

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Heretofore the office of the Prime Minister has not been dealt with as a distinct office; it has always been dealt with as that of a member of the Council holding the office of Prime Minister, and has necessitated his having a portfolio. Under the present Bill it is not necessary that the Prime Minister should be designated as holding a specific portfolio. The salary is voted to the office of Prime Minister.

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: Does it not amount to a change in the Constitution—in this way, that under our Canadian Constitution and also under the traditions of the British Constitution the Prime Minister has been looked upon simply as a member of the Cabinet whom the other members have agreed to work with, and who, of course, has been called upon by the King to form a Cabinet? No recognition was given to him as Prime Minister. He accepted a portfolio either as First Lord of the Treasury in England, or in Canada as President of the Council. Now we are going to adopt an altogether different programme, as it were: the Prime Minister is Prime Minister without any other portfolio.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: We recognized him as holding that office. I think it is a distinct improvement in our Constitution.

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: But it is a change.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Yes, to that extent it is a departure.

Hon. Mr. POWER: He has to run an election.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: He need not necessarily do that. He might be a member of this Chamber.

Section 2 was agreed to.

Section 3 was agreed to.

On section 4—provisions applicable to present session:

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: I think we might have a little explanation of this. The first two lines of this section provide that the other regulations in this Bill shall not apply to the indemnity for this particular session. That is to say, the rules and regulations that have applied to the paying of the indemnity heretofore will apply to this session except in so far as the amount of the indemnity and the amount that is to be deducted for absence are concerned.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: The effect of it will be that notwithstanding

the increase of the indemnity the Act as at present upon the statute book, with regard to payments and absences of members, and so on, shall be in operation as if the Act had not been amended, except to the extent of the greater compensation. The difference between \$2,500 and \$4,000 shall apply to this session.

Hon. Mr. BEIQUE: And \$25 instead of \$15 for absence?

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Yes. The deductions will be made as they will be made hereafter; but the Bill permits members who were absent to take advantage of the increased indemnity less the increased deductions to the same extent as if no increase had been made.

Hon. Mr. POWER: Does not the leader of the Government see that there is to a certain extent a contradiction between this provision and the provision in clause 5? The clause we are considering provides that the members shall attend three-quarters of the sitting days, and new section 35 says:

A deduction at the rate of twenty-five dollars per day shall be made from such sessional allowance for every day beyond fifteen on which he is a member, if the House sits on such days.

I do not undertake to say that under that provision a member could get away with the gross indemnity without attending three-quarters of the days. We will say that the session lasts 50 days. Three-quarters of 50 are in round numbers 36. Now, a member attends 22 days, and then he has these 15 days for which he is not penalized under section 35. Is there not some risk that we may get back to the old abuse? I think that, when we are getting so generous an indemnity as is being given by this measure, this provision allowing 15 days to a member on which he does not need to sit should be omitted.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: I think not. The Parliamentary Counsel tells me that that has received every consideration, and that there is every safeguard surrounding it. The introduction into the Bill of a compulsory attendance of three-quarters of the days upon which the House sits will amply protect against that; and likewise there is an additional provision in the last proviso in subsection 1 of new section 35, under which a member must be in his place during the last two weeks of the session.