

reads the Act, that this increase is not a matter of course. It seems to me that the interpretation is, as if the section was read something in this way.

The minimum salary of a first-class clerk shall be \$1,400, with an annual "possible" increase, &c.

It is a fair interpretation of the section to read it as if the word "possible" were there, because it must be controlled by section 26 of the Act, and which reads :

No officer, clerk or employee shall receive any increase of salary except by Order in Council passed on the report of the deputy head, concurred in by the head of the department, stating that such officer, clerk or employee is deserving of such increase.

It follows, therefore, that if there is no such report by the deputy head, approved of by the head of the department, there can be no increase. That report is a condition precedent to the increase being granted. I can easily understand that in a case such as the present, when a new Minister desires to reorganize his department, he might find it well to stop this annual increase. As has been stated by the hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace)—and nobody can deny it—if ever there was a time in the history of the country when economy should be practised, and when if any changes are to take place, salaries should be decreased rather than increased, that time is the present. That rule applies to all professions and all departments just now. If the Minister has to reorganize his department, he must first discover what men are competent and efficient to do the work. If the head of a department who has to take the responsibility for his administration is not to be permitted to make a selection of that kind, it would be very extraordinary indeed. In any mercantile establishment he would have that discretion allowed him, and much more should he be allowed to have it while administering such an important department as the Interior. It seems to me that the House ought, without cavil, to accept the action of the Minister in reference to the increase of salaries, to particular men whom the Minister sees are the best fitted to discharge their duties. I quite agree with what was said this afternoon; that if the whole of the officers of the department were not left without the passing of this Order in Council, which is a condition precedent to the increase, then there might be an invidious distinction which certainly would be objectionable in reference to a class of persons such as compose the civil service of Canada. No one could have greater respect for the members of the civil service as a whole than I have, judging from the intercourse I have had with them during the short time I have been a member of this House. The Government in this case have made no distinction. They state, apparently

Mr. BRITTON.

under the advice of the Minister of Justice, that they have the power, without making any invidious distinction, to say that this increase, this additional increase, provided for by the statute, shall not be given this year, and so without doing the officials any harm—except, of course, the harm of disappointed expectation—they do not give the increase. However, disappointment is quite in order these days for others than the civil servants, and they can hardly find fault, if the Government, in their desire to practice economy, should not ask this House to vote the increases. It is rather fortunate that the statute is so worded as to permit of a reduction all around, or rather to prevent an increase all around, at a time when the country can ill afford it. I hazard the opinion, after carefully reading the Act, that the Government have made a fair interpretation of it. I submit that now is a good time for the Government to avail itself of the provision of the statute, and to practice economy in the right direction.

Mr. HAGGART. No one on this side of the House disputes as to what the law is on the subject. It is not denied that the Government have an option in the matter. Even after the report recommending the increase is made by the deputy head, it has to be approved by the head of the department, and then it requires the sanction of an Order in Council. What we do object to is that the Ministry come here and ask for an increase in excess of the amount specially mentioned in the statute. The Minister and the deputy head of the department are perfectly justified in refusing any increases, as these were not intended to be made annually and perpetually. The increment is only to be granted when the party is deserving, when the deputy recommends it to the head of the department, and when the head of the department recommends it to Council; the Council may refuse to grant the increment. I remember the debate which took place in the House upon the parties who were suspended. Mr. Pereira was one, Mr. Henry was another. In that debate, hon. gentlemen opposite took the ground that these men were not punished sufficiently by a month and a half's deprivation of salary, and that they ought to be dismissed from the service; yet we now find them supporting a Minister who by his action justifies the course of the Government at that time.

Mr. FOSTER. I would like to ask the Minister whether there are any vacancies at the present time?

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. There are no vacancies.

Mr. WOOD (Brockville). I understood that the opinion of the Minister of Justice was to be laid on the Table before this item was declared carried.