

MR. LANGEVIN asked that the Bill be read.

THE ASSISTANT CLERK read the Bill.

Bill read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: A very old practice has been revived in this instance, which has been regarded as entirely exploded—in demanding that the Bill be read. This was my impression at the time, but I did not like to say so, because I did not have my hand on the authorities. So late as 1868, a motion was made in the Imperial House of Commons that a Bill be read by the Clerk at the table, and Mr. Speaker explained that it was an exploded practice and not at all customary.

SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD: The Bill is always explained on the first reading.

MR. HOLTON: As a matter of practice, of course, this particular Bill has been disposed of, but I should like to know whether the right of a member to call for the production of a Bill *in extenso* has been exploded with the right to cause the reading of the Bill. The call for the reading of the Bill is usually made with the object of disclosing the fact that the Bill is introduced in blank. Can a Bill be introduced in blank?

MR. SPEAKER: No; it is contrary to the law of all Parliaments that a Bill be introduced in blank.

MR. MASSON: No Bill can be introduced in blank or in an imperfect shape; how then can it be known that a Bill is accepted in perfect shape?

MR. SPEAKER: It can be known by enquiry.

MR. LANGEVIN: There is no rule against reading the Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no rule against it; but the practice has entirely disappeared. In 1868, in the Imperial Parliament, it was asked that a Bill be read, and Mr. Speaker said that it was an exploded practice. It was the old practice.

SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD said that, of course, a motion must be made for leave to introduce a Bill, and, therefore, the House must be informed

whether it was such a Bill as it was willing to grant leave to introduce. The practice in England had always been to explain the Bill on the first reading and at such length that the practice of reading of the Bill itself had become obsolete because the members stated verbally its substance. Consequently, the practice of reading the Bill had fallen into desuetude, but if the other practice of not explaining Bills obtained at all, they must return to the old practice of having them read, so that the House might become informed sufficiently to say whether leave to introduce the Bill should be granted or not.

MR. SPEAKER: If any member chooses to object to a Bill, presuming that it is in blank, it is open to him to call on the Speaker and ascertain whether it is in blank or not; and that being ascertained, of course, if a Bill be in blank, it cannot be introduced in that shape. That is clearly against the rules. I may state that it was usual, on making the motion to introduce public Bills, to explain the object of the Bill and to give the reasons for its introduction; and unless the motion be opposed this is not the proper time for a lengthened debate on its merits. When an important measure is offered by a member, opportunity is then frequently taken to secure a full explanation of its character and objects; but where it is not one of an important character, debate should then be avoided, unless it is expected that the motion for leave to introduce be negatived and no further occasion arise for the discussion. Of course, it lies with the House to say whether it attaches any importance to a Bill or not.

MR. MITCHELL said he thought that this was a very important measure. No measure more important in its character had been introduced this Session. It was intended to compel every citizen to go to the polls, whether he desired or not, whether the voters liked the candidates or not, and whether they had any confidence in the candidates or not. It would also compel voters to go eight or nine miles to the polls to vote. It appeared to him that this was a very important measure; and that, at this late period