

DEBATE

When this new Amending Bill came before the two Houses for debate, it encountered little opposition. It was, after all, merely a reallocation of portfolios. There was very little discussion in the House of Commons, which read it through its stages and passed it perfunctorily. In the Senate there was a brief discussion on the second reading during the Committee stage, and again on the third reading. Sir Richard Cartwright, Opposition Leader in the Senate, while not objecting to the Bill, expressed the opinion that the Prime Minister was already too busy to be burdened with the duties of the Department. In reply Senator Lougheed and others declared that the importance of the work of the Department made it almost imperative that it should be handled by the Prime Minister.⁽¹⁾

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, by anticipation, while this Bill was under discussion in the Legislature the old controversy over the use of the phrase "conduct of official communications" was revived; but in the outcome no amendment was made and the wording remained in the new Act. Lord Grey, the Governor General, was no longer in office to keep the question active.

Senator Cartwright's reservation against specifically conferring the duties of Secretary of State for External Affairs upon the Prime Minister, without the provision "that at any time, if found expedient, another Minister might be charged with the administration of same", was indeed prescient. He pointed out that, by not including this qualification in the present Act, inconvenience might

⁽¹⁾ Senate Debates. 31 Jan. 1912, pp. 124-5.