

Civil Service Superannuation

quite fair, and I feel that at this particular time a great deal of resentment is aroused against the treasury board. I believe that the name of one individual figures all too prominently, because the fault is not all his, but that a board that is largely an unknown quantity, who do or do not confer around a table should give judicial decisions which affect the welfare of the people of Canada, is not a very satisfactory state of affairs. I believe, for instance, that if an application is made whereby the discretion of the treasury board is sought, that discretion should be exercised at a hearing open to the public, with full knowledge of whose case has been heard before it. I am one of those who believe that publicity is one of the best assurances of justice; and in matters of this kind, with treasury board being given such absolute power, some measures must be taken to guide the exercise of that power in a better way, by giving it publicity, so that we and any person whose application is handled by the treasury board may know for what reason his request is or is not allowed. I believe also that there should be an appeal of some kind from the treasury board when it is not acting as a responsible government body, and that that appeal should be public.

I suggest that the two points which I have drawn to the minister's attention should receive his most earnest consideration, and I should like to have his explanation as to the first matter I raised.

Mr. NEILL: I endorse what has been said by the hon. member who has just taken his seat. I was sorry to read in the bill language which is carried on from previous acts—"stated annual salary." That might be a vehicle of injustice. I recall a case which occurred a number of years ago; there is no reason why I should not give the details. There were telegraph agents some of whom had been working for twenty to twenty-five years, drawing an annual salary payable so much a month. It was thoroughly acknowledged that they were really permanent employees, although they were "permanent temporary" employees; it was reported in the estimates that they should get \$1,200, say, a year, and they were paid monthly at that rate; yet by some peculiar quirk of the regulations they were not drawing "a stated annual salary" and therefore were not eligible for superannuation, and I had a great deal of difficulty and had to do a good deal of wirepulling to get that very simple act of justice performed and have these people put on a stated annual salary, so that they would get superannuation. The obstacle was, I think, that the board referred to by my hon.

[Mr. Boucher.]

friend would not do it; they said it would require—oh, I forget; a change of the British North America Act or something almost its equivalent. But all of a sudden the justice department or somebody discovered that they did not have to do that, that by a simple resolution, I think of the minister, it could be decided that these people would hereafter be on a stated annual salary and, by virtue of that, enabled to get superannuation. A great many classes were excluded from the benefits of the act by this "stated annual salary" business.

I have in mind the linesman, whose work is very similar to that of the telegraph agent; but the telegraph agent gets superannuation, while the linesman, who may have been on the job for thirty or forty years, has no opportunity at all to be superannuated. I am afraid, the way the section reads, it still requires the person to be on a "stated annual salary" and also to get the consent of the treasury board. What that amounts to is that all the power is put in the hands of one man; the treasury board is only a figure of speech.

I should like an explanation about that "stated annual salary" business, because I am afraid it is going to be a stumbling block in the extension of the principle. I am not suggesting that the person who is hired to do a little carpenter work at intervals of two or three weeks or months should be eligible for superannuation. But when you see people going on for ten, twenty or thirty years, and they form the class known as—and the very language indicates the absurdity of it—permanent temporaries—under what language can you define a person as being a permanent temporary? Some consideration should be given to them.

While I am on my feet I should like to put in a plea for a class of people whose case has not been brought up here to-night. From the remarks that have been made here I gather that this bill is to be widened, and therefore these people may now be eligible. I refer to a class of people who are permanently employed on board the government boats, although they are not paid a stated annual salary. That matter was taken up a number of years ago on the Pacific coast. I am not familiar with the Atlantic coast. It was decided that the officers, the mates and the engineering staff, would be eligible, but not what you would call the technical men of the deck crews, such as stewards or carpenters or, I suppose, the coxswain. They were not eligible because they were not styled officers. Many of these men are just as permanently employed year after year as the officers are, but they are not eligible for superannuation.