

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read the second time.

THIRD READING

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN moved the third reading of the Bill.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I should add one point, which has just been suggested to me by the honourable gentleman from Moose Jaw (Hon. Mr. Ross), namely, that the opportunity time for reduction in a staff is when a member of that staff dies or is pensioned. The Deputy Minister might then examine into his organization and see whether he could not, by rearranging his staff so as to distribute the load, get along without a new appointment.

Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX: It can easily be done.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I was going to express pleasure at the enthusiasm of the honourable gentleman opposite for Civil Service reform, now that he is out of the Government. I know that he realizes what a difficult problem it is. The whole Civil Service situation has appealed to me for a long time as one worthy of a great deal of attention—very rigid and drastic attention—at the hands of governments, but nothing has impressed me so much as the difficulty of handling just that phase of government. The Administration of which my honourable friend was a member did not take very great chances with its popularity in the city of Ottawa by adopting any drastic policy with respect to the Civil Service. The present Administration can at least point to the results of a drastic policy, whether it gets credit for it or not. The conviction within a wide radius of where we stand is that economies have been exercised to the distress of the Civil Service. Certainly I do not think I should be a very successful candidate in the city of Ottawa. Honourable gentlemen opposite who have been in governments decided that in this respect they would not suffer a handicap, and they never did. I admit, of course, that the situation to-day is different. Financial conditions are much more stringent than they were. There has been a great contraction of several departments. The Interior Department, for instance, has been very much reduced.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Have some of the officers of that department who were in charge of the natural resources been transferred to the Western Provinces?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Oh, yes. So far as the Government can promulgate orders, it has not failed to see that persons who have become unnecessary because of a contraction of services are placed first in line for vacancies as they occur. Of course, the machinery of the Civil Service Commission interposes itself at all times, and to that machinery, as the law provides, we must submit. Under it, the permanent heads of departments have more to do with selections and appointments than have the political heads, and they are very fertile in reasons why the person whom they prefer should be appointed, and not someone from somewhere else. However, on the whole, I fancy that those who have been more closely associated with the subject than I have been agree that they have had very good co-operation from many of the permanent heads. All I can say is that I think the people of our country who suffer least in these anguishing times are those in the employ of the Civil Service of Canada or its provinces. I am inclined to think that there has been too much protest on the part of some, at least, by reason of the measure of contraction that has already taken place. I must not sit down, however, without admitting cheerfully that, generally speaking, that contraction of pay has been very well received; and to those who cause me to make the admission I desire to pay tribute.

I do not want what I say to be construed as opposition to what has been said by the honourable senator opposite. I merely regret that it was not given executive force a few years earlier.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: We were then in times of prosperity.

Hon. W. E. FOSTER: May I take a few moments to give my views with respect to a matter which may or may not be involved in the legislation before us, but which is financial in character? I refer to the system, which has come into being very recently, of making loans to the different provinces which have found it necessary to obtain assistance from the Federal Government. The right honourable leader of the House will know that such a practice has come into being in the last year or two on account of the exceptional conditions, and that formerly no province had found it necessary to call upon the Dominion Government for assistance in financing. I think the principle behind such assistance is wrong; that it rather tends to lessen the self-reliance of the provinces in solving their financial problems. I believe that some of the provinces that have found