

Supply—Re-establishment

Mr. KENNEDY (Glengarry): Are these permanent employees?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): No, they are nearly all temporaries. Increases are being provided by the Civil Service Commission as follows: \$120, \$60, \$270 and \$45.

Item agreed to.

SOLDIERS' CIVIL RE-ESTABLISHMENT

Pensions—European War and Active Militia, \$32,500,000.

Hon. H. S. BELAND (Minister of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment): I suppose that hon. members would like to have a few statistics placed before them as to the number of pensioners and other matters.

Mr. MANION: May I interrupt the minister for a moment. I do not know whether my point will be well taken or not but this is one of the paramount questions before the country to-day. There is also the fact that a royal commission has been sitting and taking evidence in the matter of pensions, and its interim report has not been altogether favourable. I am just suggesting this to the minister in the interest of his own department, in the interest of publicity and in the interest of making the soldiers throughout the country understand the conditions: I suggest that he might hold this item over and make a statement regarding pensions—giving the statistics he wishes to give and explaining any regulations which may have been changed—before a larger House, and perhaps earlier in the day, when the discussion would receive a certain amount of publicity which it would not get to-night. I say that in the interest of the minister himself and of his department. I suggest that it would be well to hold up this item until we can get a report from the royal commission which is sitting. Would the minister mind telling me if he is expecting to have the final report of the royal commission shortly?

Mr. BELAND: The interim report of the commission was laid on the table some two or three weeks ago, and it deals with pensions and the Returned Soldiers Insurance Act. No feature of the Pension Act will be referred to in the final report whenever it is submitted. It is somewhat doubtful whether the commission will be in a position to submit that report before the session is over. What I consider to be the main portion of the commission's report—that is the part which bears upon pensions and returned soldiers insurance—is dealt with extensively in the report that has been brought down. I have no objection at all to postponing the consideration

[Mr. C. A. Stewart.]

of this item, but may I point out that in consequence of the recommendations made by the commissioners regarding pensions and insurance, amendments to the Pension Act and to the Returned Soldiers Insurance Act will have to be introduced into this House before the end of the session. Then, of course, full opportunity will be given for hon. gentlemen to discuss the report. The estimate which is now submitted for consideration was prepared under the direction of the Board of Pension Commissioners for the year 1923-24. I hardly think this would be the proper occasion to discuss the Pension Act. The proper time, if I may be permitted to express the view, would be when the amendments to the Pension Act are introduced.

Mr. MANION: May I further interrupt the minister for a moment? I would agree with him to a certain extent except that when the amendments to the Pension Act are introduced it will probably be—so far as one can see now—towards the last of the session. Suppose the session should be over by the end of May; some of us think it may be over by that time.

Mr. GRAHAM: Hear, hear.

Mr. MANION: I am expressing my personal opinion.

Mr. GRAHAM: I am too.

Mr. MANION: Suppose the session should be over by that time, then the amendments to the Pension Act would be brought in probably in the dying days of the session, as the favorite expression is, and would probably be rushed through in such a manner that there would not be an adequate opportunity for the discussion which may be desired upon this question. If the minister will look around he will see that the vast majority of the members are not present, and I do not suppose there is any member who does not wish to mention perhaps some particular suggestion regarding pensions—I should think at least, that one-half the members of the House may have some remarks to make upon the subject—and I would like to suggest to the minister, while I will not hold the item up otherwise—that it would be wise to delay this matter. After all, this is the item upon which members should discuss pensions in general—not the Pension Act but pensions in general. I would therefore suggest to him that he should hold the item over until there is a fuller attendance of members. I would remind him that there are a number of committees sitting to-night, notably the Banking and Commerce committee which is consider-