

Supply—Pensions—Veterans

Edmonton, Alta.—

Menzies, A., secretary, \$1,800.

Adam, Miss H., stenographer, grade 1, \$720.

Vancouver, B.C.—

Bedson, S. L., secretary, \$2,400.

Malabar, R. F., stenographer, grade 1, \$1,200.

Freudiger, R., clerk, grade 1, \$720.

Mr. GREEN: In Vancouver last Christmas the department acted in a way which was very harmful to the efforts of the honorary local committee. Each year at that season, there is special work in the post office, and last year I believe two or three hundred returned men were required for that temporary work. We had over five thousand unemployed veterans registered in Vancouver and district with the veterans' assistance commission, and I understood from the minister last session that these post office jobs would be filled through the honorary local committee, apart from politics. Instead, I believe men were called from different soldiers' organizations, but in each case had to get the approval of a representative of the government, or of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie). That sort of thing does not help the honorary local committee to persuade citizens generally to give work to unemployed ex-soldiers. I protest strenuously against action of that kind. I should like the minister to assure the committee to-night that that procedure will not be followed this coming Christmas. I see no reason why politics should enter into the employment of these unfortunate unemployed veterans for a few days around Christmas. That is going altogether too far.

Mr. POWER: These honorary local committees are not patronage committees.

Mr. GREEN: That is why they should distribute the jobs.

Mr. POWER: I would call that a patronage committee. The other day when the estimates of the Minister of National Defence were being considered, my hon. friend complained in connection with a project, at Point Grey I believe, that the Vancouver honorary committee did not have the choice of the men. But it appears that there were forty-eight men employed and all forty-eight were returned soldiers. I do not know what more my department could do or what more the Department of National Defence could do. The object of this commission is to find jobs for returned soldiers, not for the particular returned soldiers picked out by the committee.

Mr. GREEN: But not to find jobs for Liberal returned soldiers.

[Mr. Power.]

Mr. POWER: That is not of interest to me, provided the full quota is appointed. If there are forty-eight jobs and they were filled by forty-eight ex-soldiers, I see no cause for complaint. The committee's job is to stimulate the interest of the public in returned soldiers and as far as possible to get them jobs, but not to select those who are to be appointed; otherwise we would make these committees into political committees. I think my hon. friend will be the first to say that ever since the committees were appointed there has been no political interference with them whatsoever. I had nothing to do with the choice of the men on the committees, or of the men who were secretaries, or with the appointment of the stenographers or anyone connected with the committees. In fact, I have been told on many occasions from this side of the house that a large number of members of the committee will be assisting at the Tory convention here in July.

Mr. GREEN: That is because they were the best men you could get.

Mr. POWER: Well, I did not choose them. Many of them are very good men. I think the best I can do is not to interfere with them at all, but let them go ahead. They are doing their best for the returned soldiers, and I deprecate any attempt to drag them into politics. It is unfair both to them and to us.

Mr. GREEN: There is no attempt being made to drag them into politics; it is only common sense. You have a high-class, independent, non-political honorary committee with a paid staff working under them costing this department several thousand dollars, and the whole purpose is to get jobs for unemployed veterans. At Christmas there are openings for 200 or 300 unemployed veterans. They are all registered with this local committee. The local committee knows better than a Liberal henchman whether they are good men or not, whether they deserve work or not; yet this government has a special representative through whom all these unfortunate men have to pass before they get a job, and if they are not Liberals they do not get a job. If that is not dragging the veterans' assistance commission into politics, I do not know what is, and it is one way to ruin its effectiveness; it is one way of breaking down the whole scheme. I suggest to the minister that this practice should not be followed this year.

Mr. POWER: I do not think there has been any complaint that the number of