

as to whether it would not be advisable to have in connection with the Railway Commission a permanent representative of the people who would appear in the public interest. I have not gone sufficiently into the matter to say whether that would be wise or not, but if such an appointment were made it ought largely to take the place of the purposes of this vote.

Mr. J. D. REID. The minister expects to spend \$10,000 for legal fees before the Railway Commission during the coming year. Has the minister ever asked the Justice Department why the Solicitor General should not undertake this work. I have never heard of anything yet in which the Solicitor General has taken part. I always understood that the Minister of Justice and the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General were supposed to take charge of matters of this kind, and yet here is a case in Ottawa where special counsel are employed. Some years ago the Solicitor General was appointed for the sole purpose of looking after cases of this kind, and if the government are not going to give any work to him the office ought to be abolished. I am not finding fault with the payment of the amount, but before it is passed I think we should know exactly what work the Solicitor General does. I would like to know if the minister has ever asked the Solicitor General or the Justice Department if they would undertake any work before the Board of Railway Commissioners at Ottawa?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. There is a great deal in what the hon. gentleman has just said. I was about to suggest the same thing myself. In fact, I took that ground last session or the session before. In Great Britain the law officers of the Crown consist of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, and they are actively engaged in the performance of their duties all the time. In this country, ever since I have been in parliament, the office of Solicitor General has been for the most part a complete absurdity. I have never known him to perform any public duty except to attend in the House of Commons and sometimes answer a question for the Minister of Justice. I do not agree with the hon. member for Grenville (Mr. Reid) that the Minister of Justice should perform any part of this work. He is at the head of a great department, the political and administrative work of which should occupy all his time. Nor do I think the Deputy Minister of Justice should undertake the task. He is a very busy man, with an enormous amount of work continually pressing him. As far as the Solicitor General is concerned, I have been trying for the last four or five years to find out what public duty he discharges, and I have not yet discovered it. If he is created and exists simply for political purposes, it is

Mr. GRAHAM.

well we should know it; if he is created and exists for the purpose of performing any public duty, we should know that. There does not seem to be any good reason why he should not take charge of the interests of the country before the board of railway commissioners. Any man capable of filling the office of Solicitor General ought to be capable of doing that. I cannot understand why \$10,000 should be taken out of the public exchequer to pay for the performance of duties which the Solicitor General ought to be able to perform and ought to perform. Before this vote is passed, I want to find out why the Solicitor General should not perform this important public duty instead of outside counsel.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The office of Solicitor General is one which has been in existence, if I remember rightly, for over twenty years. It has been occupied by men of eminence, and my hon. friend will agree with me that the office is made more or less useful according to the character of the occupant. The present occupant is a very active gentleman as everybody knows. I do not know, however, that he has given attention to the class of subjects which come before the Railway Commission. The Solicitor General is chiefly engaged, I believe, in looking after the current business of the department. He has to look into all applications for pardon, tickets of leave, and similar matters which come before the Department of Justice. He has also to do some counsel work in attending before the courts and so on. I am not aware that the Solicitor General has ever attended before the Railway Commission. He may or may not have done so; I do not know that he has. But I know that in many instances the Minister of Justice has thought it advisable to employ outside counsel. My hon. friend knows that legal work is very much specialized in these modern days. There are classes of lawyers known as corporation lawyers, railway lawyers, commercial lawyers. In the general administration of the law specialists are engaged for certain cases, and there are certain cases coming before the Railway Commission in which it is advisable to have legal ability that has been specially trained in railway matters, and I dare say that this is the class of cases for which the Minister of Justice has secured outside counsel.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I repeat that I would not expect the Minister of Justice to be able to give his time to duties of this character. He has a great deal of work in his department and very important political duties to perform. But the duties of the Solicitor General are relatively very light. I am very glad to hear of something that the Solicitor General really does. Before the right hon. gentleman spoke to-night I never could find out that he ever did anything. I understand now that he makes a preliminary