

changing the service in a certain direction the work can be more efficiently performed. I may tell the hon. gentleman that one of the first things I encountered in connection with the department was a deluge of letters—not applying for offices—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. Although there were quite a number—in which my attention was called to the fact that people had written letters, one, two, three, four and even five years ago and had not received any replies. This it appeared had been going on for many years. I take it to be the right of people who have business to transact with the department to receive answers to their letters, and I am inclined to think that any one who has had any business with the Department of Indian Affairs during the last five months will say they have received answers in the ordinary business course and have obtained the information asked for. If I do not have a secretary at liberty to collect the information asked for by these letters sent from all over Canada, it will be an absolute physical impossibility that the correspondents can get answers to their letters. It is one of the duties of a Minister to see that correspondents get answers to their letters, and I am endeavouring to do it, and for this purpose I have employed this gentleman to do this part of the work, and I do not think he is excessively paid. In view of the extra work and of the fact that he is liable to be called upon at any hour of the day or evening when Parliament is sitting, he should be allowed the additional remuneration asked in this vote. I may say that so far as regards the appeals made by the hon. member who sits behind me, I can appreciate the disappointment the hon. gentleman must feel at the lack of response.

Mr. FOSTER. Who is the new secretary?

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. A. J. McKellar.

Mr. FOSTER. Is he now in the service?

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. Yes.

Mr. FOSTER. He is a clerk belonging to what class?

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. He is a second-class clerk, at \$1,400 a year.

Mr. FOSTER. Here is a second-class clerk at \$1,400 made a private secretary. I must now call upon the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who has most persistently declared that it was a parliamentary outrage to take a first-class or a second-class clerk for private secretary. Why did not the Minister select a young man on a comparatively small salary and add \$600 to it, so as not to make a drain on the service and on the finances of the country. Instead of doing

Mr. SIFTON.

so, the hon. gentleman must have a high class clerk, one at \$1,400, as private secretary. But how grateful will the hon. member for North Wellington (Mr. McMullen) feel that during the last five or six minutes the Minister of the Interior has had the satisfaction of telling him in so many words that while that hon. gentleman opposed the appointment of two private secretaries in previous years, he must refrain from doing so now, and in fact he complimented the Minister on his administration of the department.

Mr. McMULLEN. The late Minister of Finance seems to take considerable delight to-night in having a "drive" at me. On the question of private secretaries, I found fault with the appointment of a first or second-class clerk in his department as secretary.

Mr. FOSTER. He was a second-class clerk at \$1,000 a year.

Mr. McMULLEN. The hon. gentleman increased his salary, and gave him the allowance of \$600 as private secretary.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman is quite wrong.

Mr. McMULLEN. Then the hon. gentleman proceeded to criticise very fiercely the estimate for two private secretaries. I can remember, not so many years ago, when the Minister of Finance had two private secretaries. He had one in his department, and in order to do the very large volume of work that devolved upon him, he found it necessary to keep another at his house.

Mr. BENNETT. But you condemned it.

Mr. McMULLEN. I did. I challenged the prudence of keeping two private secretaries, but the ex-Minister of Finance (Mr. Foster) gave such a very plausible explanation that the House sanctioned the vote. I cannot but feel amused by the criticisms of my esteemed friend the ex-Minister of Finance, because it brings to my recollection so many little things that he was guilty of himself when he was in power. It is wonderful what a change a position makes in a man.

Mr. FOSTER. We want now to hear from the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright). Has he also experienced a change of heart. I am thinking he will be a little more prudent than the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. McMullen), and will say as little as possible about it; but for fear that the Minister of Interior may have wrong information imparted to him by the hon. gentleman (Mr. McMullen) I want to say, that although I had two private secretaries, \$600 was the total amount that was paid, and I did not have two clerks drawing pay from the department either; only one, so that there is quite a difference