

upon the same footing as other citizens, I cannot support the measure, as I think it is beyond our jurisdiction. But I think the very best law is one such as the hon. member for West Huron (Mr. Cameron) has suggested—that the Government should pass an Order in Council, or send a circular, saying that public employees who do not pay their debts, or come to some agreement with their creditors, should be dismissed. I think this law would be the best in form, the easiest to work, and the most satisfactory in its results.

Mr. LEMIEUX. (Translation.) In rising to participate in the discussion of the Bill under consideration, I am aware that I may be open to the imputation of making a pro domo speech, as I am the son of a Government employee, but I am free to state that, from what I have so far heard from the several legal gentlemen who have so ably spoken in support of the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Richardson), I am not yet satisfied that this measure should be crystallized into law by this House.

In my opinion, Sir, there is a great deal of exaggeration in what has been said here about the dishonesty of civil servants. For my part, I am satisfied that, with the exception of a few isolated cases of civil servants refusing to pay their debts, the great majority of them pay their debts honestly, and do not shirk their responsibilities. I know many contractors, many merchants and banking clerks who are still more eager than Government employees to escape payment of their honest debts, notwithstanding all that has been said here to the contrary.

The hon. member for West Huron (Mr. Cameron) has suggested a plan by which the evil complained of might be obviated, and he told us that by adopting his system that evil would sooner be rooted out than by enacting a law for the attachment of the salaries of civil servants. Sir, if the proposition of the hon. gentleman were adopted, what would be the result? We are told that an Order in Council could be passed by the Cabinet saying that public employees who do not pay their debts should be dismissed. But I have no hesitation in saying that a more radically vicious measure could hardly be devised. As a matter of fact, if such an Order in Council were adopted, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, Cabinet Ministers would feel obliged to interfere in favour of those unhappy officers who would happen to be in the clutches of their creditors. As the Ministers would have a discretionary power in the matter, they could decline carrying out such a drastic measure.

On the other hand, where would be the sanction of such a provision? It is provided by our codes of procedure how creditors are to proceed to secure the execution of judgments obtained against debtors. But, in this particular case, judgment creditors would, I

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suppose, apply to the Minister and tell him: "We have obtained a judgment from the court against such or such officer of your department; now, if he does not satisfy that judgment you are going to dismiss him." Will any hon. gentleman in this House pretend to say that such a measure could be enforced? It is true the Order in Council would be there, but nobody, with the least insight into human nature, will pretend to say that, under the circumstances, those civil servants, when they happen to be political friends of the Minister, would be removed by him. Therefore, as matters stand, the suggestion of the hon. member for West Huron (Mr. Cameron) cannot commend itself to the judgment of the House. I coincide in the opinion of the hon. gentlemen who preceded me, when they said that Government employees should be put on the same footing as other members of the community. It must also be granted that the mass of our civil servants have but small salaries. It is true some of them are better paid, but they form the exception to the rule. Generally speaking, it may be said that civil servants in our country have salaries which barely enable them to keep up their position. In the face of these facts, I think the well-known motto that "Her Majesty's Government must be carried on" would not be out of place here. At all events, I must say that I am not ready to vote in favour of the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Richardson). I take it that this Parliament cannot pass a legislation which, under the Union Act, is placed under the control of the provincial legislatures. In my opinion, this House should refrain from enacting a law interfering with provincial rights.

Why, Sir, when I heard my hon. friend from West Huron (Mr. Cameron) declare that it was within the scope of this Parliament to legislate in the matter, and when listening to the words fallen from the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Fortin), it struck me that their speeches did not bear that emphatic stamp of the Liberal principles which our party did so loudly proclaim before the country, when out of power. The Liberal party has unflinchingly advocated and battled in favour of provincial rights, against any encroachment whatsoever by the federal Government upon the prerogatives of our provincial legislatures. Yet, strange to say, hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, with a lack of consistency on their part, which is a matter of genuine surprise to me, declare themselves ready, under the intoxicating influence of power, no doubt, to endorse a Bill the scope of which they know perfectly well, and to sanction by their vote an encroachment by the federal authorities upon the rights of legislatures. What were the measures for which the Liberal party have kept battling for over twenty-five years? Upon all matters relating to provincial rights, such as the liquor licenses,