

*Supply—Legislation*

to urge that he make changes of that kind at this stage in the history of this parliament but the way he could meet the need for a more balanced representation with respect to other sections of the province of Ontario would be to give representation on the lower ministerial level in the form of appointments as parliamentary assistants. That is an excellent suggestion which I make to the serious minded Minister of Public Works who undoubtedly has a lot to do with cabinet making in the present administration. If he wishes us to pass this measure I ask him to rise in his place and tell us whether or not we are going to have parliamentary assistants.

Is this vote just a pro forma thing to hold dangling between sessions before expectant junior ministers the possibility of their appointments? If that is what it is, then obviously we should not support the amendment. The Minister of Public Works has it in his hands now to clear this matter up at once and to say, yes, the government is going to appoint parliamentary assistants. He does not need to tell us it is going to be done tomorrow or at the end of the session, but that it is going to be done within a very reasonable period and length of time. If this is done, then the minister will give us a satisfactory answer, and he will demonstrate what I know is really the case, namely that he has great power and influence in the present government.

**Mr. Green:** Get thee behind me, Satan.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** I really cannot allow the remarks of the hon. member for Essex East to go by.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** May I apologize to the hon. lady. I know she comes from Hamilton, and I know I should not have said she came from Toronto.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** You certainly should not. While I am on my feet, perhaps I should say I am sure my colleague, the Minister of Labour, feels as badly as I do about the appellation which has been applied to us. I can assure the hon. member for Essex East that there are some 300,000 people in the city of Hamilton who feel just as I do.

**The Deputy Chairman:** Is the committee ready for the question?

**Mr. Regier:** Mr. Chairman, first of all I wish to assure the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate that I was not attempting to amuse either the committee or myself in moving this amendment. I do believe the amendment involves a matter of principle. However, I have another comment to make. I listened with considerable interest and, I

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

must say, with a good deal of concern, to the assurance of the Minister of Public Works to members of his own party when he indicated to them that in his own good time the Prime Minister would take such actions as are in the best interests of Canada. It seems to me there is a rather serious implication there. Parliament established those offices some years ago and now, simply by leaving them vacant, they apparently do not exist. When we ask, and I am sure the members of the minister's party ask, when will these traditional offices be filled, we have the Minister of Public Works assuring us that in his own good time the Prime Minister will decide what is best for us. No longer will parliament decide. We are to go home from this session and rest assured that in his own good time the Prime Minister will decide what is best for parliament and, presumably, for the government of Canada.

I must agree, Mr. Chairman, at this time this whole debate seems a little bit like a phantom debate in that we are all really arguing against the existence of or against the argument of someone who is not here and yet who hears us. It is a rather weird atmosphere that seems to prevail. One member from the opposition rises and appeals to the Minister of National Defence who he thinks has influence with this non-existent personality who hears but who cannot be seen, and asks him whether he will use his influence. Then another member of the opposition appeals to the Minister of Public Works and asks will he please use his influence. I know it is very hard for us in the opposition to use our influence upon someone who can hear us but whom we cannot see. He cannot even see our facial contortions to know whether we are speaking in levity or in seriousness.

I must point out that the amount of money being asked for would, according to the wording of the vote, enable the appointment of 24 parliamentary assistants at the end of August. If they were appointed at the end of this month, the amounts that they would be entitled to for the remainder of the fiscal year on a pro rata basis would be \$2,333 each, I believe. If we divide the vote of \$62,000 by \$2,333 it would permit the appointment of 24 parliamentary assistants. What the Minister of Public Works actually is asking is the right to appoint more parliamentary assistants to cabinet ministers than there are cabinet ministers with portfolios. I feel that this is introducing a new approach and something is being asked for which was never intended when parliamentary assistants were first established.

The Minister of Public Works referred to this amendment as a red herring. All I can