

Mr. BENNETT: No, not at all.

Mr. ROGERS: If the leader of the opposition has received any information which would indicate that any members of the Department of Labour altered the files in any way, I wish he would give it to me here and now.

Mr. BENNETT: I will deal with the first question first. The Prime Minister read my statements with respect to the Minister of Transport. That represents my considered opinion with respect to a matter which was discussed with the right hon. the leader of the government, and it referred to a file which had to do with post office matters. We came to the conclusion that when you deal with public business you cannot escape the publication of it by merely putting "personal" on it. It also had to do with questions raised in connection with pensions. But the present letter, dealing with a political matter, marked "personal and confidential," is a privileged communication, and always has been in this house, unless the writer of the letter removes the privilege. That is his privilege, not somebody else's. I think the most striking case of this kind was that concerning a letter written by Hon. Vincent Massey to the present Conservative leader in the senate, Right Hon. Arthur Meighen. He marked that letter "personal," and in view of the fact that he had become a political factor in the life of the country, Mr. Meighen desired that Mr. Massey should remove that privilege. He declined to do so, and after careful investigation Mr. Meighen was satisfied that he could not use or publish that letter unless he had the consent of the writer. That is his privilege, not somebody else's. So far as the other feature of it is concerned, it is the considered opinion of the former minister that he did not leave that letter on that file.

Mr. ROGERS: Where could it come from?

Mr. BENNETT: That is what he would like to know.

Mr. ROGERS: It was attached to his letter.

Mr. BENNETT: It was there in 1936 and 1937 but it was never produced in this house. The motion was made on the sixth and acceded to on the ninth. The return was made so hurriedly that it was signed by the Minister of Labour for the Secretary of State. The return had to do with correspondence between two dates, one in August and one in October. The former Minister of Labour has no detailed recollection of it; all he says is that to the best of his belief and knowledge that letter was not on the file when he left that office. That is his view.

[Mr. Rogers.]

Mr. ROGERS: The only answer to that is that the letter was there when the file was examined. I have said already that I had no knowledge that the letter was there until the file was requested. The file was requested by a member of this house who was particularly interested in the construction of those roads.

Mr. BENNETT: Apparently he had knowledge of the fact that the letter was there.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: I deny that I had any knowledge.

Mr. BENNETT: We know differently.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: My right hon. friend knows that if he looks through his files he will find a copy of that letter.

Mr. BENNETT: I have had my files searched carefully, and I took the trouble myself to do it. There is no letter or copy of that letter on my personal file. But in my opinion some such letter was received from Mr. Webb, for he was advised in four lines that Hon. Mr. Murphy, then Minister of the Interior, was going to western Canada and would investigate the whole question in connection with rust and drought. Those matters were mentioned separately. He did so, and the very hon. member who has just spoken was one of those who urged that the work should be done. The work was continued after October, but has not yet been completed.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: My right hon. friend cannot deny that the work was started with the object of winning three seats and not to give work to those who needed it.

Mr. BENNETT: I say no such thing—just the opposite.

Mr. MacNEIL: I cannot allow this vote to pass without a brief reference to the unfortunate disturbance that occurred in Vancouver on June 19. I have already stated my views with regard to that situation. I regard it as a terrible blot on the record of this administration. Since this matter was last discussed in the house several points have come into view which I should like to bring to the attention of the committee. We have had an opportunity to examine the sessional paper containing the correspondence and telegrams exchanged between the department and the departmental representative in Vancouver and the department of labour in Victoria. I cannot condemn too definitely the incompetence of the departmental representative in Vancouver, Mr. Mitchell. I have carefully read his communications to the minister, and in my opinion he made no attempt, while staying at the hotel Vancouver in Vancouver