

*Judges Act Amendment*

1944 to provide the court with three judges instead of two, but that increase has proved to be insufficient to cope expeditiously with the business coming before the court. It is felt that it is desirable to make all possible efforts to have litigation disposed of in an expeditious manner.

Moreover, it is felt that with one more judge on the court it will be possible to restrict the calls being made on judges of provincial courts to preside over or take part in royal commissions, special boards or other agencies it may become necessary to set up from time to time to deal with matters which cannot come before the courts in the usual way but which require to be considered in the judicial and strictly impartial way that characterizes the work of our courts of justice.

Hon. members have from time to time expressed concern over the fact that, especially during the war, it was considered necessary to take judges away from their ordinary duties and ask them to assume other important functions for the state which it was necessary to have discharged by gentlemen of their calibre and repute. I have always shared that concern. But other functions needed to be discharged, and it seemed to be in the interest of the state that they be discharged by the persons best fitted to convince the public that they were being discharged in an impartial, competent and objective way.

Similar situations will probably continue to arise, but I hope that with an additional judge on the exchequer court bench it will be possible to draw more frequently from that bench and less frequently take from their ordinary judicial duties the judges of the provincial courts.

The second part of the resolution deals with judges' salaries. The salaries now being paid are those which were fixed in 1920. I think it is fair to say that those salaries are only about two-thirds as high as those being paid for like public service in any of the countries where the administration of justice is modelled on the British system. What is proposed here will make some improvement. If we take 100 as the index of the salaries prevailing generally in those countries where the courts are modelled on the British system, our judicial salaries at the present time would rate about 66.

Mr. BRACKEN: What countries does the minister refer to?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The United Kingdom, countries of the British commonwealth and the United States of America all of which

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

have courts modelled more or less on the British system. The provision now being proposed would bring our rate up to about 88. It is suggested that it is time that this should be done. Those hon. members who were here in 1929 will probably remember that this matter received serious consideration at that time, but a depression overtook the country and it was felt that it was not the proper time to consider judicial salaries. Many people consider that this increase is long overdue. For at least twenty years the Canadian bar association has been urging that this matter be dealt with by parliament. The last committee appointed by the Canadian bar association to deal with the matter looks as if it might be a standing committee of this house. Of the six members comprising the committee, one is the hon. member for Vancouver South and another, the hon. member for Lake Centre.

Mr. GREEN: I was not on that committee; I was never called in to any of the committee meetings.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I have a list of the members of the committee and I read: "Howard C. Green, M.P., Rogers Building, Vancouver."

Mr. GREEN: I was never called to a meeting.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I hope other members of the committee have been more active than the hon. member for Vancouver South.

Mr. GREEN: I never even got notice of any meeting.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Perhaps they had such confidence in the Minister of Justice that they did not feel that any further meetings were required since the annual meeting of last summer. Two other members of the committee are the hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Hackett) and the hon. member for St. Antoine-Westmount (Mr. Abbott).

But quite seriously there is no doubt that we are all highly appreciative of the services rendered to the state by the judicial body. The salaries that are being paid at this time are those that were fixed in 1920. Personally I feel that they are out of line, not only with what are the salaries elsewhere, but also with what prevails for salaries and income in our own country. The suggestion is, now that there is being some relaxation in the controls over wages and salaries, that a provision which will come into effect on January 1, 1947, will not be out of line with what will