

*The Address—Mr. Mackenzie King*

two years we did not lose a single seat we formerly held. My hon. friend says that at some previous time I stated that there was no great significance to be attached to the return of a minister by acclamation. I do not recall the occasion he refers to, but I venture to say that if I made such a remark it related to the return of a minister immediately after the time at which the government was formed.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Oh, no.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Not after it had been in office, not after it had been challenged over and over again by the opposition, not after it had been told that it had not the confidence of the people of the country. My right hon. friend was denouncing this government in the different provinces, but we brought on a bye-election in Ontario, and he did not oppose the minister, who was returned by acclamation. We brought on a by-election in Nova Scotia; he did not oppose the minister and he was returned by acclamation. We brought on another by-election in Manitoba, and though our minister was opposed he was returned to this House by a large majority. We brought on another election the other day in Quebec, and the minister was returned to this House by acclamation and took his seat to-day.

Mr. BUREAU: He was opposed in the province of Quebec by the hon. leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes, after my hon. friend had toured from one end of the province to the other. With regard to the two by-elections which my hon. friend refers to, I think he knows as well as I do the circumstances which accounted for the defeat in those two cases. I think the House is well aware, and I think the hon. gentleman is well aware, that the only questions that were discussed in those by-elections were local questions, except where appeals were made, as they were made by my hon. friend from St. John (Mr. Baxter) of a sectional character—sectional appeals to one part of the country, setting it over against the other. That was the kind of appeal which my right hon. friends opposite made, but beyond that, the by-election had no significance whatever. We have taken the stand with respect to the laws of the country as we found them, that we would seek to administer them without fear and without favour. When we came into office we found, so far as the administration of public affairs was concerned, that to a considerable extent our hands were tied by the Civil Service

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Commission, which controls all appointments, which put into office whomever they pleased, without the government of the day having a voice one way or the other. The people of this country have not yet come to understand the meaning of that form of administration of public affairs. I am not going to debate to-night the wisdom of the Civil Service Commission carried on within certain limits and in accordance with certain principles, but I say this—and every member of the House knows it—that among the government's following from one end of the country to the other, the fact that many of those who had been bitterly opposed to the government, men who have been prominent in Tory circles, have been given political appointments under the Civil Service administration, has created dissatisfaction with the government from one end of the country to the other. More than that, as my right hon. friend knows, when we took office we said, with respect to the National railways, that we would divorce their control and management from politics. We selected a man in whom we had great confidence and made him president of the system. We gave him a board of directors to associate with him in the management, and we told him that they were to have a free hand in the administration of the railway. We believed the only way to test the wisdom of the system of national ownership was to give it a fair trial. I have taken very strong grounds on that personally. I have refused absolutely—and hon. members on this side of the House will bear me out in this statement—to listen to any appeal in any way to interfere with the control of the national railway system by the president and board of directors. I have told the president and directors that it was for them to administer the railway without fear or favour. In their endeavour to consolidate, to effect economies, in their endeavours in every way to safeguard the interests of the public, they have made changes in some parts of the Maritime provinces which have affected a large number of the citizens there. The government has been held responsible for that, though we have had nothing to do with the changes, and one effect of the changes which have been made in the Maritime provinces, under the direction of the present administration of the railway, has been a certain discontent amongst some of the government's followers, which has been reflected in part in the results of the by-elections. I think it is only fair that the country should know that. Instead of being condemned for our action, we are entitled to the confidence