

Supply—Privy Council

that there seems to have been in these last few days a strange non-political attitude, even among members of the government. However, I have every compliment to pay to the clerk of the privy council. I have known him for some years, and I know he is a very capable clerk. He was recognized to be a very capable private secretary to the late prime minister, the Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, and he has splendid qualifications.

I know he is a very non-political gentleman, too. But it does appear to me that, in the estimates, he is now made deputy head as well as clerk of the privy council. I notice that the item here says that the special assistant to the prime minister in the year 1952-53 was paid \$12,000. In 1953-54—and this is about the only economy I observe in the whole sheaf of estimates, full of necessary expenditures, combined with some extravagances—this amount is not voted. So I am wondering if the man who is now clerk of the privy council and deputy head is going to act as assistant to the Prime Minister, as well. If he is doing all that work, and remembers everything that happens, as I believe he does, I am not so sure whether he may be underpaid. Because even though he is getting nearly twice as much as some deputy ministers, it would seem that he has great responsibilities.

The Prime Minister has said that he must have a liaison to find out what is going on in Ottawa while he is in the country. It is to be expected by everyone that he will be out in the country quite a bit in the next few months, unless he thinks his political effect would be better if he did not go out in the country. Of that I am not so sure.

An hon. Member: Wait and see.

Mr. Rowe: Yes, "wait and see"; that is the slogan on which you have survived for a long time. But there always comes a turn in the wind.

I was about to say that the Prime Minister is likely to be away from Ottawa a great deal; and if he is to have a liaison who would know what is going on in Ottawa, then I should think it would be better for the clerk of the privy council to stay in Ottawa rather than to move the privy council to Winnipeg or Edmonton or Vancouver, to attend these meetings some of which are called non-political and some of which are political. Some are called to say that the government has not been extravagant, or that their extravagance has been only imaginary. In any event these are supposed to be matters quite within the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Rowe.]

The Prime Minister said he believed—well, he did not say he believed; I must not misconstrue what he said; lately he is not so sure about his political effect as he has been at other times—but I do believe that the combined efforts of the clerk of the privy council, who at that time was more or less acting as private assistant, or almost as a prime minister's secretary, and those of the Prime Minister in Winnipeg were not greatly to the political advantage of the party they were representing.

I know and I do believe that the Prime Minister is well advised. The hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, who has contributed so much to the debates of this house this session and in many other years, has brought up a matter of great importance, and that is that the functions of the clerk of the privy council have been definite for a number of years. I believe it is a change to call him a deputy head. I believe he is now known as a deputy head, clerk of the privy council and secretary to the cabinet. And, by all signs, and from what we have heard tonight, he is also a special assistant to the Prime Minister.

I say that because I notice that the salary of the special assistant to the Prime Minister ceased when he became clerk of the privy council. I feel, and I have always felt, that it would be unfair in the House of Commons to take advantage of any of our capable civil servants during debate in the house. I think it is more unfair than to take advantage of the press, because the press can answer next morning, but a member of the civil service can answer only when his minister tells him to answer. Recently we have seen where they have spoken for ministers, but that does not happen very often.

Even if that were not so, I have every regard for the ability and the memory of Mr. Pickersgill, who is now clerk of the privy council. And I believe if he is allowed to carry out his functions in that office he will make an excellent clerk of the privy council. However, I do not like to see any man in public life overworked, and I hope the clerk of the privy council is not used as deputy head, secretary to the whole cabinet and private assistant to the Prime Minister, and his non-political powers used in an advisory capacity for the political effect they might have, or used to have in the old days.

He is a good man. I am pleased to see in the Prime Minister's answer to the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra that he is not going to work him so hard in the future, that he took him once but that he will not take