

*Employment Commission*

contemplating it carrying out any administrative duties, which this bill evidently intends.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am glad that my right hon. friend has drawn my attention to the matter of administration, because hon. gentlemen opposite seem to imagine or fear an extent of administrative powers being conferred that has never been thought of or intended by the government. The purpose is to give this commission advisory and supervisory powers, not administrative powers as a primary function. It may well be that between now and the next session of parliament some matters may evolve or come to light in connection with which it would be distinctly in the interests of the country to give this body administrative powers of a limited character, for specific purposes. My right hon. friend shakes his head.

Mr. BENNETT: There is no limit in the bill.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: The clause in the bill would enable the government if it saw fit to turn the whole administration of relief over to this body.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Perhaps my right hon. friend will permit me to interpret the measure from the government's point of view. The government have no thought in the world of making this commission an administrative body. All that we have had in mind, including clause No. 7, to which my right hon. friend has drawn attention, is the possibility of some situation unforeseen at the moment, arising where to enable the commission to assume administrative powers would be much in the public interest. If I were asked what administrative powers this commission is to exercise I would have to say to the committee that at the present time I cannot anticipate what they may be.

Mr. BETTS: If I might interrupt; referring to the comparison between the economic council and the present commission I may be wrong but it is clearly in my mind that I heard the Prime Minister state not long ago that he wanted no economic council, that his cabinet was sufficient economic council. Then why is the cabinet insufficient to deal with the present subject?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Perhaps my hon. friend will be courteous enough to allow me to finish the answer which I was in the midst of making to hon. gentlemen in the front benches opposite before I reply to him. I was seeking to reply to the question of my right hon. friend the member for Argenteuil, in

[Sir George Perley.]

regard to the extent of the administrative powers which this commission will have, and was saying that I could not at the moment name the administrative powers which the government intend to give to this commission because the government hope and expect that all that will be necessary for this commission are advisory and supervisory powers in connection with the subject of relief and unemployment. But it may well be that as hon. gentlemen opposite have stressed very often in the course of their remarks, in dealing with a great problem such as that of unemployment, with conditions as they are at the moment, something unforeseen may arise in regard to which it would be a distinct advantage to have in the statute authority by order in council to confer on this commission limited administrative powers. That is the extent to which the government contemplate their possible use by the commission of administrative powers.

This enables me to reply also to the criticism of the leader of the opposition, that there is no difference in principle between action by order in council provided for in this legislation and provision for action by order in council in the legislation provided by hon. gentlemen opposite. Now I think I am stating it correctly, as correctly as my right hon. friend would be able to state it; the extent to which it is proposed to delegate legislative power to the executive constitutes the essence of the difference between hon. gentlemen opposite and ourselves. If it were intended by this legislation to confer, on this commission, through the governor in council, administrative powers of an extensive character, involving the expenditure of public money and the like, I should say that my right hon. friend was wholly justified in criticizing us for doing the very kind of thing which he and hon. gentlemen around him did when they were in office. But there is nothing of the sort intended. The power of the governor in council confers administrative powers on this body as I have indicated, of the most restricted character possible. As was often said by hon. gentlemen opposite, there are very few enactments of parliament which do not contain a clause giving to the governor in council certain powers with respect to the carrying out of the provisions of the act. Those powers are to enable them to carry out what is essential in the way of routine. But that is vastly different from a power which in practice places the executive in the position of the legislative branch of parliament in dealing with public questions, in other words substitutes the executive for the legislature.