

powerful interests, that they will come to constitute, as compared with others, a very large section of the membership of the house. In other words, we shall have a privileged class here at a time when the world is doing the best it can—in perhaps the worst possible way—to get rid of a lot of privilege and to recognize that there is a certain equality in men regardless of the particular class to which they may belong, or their particular calling.

There is another danger, and that is that we shall have men elected to this House of Commons who, through the inability to secure a different type of candidate, would not be able to earn an income outside of parliament comparable with that which would be secured to them by an indemnity, or coming here, may I say, under obligation, some of them, to corporations, others to special interests, but not free agents.

I feel that that is a very dangerous thing for the independence of parliament. I look upon the payment made to members of parliament in the form of an indemnity, as I have said, as something to secure the independence of parliament and the independence of members of parliament, and if part of that is taken away in taxation, then the purpose for which the indemnity exists is to that extent defeated.

Mr. Lloyd George made the following statement:

But even now, membership of this house is very largely confined to four classes, apart from the other classes I shall point out later on. Men of means who have got an unearned income, and barristers with their practice in the London courts are members.

Then there are those in well-organized and well-established businesses who have efficient, and, what is even more important, accommodating partners. Then there is another class who are "something in the city."

The demand of the democracy is really for a free choice of doctors. Instead of confining as it were, those who were able to remedy their evils and cure them to a small class, they say, "We want an unlimited choice in picking out the men who will suit us best." It is the same argument we had last week. This demand can only be met in two ways. The first is by raising funds in connection with some great national agitation, or an agrarian agitation, or a labour agitation, which would enable members connected with the movement to be more or less adequately maintained during the time they are attending to the business of that movement. The second is by the organization of capital and labour, whose business is liable to be affected by legislation. These are the only two classes outside the four I have mentioned who offer any source of opening for democratic representation in the house, and both of them, in my opinion, are open to serious objection. One objection is that when the fervour of the agitation dies down, and when you come to humdrum parliamentary work, it is difficult to keep up the funds. Another

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

objection is that I do not think it is desirable—and I agree here with my hon. friend the member for Leicester (Mr. Ramsay Macdonald)—that any man should come here to represent any organization except his own constituency, I do not care whether it is a trade union organization or any other organization.

A man ought to be here to represent the general interests of his constituents, and it is only the necessities of the case which drive a man as an expedient, as the only alternative, as the only opening, to utilize the other method in order to come here to fight for particular interests, and I do not mean to say that I have not seen some of my hon. friends representing trade unions rather than the general interests of labour. That has been my view. But there is one thing in connection with the payment of members—it makes them not merely trade representatives, but representatives of constituents as a whole.

Then he makes this important statement which I think is correct:

When we offer £400 a year—

This was away back in 1911.

—as payment of members of parliament, it is not a recognition of the magnitude of the service, it is not a remuneration, it is not a recompense, it is not even a salary. It is just an allowance, and I think the minimum allowance, to enable men to come here, the men who would render incalculable service to the state, and who it is an incalculable loss to the state not to have here, but who cannot be here because their means do not allow it. It is purely an allowance to enable us to open the door to great and honourable public service to these men, for whom this country will be all the richer, all the greater, and all the stronger for the unknown vicissitudes which it has to face by having here to aid us by their counsel, by their courage and by their resource.

I have had some knowledge of this House of Commons for many years, and I wish to say that nothing causes me more anxiety at the moment than the risk which this country is running of losing from this House of Commons many of its present members at the next general election, not that they are going to be defeated, not that they would not be elected if they were to run again, but because they are unwilling again to become candidates and this only because they find that with the indemnity taxed along with the taxation on their incomes they cannot make ends meet; they cannot maintain their independence. I feel it my duty as a citizen of Canada, as a member of this House of Commons and as the leader of the government to say what I feel concerning the necessity of maintaining the independence of members, and how important it is to get into this House of Commons the best class of men and women constituencies can possibly secure as candidates, and to retain for the house what it has in the way of valuable experience on the part of members who have been here over a period of time. I say that