

SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS  
ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READINGS.

A message was received from the House of Commons with Bill (151) 'An Act to amend the Act respecting the Senate and the House of Commons.'

Hon. Mr. SCOTT moved the second reading of the Bill.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read the second time.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT moved that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on the Bill.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—I desire, more particularly with reference to this Bill, to express my regret that the government have not seen proper to consider the whole question affecting the indemnity. I do not hesitate to say that the present terms of the Bill enable members—I will not say to abuse the provisions of the Bill, but enable members to take an advantage of the wording of the Bill which was never contemplated. For instance, members of both Houses may come here at the opening of the session and remain constantly attending to their duties to the best of their ability until prorogation, whether the session lasts three months or six months. There are others who come at the beginning of the session, answer to their names, and come occasionally afterwards, and then they are entitled to draw the indemnity for every holiday and every day on which the House does not sit. Then there is another difficulty which arose between the Auditor General and some gentlemen living in the maritime provinces, as to the route which they should take in travelling to and from the capital. Those who travelled by the longest route considered they had a perfect right to do so, and I am not so sure that, under the law, they had not the right, but the wording of the law is, as I understand it, that they should take the shortest route. The shortest route is through a foreign country and circumstances might arise which would render it not only unsafe, but impolitic to travel through that foreign country in connection with their duties in parliament. This is a point that ought to be settled beyond a doubt so that there should be no dispute between any

member who conscientiously claims his money, and the Auditor General who thinks proper to take another view of the law. I hope the Minister of Justice and the members of the government will consider this matter before next session, so as to make the provision that unless a member of either House attend at least thirty days, as provided in that law, he should not be entitled to the full indemnity, but that there should be a deduction for the number of days that he is absent.

Hon. Mr. McMILLAN—Thirty sitting days?

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Yes, that is what I mean; that would prevent abuses which might exist under the present law, which gives a member a perfect right to draw his indemnity as I have indicated has been done. I know it was a crying evil in the Lower House when I was a member there, and I speak from my own experience, and I think there are very few members—I say it who should not, who attend more regularly than I have done.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Hear, hear.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—My hon. friend sitting opposite me (Mr. Mills) occupies a similar position. I have been absent this session four days, and with the exception of one session, in which I had to go to Southern California, unfortunately for me, for certain purposes, four days is the most time I have lost in any one session during thirty-one years I have been in parliament. I do not boast of that. It was my duty to attend. I do not object to other people not coming, if their business keeps them away, or if they desire to stop away. What I object to is that they should have all the advantages accruing to those who attend regularly to their duties in parliament. There are plenty of gentlemen in the Senate and House of Commons whose business would not permit their being here all the time. They have to look after business or family affairs, and if the law gives them the indemnity, they are entitled to take it. I think the law should not give it. I speak as plainly as I can on this question, and I think the Minister of Justice is fully in accord with the sentiments I have uttered, I hope next session he will be prepared to so amend the law as to pre-