

Penitentiary Act

the constables are selected for the mounted police force. There is no political patronage in connection with the choice of constables for that force, and I think every hon. member will agree with that statement. If I know of a man who in my opinion would make a good constable in the mounted police force, I would simply tell him to go to the office of the commissioner on Rideau street and be examined. The examination is very careful both as to the physical condition and mental capacity of the applicant. Appointments are made entirely upon merit and there is no political patronage whatever. There will be no political patronage in the appointment of officers and guards of the penitentiaries as provided for by this bill. The hon. member for Ottawa has the civil service particularly under his care, and has to get up and object to this bill on general principles.

Mr. CHEVRIER: Not particularly.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: As to the wisdom of the Civil Service Act, I am entirely in accord with my hon. friend.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I may be the minister representing the civil service.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Perhaps when my hon. friend's party gets into power he may be a new minister of civil service.

Mr. McINTOSH: Do you think he has a good reputation?

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: There are a great many hon. members on the other side who are particularly careful about the civil service now that they are in opposition.

What we are asking is that the guards and officers in the penitentiary force shall be chosen on merit. The Civil Service Commission does not have an opportunity of inspecting applicants and making their personal acquaintance as could be done by the superintendent or whoever is given authority by him to select these men. The penitentiary guards are really a quasi-military force, somewhat similar to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I do not consider that the altering of the present system of appointing these guards and other officers can be considered as an attack upon the merit system. With appointments being made to this very important service in the manner provided for by this bill there would be more surety of obtaining those qualified for the positions. The appointments would be made without political partisanship of any kind.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING
(Leader of the Opposition): The speech

[Sir George Perley.]

just made by my right hon. friend, the hon. minister who is member for Argenteuil (Sir George Perley) is very similar to the one made by the hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Guthrie) during the debate upon the resolution. At that time there were some hon. members on this side who were inclined to support the minister in what he was proposing as far as the appointment of guards, wardens and superintendent of the penitentiaries was concerned. If the bill did not go any further than that—

Mr. GUTHRIE: If we could get the bill into committee we could discuss the details.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I should like to finish first what I have to say. If the bill did not go any further than that I imagine many hon. members on this side would, in view of the special circumstances mentioned by the minister, be agreeable to the government having the special powers which it is asking for in this bill. The former Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) has however pointed out that while this bill seeks to remove the superintendent, the wardens, the deputy wardens and guards from the control of the civil service, it seeks also to take out from that control practically the entire staff of the penitentiaries branch of the Department of Justice. One section of the bill provides that the governor in council may appoint inspectors, wardens, deputy wardens and other officers and in addition, such officers, clerks and employees as are necessary for the proper conduct of the business of the penitentiaries branch of the Department of Justice. These last mentioned employees are not upon the staffs of the penitentiaries; they are in the penitentiaries branch of the Department of Justice. Unless the minister has his bill amended in these particulars, all these clerks and officials, including a purchasing agent, will be taken out from under the control of the commission. The bill provides also that the governor in council shall approve the salaries to be paid to these different officials. These clerks and officials are similar to the clerks and officials in other departments of the public service, and there is no more reason why they should be taken out from under the provisions of the Civil Service Act, upon special or other grounds, than there is for taking out from under the provisions of that act the officials of the Department of National Defence, the Department of Railways and Canals, the Department of Trade and Commerce or any other department of the public service. If my right hon. friend has been speaking on behalf of the ministry of which