

Mr. FOSTER. I do not think the hon. gentleman would obtain much more information if that were done.

Mr. MULOCK. Then what is the use of the reports to the Governor General?

Mr. FOSTER. The report, if the hon. gentleman got it, would inform him that so much money was required, and there was no appropriation out of which it could be taken, and it was so declared on the report of the Minister of Finance, and, therefore, a Governor General's warrant do issue. In some cases there might be a more detailed statement. The hon. gentleman fears there is not a truly strict revision of Governor General's warrants. He is more or less right as regards the past, and it may be there is too much laxity at present; but, so far as I am concerned, I have tried during the past year to revise all such statements, and before I sign the report to satisfy myself, as far as possible, that there was really a ground for issuing a warrant. Then we have adopted a new principle within the last few months, that all Governor General's warrants before being passed by Council shall be referred to the Treasury Board and undergo the revision of that board. That, I think, will be a very good extra check on the issue of Governor General's warrants. So the hon. gentleman will see that every disposition exists to keep as nearly as possible to the line.

Mr. MULOCK. The Minister of Finance says the reports of Ministers would not throw light on the matter. The report of the Minister should not be a mere echo of the statute, but it should contain on the face of it the facts that warrant the exercise of this special power. The facts form the basis on which the Council comes to a conclusion on the application.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman is quite right in that, and it was that consideration which led to the determination to refer the reports to the Treasury Board. Since that reference has been made several instances have occurred in which we have had officials from the departments to give information as to the necessity of issuing Governor General's warrants.

Mr. MULOCK. Then in future these reports will be of service, and will be laid on the Table of the House?

Mr. FOSTER. I have no objection to laying them on the Table, if the House wants them—that is, any that may be called for.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). I do not see that the change suggested by the Minister will quite meet the case. If a Minister is without the necessary funds he applies to his colleagues for a Governor General's warrant, and that if it is referred to the Treasury Board I suppose the only question that can come before it is whether the money is required in the public service, and there is no appropriation for the purpose. I do not suppose the Treasury Board would prevent the money being obtained, if it were made perfectly clear that no appropriation existed and that money for the purpose was required. But it will be seen from an examination of the Act that while it may be necessary that the money should be obtained, it is not such a necessity as is contemplated by the provisions of the Auditor's Act authorizing the issuing of Governor General's warrants. It is the duty of officials of the department to inform the Minister as to the

Mr. MULOCK.

money required for the public service of that department, and there is great neglect of duty if that information has not been given in order that the appropriation should be had at the hands of the House. The statement of the Minister of Finance shows great neglect of duties in these particulars. If the money has not been appropriated, why was not application made to Parliament for an adequate sum for the public service? What is contemplated by the Auditor's Act is an appropriation upon a Governor General's warrant for some unforeseen emergency. There may be some public work which the Government require to maintain, destroyed by fire, or in some other way. There may be something arising which requires an appropriation of which neither any Minister nor the House could know anything at the time the appropriation was sought. But these sums which are provided in the Supplementary Estimates by Governor General's warrants are sums wanted in the ordinary course of the administration of each department, and it certainly indicates very great laxity in the administration of the affairs of the department when the authority is employed for the purpose of supplementing the sum asked that ought to have been provided when the House was in session.

Mr. FOSTER. I will give the House the fullest information before concurrence.

Country Savings Banks, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island—	
Salaries.....	\$11,650
Contingencies.....	1,750

Mr. McMULLEN. I notice there is a small decrease in this item.

Mr. FOSTER. That is because, according to our policy, these savings banks are being absorbed into the post office savings banks whenever by death or other cause the incumbent for the time being vacates the office. By this means we save a considerable portion of that vote and add very little expense to the management of the post office savings banks.

Mr. McMULLEN. I am glad to learn that the Government is going to carry out that policy. Has this reduction been caused by the death of any of the office-holders?

Mr. FOSTER. We transferred three savings banks last year; the keepers of two having died and one keeper having resigned.

One-half of 1 per cent commission on \$7,222,271.57 for payment of interest on public debt.....	\$36,101.35
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Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. Before we quite leave this subject of the savings banks I would like to ask the hon. Minister, although I shall not press him to answer the question unless he chooses—I would be glad to know whether any sort of understanding has been come to, or whether he expects to come to any sort of understanding with the various banking institutions of the country as to the rate of interest? The alterations which were made last year in the Banking Act would, in my judgment, under certain conditions, render that possible. It is an important question of policy, and if the hon. gentleman for any reason does not see proper to make any statement upon it, I shall not press the question further.