

Mr. BENNETT: Yes.

Section agreed to.

Sections 4 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

On section 19—Duties of Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): May I ask the Prime Minister to give us a brief description of the respective duties of the Deputy Minister of Finance and the comptroller of the treasury?

Mr. BENNETT: I shall be glad to do so when we get to that section, which is section 21.

Section agreed to.

Section 20 agreed to.

On section 21—Comptroller of the treasury.

Mr. BENNETT: In answer to the hon. member from West Edmonton (Mr. Stewart), this section and the immediately succeeding sections contain a statement of the duties to be discharged by the comptroller of the treasury. As the hon. gentleman possibly knows, there has been a great deal of difficulty in the past in connection with making certain that the receipts of casual small sums which come in to various officials get to the treasury at all. I suppose it is within the knowledge of my hon. friend that small defalcations have from time to time been established and that considerable difficulties have arisen in that regard. That has necessitated a good deal of concern on the part of those responsible.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): The trouble I had was as the result of advances for travelling, and so forth.

Mr. BENNETT: It would serve no useful purpose now to mention departments at all, and in some instances the persons affected are no longer on earth, but we have had three cases to deal with since we came into office. There is difficulty, for instance, in connection with the opening of the mail when men send in five-dollar bills in an envelope, sometimes registered and sometimes not. There is difficulty in connection with currency that is kept in offices in amounts of \$2,000 and \$3,000, representing moneys that have been received. There is also difficulty in connection with cheques made out in the name of the officer in the department who conducts that particular business.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Sometimes in the name of the minister.

Mr. BENNETT: One case arose in that way. Another case arose in respect of currency, and another was a combination of both. It is felt that if the deputy minister and the auditor general have larger powers with respect to that, and are released from any power with respect to (a) the control of contracts generally, and (b) the disbursement of moneys, the situation will be very much simpler. I need hardly say to those within sound of my voice that practically every department has at the moment its own bookkeeping system which grew up from olden times, and there has been no change in the matter practically for fifty or sixty years. No large business can be conducted in that way in any country under modern conditions. What happens is that parliament makes the grant of money. That is in the estimates. Then it has been the custom for the several departments to obtain a letter of credit and deposit it in a bank, and against that letter of credit the accountants and officials have issued money upon contracts and for work performed for each department. So, in that way, there is an absolutely separate organization set up in each department dealing with these matters, relating to nobody except the auditor general who authorizes the grant of the letter of credit in the first place. He does see that the letter of credit granted is a letter of credit for which there is a warrant in the estimates, but, up to the moment, he has no authority beyond that. It is proposed, as will be observed by the bill, first of all to appoint an officer to be called the comptroller of the treasury.

hereinafter called "the Comptroller," who shall be charged with the performance of the duties assigned to him by this act and such other duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the governor in council.

The bill further provides that the comptroller shall be an officer of the Department of Finance and that he shall hold office during good behaviour but may be removed by the governor in council for misbehaviour, incapacity, inability or failure to perform his duties properly. There is a further provision that he shall have free access to records; a provision with respect to parliamentary authority, and with respect also to the moneys received by him and how they shall be treated.

Putting it generally, what is endeavoured to be done by these sections is to provide that no contract shall be valid unless it is registered by the comptroller of the treasury, and secondly that no money shall be disbursed by the several departments of the