

ernment due to any person. My Bill only provides that moneys due to civil servants and money in the hands of the Government due to any person may be garnisheed, just as in the case of wages payable or money due by ordinary citizens. I think I need not present to the House any reasons why this should be done. Hon. members know that in various parts of the country it has been impossible to compel civil servants to pay their just debts. I do not know exactly how it is in Ottawa, but in the part of the country I come from considerable difficulty has been experienced in that regard, and if reports regarding the position of affairs in Ottawa are correct, I think members will endorse at least the principle of this Bill.

I know there are many difficulties in the way. It will be pointed out that a law of this kind will occasion very great trouble and probably some expense to the Government. But I would answer, that if the Government takes a strong position with regard to officials, very little difficulty need be experienced, and any difficulty that arises will rapidly diminish as years go by. A Bill was passed in the province of Manitoba similar to this, and they have had very little trouble, because, under the rules that have been made, if a civil servant allows his salary to be garnisheed a second time, it is tantamount to his dismissal, for the government will not retain him in office. The province of Ontario has passed an Act of the same kind, and I understand that in the province of Quebec similar steps have been taken.

Since my name has been identified with this Bill, I have received many petitions in favour of its passing. I have here a resolution passed at the regular monthly meeting of the Montreal Grocers' Association, on February 4th, 1897, which reads :

That the secretary prepare a petition praying the Federal Government to amend the law in order that a certain proportion of the salaries of the civil service employees may be made attachable for just debt, and have same distributed for signature by all traders.

I have also before me the petition of the Hamilton Grocers' Association, very largely signed indeed. The petition sets forth :

That by the existing law the salaries of civil service employees are exempt from garnishee for just debt.

Wherefore, your petitioners respectfully request you to amend the law allowing a portion of the salaries of civil service employees to become attachable for just debt.

I understand that considerable difficulty has been experienced in reference to this very question in the United States, and it has been pointed out to me that the difficulty has been dealt with by resolution of the government, that any civil servant permitting his salary to be garnisheed shall be promptly dismissed. As I know that difficulties will be pointed out in relation to this

Bill, I desire to have the measure brought before a Committee of the Whole House, so that there may be the fullest possible discussion, and the country thus may know exactly how the Government and members of this House feel upon the subject. My Bill may not be as perfect as it ought to be, but I hope that, with the maturest discussion on the subject, we shall be able to frame a measure that will effectually cover the ground.

It is not my desire that the Bill shall be retroactive. I do not think that we should go into questions of past debts : but if the civil service has due notice before the Bill is brought into force, that any debts contracted in future will be attachable, I think that is as far as we ought to go. I would invite the fullest discussion on the Bill.

Mr. FORTIN. I understand, that the object of the Bill is twofold, the first being to declare that all moneys due by the Crown shall be attachable, as if such moneys were due by private parties. So far as that is concerned, I can hardly see any objection. It seems to me that there is no reason why moneys due by the Crown to contractors, or for indemnities in cases of accidents on Government railways, or otherwise, should not be seizable, as if they were due by ordinary individuals, after judgment duly rendered by a competent court. The second object of the Bill, as I understand it, is to allow the salaries due to public officers to be attached. The Bill, as framed, would render the full salary in the hands of the Government seizable by garnishment. Now, with the principle of the Bill I entirely agree. It seems to me that there is no reason why public officers should not be compelled to pay their just debts, as ordinary citizens are. If we are to judge of the value of public office by the number of applicants, by the number of office-seekers, we may fairly conclude that public office offers fair emolument, that the salaries paid by the Crown to these officers are such as to enable the recipients of them to live well, to have sufficient to pay their legitimate debts, like ordinary citizens. As the law stands in the province of Quebec, the wages of a workingman or labourer can be attached for debt, but the amount attachable is limited to one-quarter of the amount of his wages. A labourer earning \$1, \$1.50 or \$2, is liable to have his wages seized to the extent of one-quarter of that amount. In the case of officers of the Dominion Government, not one single cent of their salaries can be attached by garnishment. Now, this is a state of things that seems to me scandalous to a certain extent. There are officials of the Dominion Government in the various provinces, earning very big salaries. I know some who earn as high as \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year. They live extravagantly, most of them, buying wherever they can obtain credit, and never paying a single cent to their legitimate creditors, if