

terpretation of the existing law and the determination of its effect, the purpose of the Bill is to modify the existing law so as to obviate the possible unfortunate consequences involved in a repetition or renewal of the plebiscites that have been held. On inquiry from the Auditor General I find that about half a million dollars has been paid in connection with those plebiscites, and at that, all the bills have not yet been paid. I mention this to show the gravity of the consequences that are sought to be avoided. I think it should be made clear also that in proposing this legislation it is not to be understood that we are acting because of any change of view on the part of the law officers who advised the drawing of the proclamation as it was drawn. They then were of opinion that it was sufficient, and they are still of that opinion. In that connection I propose to lay on the table of the House for the information of members a copy of the considered opinion of the Deputy Minister of Justice on the subject.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the first time.

#### JUDGE SNIDER'S REPORT

On the Orders of the Day:

Hon. RODOLPHE LEMIEUX (Maison-neuve—Gaspé): May I inquire again whether we may expect the Snider report to be brought down before the close of the session?

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: My hon. friend knows the answer that was given yesterday by the Prime Minister, that he would ascertain whether it could be brought down, if possible, immediately. That is all I know.

#### OPIUM AND NARCOTIC DRUG ACT AMENDMENT

On motion of Hon. J. A. Calder (Minister of Health), the amendments made by the Senate to Bill No. 81, to amend the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act, were concurred in.

#### DOMINION LANDS ACT AMENDMENT

On motion of Hon. J. A. Calder (Minister of Immigration and Colonization), Bill No. 212 (from the Senate) to amend the Dominion Lands Act, was read the second time, and the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Boivin in the Chair.

On section 1—confirmation of appointments before May 24, 1918, by the minister [Mr. Doherty.]

of certain officers to administer the Dominion Lands Act.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: This section, as it reads, looks as if the minister had been making a number of appointments in violation of the Civil Service Act, and that he is now trying to legalize this.

Mr. CALDER: That is exactly what has happened. This Bill is necessary for that purpose. It would appear that between the years 1908 and 1918, that is the date of the present Civil Service Act, the Minister of the Interior had power, through the Governor in Council, of course, to make all appointments in the Outside Service, for the administration of the Dominion Lands Act. We find that, in the case of a number of the appointments made, the appointees reside at Ottawa, and as a matter of fact, such appointments should have been made through the Civil Service Commission. The practice started, I am told, in 1908; it has continued down to 1918, and I think some 260 officials are involved. In working out the administration of the present Civil Service Act, a condition has arisen which makes it practically impossible for the Civil Service Commission to function as regards these appointments, and I understand the Auditor General as well objects to continue paying salaries unless what was done illegally in those days is legalized. That is the purpose of this legislation. Many of these people who have been thus appointed have been in the service a long time, and unless this measure goes through and these appointments are legalized, I scarcely know what can be done with them.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: They are all partisan appointments, I suppose.

Mr. CALDER: Under both Governments.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: They are not new appointments.

Mr. VIEN: Can the minister explain how this could occur, that the minister could override legislation which was enacted for the appointment of these officials by the Civil Service Commission?

Mr. CALDER: It was a practice that grew up, not only in one department, but in several departments. The practice was adopted of making certain appointments to the Outside Service and paying them out of general votes instead of Civil Government votes.