

ment is to avoid congestion during organization.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: What department does the commission report to?

Mr. ROWELL: Directly to the Prime Minister.

Mr. McKENZIE: Will this commission come under the new Civil Service Act that we hear so much about?

Mr. ROWELL: Yes.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. McKENZIE: The minister in his closing speech before we divided on this question was very strong in stating that there is no purchasing power in this commission except as it receives requisitions. I think he is mistaken. This section 6 gives the commission absolute power to buy everything, and it can secure a warehouse and store millions of dollars of goods in it for distribution to the different departments as requisitions are filed. The only restriction of that power seems to be in section 14:

The commission shall not, without the approval of the Governor in Council, purchase or agree to purchase any supplies except such as are included in estimates or requisitions sent to the commission by the various portions of the public service.

That is no restriction at all. If the commission comes to the Governor in Council and says that it wants to buy large quantities of goods, the Governor in Council are not very likely to constitute themselves judges as to whether the commission should make those purchases or not. Therefore apparently section 6 gives this body absolute and unrestricted power for the purchase of whatever it may require—and as far as using it as an engine for patronage is concerned, it is the worst that was ever introduced into this country.

The fact that what was spread over eighteen or nineteen departments, and was not as strong as it might be on that account, is now given greater force, greater strength, greater momentum, so to speak, by being organized into one department. This is an organized system of patronage, and it will be exercised as such. To a person like myself, who is up against these things every day and knows what is going on, it is laughable—or is it not rather sad?—to hear men who are, no doubt, honest, say that there is no patronage. Why, patronage in connection with Government business is just as it always was. And now we are going to have an institution that will have power to exercise patronage wherever it wants to. If tremendously big

[Mr. Rowell.]

purchases are had in mind; if it is deemed necessary to have rake-offs, corruption, bribery, this is the institution where these things can come in. There is no check on these men, except that of their being supposed to go through the formality of getting the permission of the Government for the purchase of supplies. The member for Antigonish and Guysborough (Mr. Sinclair) has given us an instance of what

11 p.m. is going on in this Department now. They destroyed what was known as the patronage list, but they have substituted something else that is just as effective—a system of “selection.” What is the difference between calling a newspaper a “selected newspaper” and putting its name on a “patronage list”? The only difference is that the man who is exercising the patronage may have to make out new lists very frequently—or he may be told to use the old list.

We are told that there is no patronage now in the Civil Service. I admit that the conditions are a little better now as regards to the appointment of returned soldiers, but before that element came in we had nothing but the old-time, hard-and-fast party patronage system. I had two cases last year in my own county. A customs officer and a postmaster had to be appointed, and two of the most ardent Tories in the district were selected for these positions. If that was a coincidence, it was a remarkable one. The same thing has been going on throughout the whole of my county. There is a letter on file in the office of the Civil Service Commission which I wrote in connection with these two positions. I said, in a communication to the Chairman: “Both officials who occupied these positions were Tories. I will give you the names of two men, one a Liberal and the other a Tory, and I think it is fair that you should appoint these men.” I may add that I was recommending the Tory for the better position of the two. But my recommendation was absolutely ignored, and two of the choicest brand of Tories were appointed. The minister will excuse me if I have no faith in these professions of the non-existence of patronage. Patronage is being exercised everywhere, and will continue to be exercised; it cannot be otherwise under present conditions. We know that two of the present members of the Civil Service Commission are tried and trained Tories. Nobody need tell me that these men are not taking the advice of their friends in different parts of the country as to whom they should appoint. That explains how they got the two men from Bras d’Or in Victoria