

Again that is what my hon. friends say.

—based upon mileage and the physical conditions of the territory involved, having regard to the amount paid to the other servants of the government for similar employment.”

When the vote was taken two of the active gentlemen opposite voted against that motion; I refer to the hon. member for South Perth (Mr. Sanderson) and the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay (Mr. Casgrain), the whip of the Liberal party. My hon. friends know I never criticize; I merely make this statement in order to keep the record straight. Incidentally the vote against the motion was 106, all of them Liberals, so far as I can see; the vote in favour was 70, all of them Conservatives, so far as I can see.

Mr. CASGRAIN: May I ask a question? Was that a vote of want of confidence in the government?

Mr. MANION: No, it was merely an amendment on going into supply.

Mr. GORDON: So I would suggest that both parties have been wonderfully consistent.

Mr. HEAPS: This only goes to show, Mr. Chairman, how virtuous all oppositions are and how full of vice they become when they are on the government side. There is one point I should like to bring to the attention of the minister, and I should like to go back to the matter I raised in the early part of this discussion. I refer to the question of the wages paid on work done under government contracts, and what can be done by the government to enforce the payment of fair wages. I know the conditions under which some of these contracts are let. In one instance which came to my attention, the manufacture of trousers, it was stated that after the goods had been paid for, only 17 cents per pair was left for wages and overhead expenses. Obviously it was impossible for the manufacturer to pay his overhead and decent wages out of that allowance, and as a result the wages were cut down. With the number of inspectors available it would be almost impossible for the government to make any close inspection of all the places where government work is being done to see that fair wages are being paid. I would suggest to the minister, however, that where government contracts are being let they insist that a sworn statement of the wages paid be submitted to the government, and that these lists be carefully scrutinized by the Department of Labour. Many of these contracts are sublet; in fact I believe that happens in most cases, and this would give the government some idea at least as to what was being done under the contracts after they

were let. I should like to ask the minister if he would be prepared at this time to inaugurate a system which would provide that all contractors in receipt of government contracts be compelled to furnish the government with sworn statements of the wages paid under such contracts. May I have an answer from the minister?

Mr. GORDON: The course followed by the Department of Labour is to see that the fair wages clause is carried out, so far as possible. I can readily understand that possibly in the purchase of clothing or some other material there may be an evasion but despite that it is the policy and the endeavour of the department to see that fair wages are paid not only in the erection of buildings but in connection with the purchase of supplies. I am hopeful that under legislation presented to parliament greater powers may be given the federal government, and that there will be a clearer recognition of the duty to see that within the competence of parliament a lead may be given in demonstrating that fair wages are imperative not only in building trades but in the preparation of supplies and materials. I am aware that at times a condition has developed, one which I do not believe is general, which has indicated that fair wages have not been paid in certain trades, and particularly those trades in which needle workers and allied working people are engaged.

It has been the endeavour of the Department of Labour to check on these matters; in fact, that is what the department has been set up to do. As Minister of Labour I am just following the course pursued by ministers who have preceded me, although I believe I may fairly state that at times I have been somewhat more vigorous than my predecessors. I trust that we shall be clothed with authority to impose greater and severer restrictions upon those dealing with the federal government to ensure a standard of fair and reasonable wages to those employed in government works.

Mr. HEAPS: In a way the statement of the minister is satisfactory, but—

Mr. GORDON: I did not expect it would be totally satisfactory. Do not misunderstand me.

Mr. HEAPS: The minister may have the finest laws he could wish, but unless those laws are properly administered they are of very little use. I was suggesting to the minister a practical way out of a difficulty which I believe manifests itself from time to