

On section 11—Remuneration and expenses.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East) moved:

That subsection 2 of section 11 be amended by adding after the word "expenses" in the first line of the subsection the following words "of the commissioner and."

Mr. BENNETT: I think that makes it wrong.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: The remuneration of the commissioner is provided for under section 5.

Mr. BENNETT: This dealt only with the special commissioner.

Mr. ROGERS: Section 5 simply states that:

The commissioner shall be paid such salary as may be from time to time fixed and allowed by the governor in council.

Amendment agreed to.

Section as amended agreed to.

Section 12 agreed to.

On section 13—Offices and equipment.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: I am sorry, but I do not like this clause at all. It looks as though some one were trying to build up a great organization as a special branch of the Department of Labour. I see no possible reason or argument why the commissioner should have offices anywhere else than in Ottawa. If he has in hand an investigation which requires some place in Winnipeg to carry it on, perhaps a room in some building, it surely would be proper for him to engage it and be reimbursed as part of his expenses. But to suggest that there shall be offices— innumerable, if the commissioner so wishes— all over Canada, is extraordinary, and I submit that there is no necessity for this clause. We have had too many examples in governmental administration of officers building up an organization for the purpose of increasing their own importance and spending money unnecessarily. All that a commissioner could ever need when away from Ottawa would be a room, which could be paid for as part of his ordinary expenses. But to set up regular offices—

Mr. BENNETT: Stationery and equipment.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Yes, there is no necessity for it whatever. The offices should be in Ottawa. All the business could be carried on here excepting when, in the case of some particular investigation, the commissioner went to another city.

Mr. ROGERS: This particular section as it appears in the present bill is not new.

Mr. BENNETT: We took it out, deliberately, in 1935.

Mr. ROGERS: It appeared first in the Board of Commerce Act, and was continued in the Combines Act of 1923 and in the revision of 1927. I understand that this section with a number of other sections of an administrative character was omitted from the act of 1935, because the Combines Act was placed under the direct administration of the tariff board. I am informed that actually it has seldom been invoked in the past, and when offices have been opened elsewhere they have been opened temporarily, for the matter of a few weeks. I can assure the house that there is no intention to set up anything in the nature of a permanent organization outside Ottawa. It is quite obvious that there would be no purpose served by doing that. The section is here rather to authorize the setting up of an office which might be needed during a prolonged investigation at a distant point.

Mr. BENNETT: You will observe that the word is "establish."

Mr. CAHAN: A temporary office would be a part of the commissioner's expense.

Mr. BENNETT: It would be part of his job.

Mr. ROGERS: He may:

... establish at any place or places in Canada such office or offices as are required for the discharge of the duties of the commissioner and of any special commissioner under this act, and may provide therefor the necessary accommodation, stationery and equipment.

I do not think there is anything in that which suggests of necessity the setting up of a permanent office. Certainly nothing is further from my own mind.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: The minister's statement confirms me in my opinion. If temporary quarters are required at any place in Canada for the purpose of carrying on an investigation by the commissioner, they can be rented by him and the cost put into his ordinary expenses. There is nothing to prevent that from being done; it is a common practice in business. But this section definitely contemplates permanent offices in other places than Ottawa.

Mr. ROGERS: Would it meet the situation if the word "temporary" were inserted before "such office or offices"?

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Is there not sufficient authority in the bill for the commissioner to rent quarters in Winnipeg or elsewhere temporarily for the purpose of carrying on an investigation and to include the cost in his ordinary expenses?