

arise if in future, "a formal Act would have to be passed - which is always to be avoided if possible - transferring it from the First Minister to some other Minister." (This is indeed, as he imaginatively foresaw, what occurred in 1946, when Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King, wishing to lay down the extra burden of External Affairs, had the Office transferred, by a special Act, to another Minister ~~Mr.~~ L. St. Laurent, succeeded by Mr. L. B. Pearson⁷ But in 1912, Mr. Borden could not anticipate the necessity of this delegation of duties, and chose to retain the portfolio himself.)

In the course of this debate, Mr. Power gave perhaps the best justification of this measure. He said:

The external correspondence of the country must, as a matter of course, come before the Prime Minister; and it is above all things desirable that the correspondence should be, as far as practicable, confidential. Now, under the system which has been in operation during the last two years or so, this correspondence had to pass through three or four hands after leaving the Prime Minister's office. That was objectionable, and I am glad that this Bill proposes to do away with that objection. As to the case of absence of the Prime Minister, I think it is the universal practice that when the Prime Minister is absent from the capital some other hon. gentleman acts as Prime Minister, and of course he would be the acting Prime Minister with respect to this department as well as the department which the Prime Minister for the time being occupies. Then, while there is no doubt that the duties of the Prime Minister are now more engrossing than they were some years ago, still I do not think that, considering that he has to see this correspondence, this Bill is going to impose any very great additional burden on him. ⁽¹⁾

(1) Senate Debates, Jan. 31, 1912 p. 125.