

Having said that much, I concede that there are many absurdities in the so-called merit system. As pointed out by the hon. member for Témiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) I did when I was chairman of the civil service committee, realize the absurdity of attempting to select floor sweepers and window cleaners and truck men on any so-called merit system and competitive examination basis. I want to be frank and say that much of the report which I as chairman moved in the house in 1932 did not contain my views in their entirety with respect to the civil service. In order to obtain unanimity in the committee there had to be a considerable amount of give and take, and in the long run my job as chairman was to present not my own views but those of the majority of the committee.

So far as the civil service commission itself is concerned, I am confident that they are making a real effort to carry out the job which this parliament has assigned to them. But when you assign to them the job of selecting people for minor positions involving manual labour, I think it is a huge joke to fill these positions on a competitive merit basis.

I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether my hon. friend from Témiscouata intended to convey in his remarks his opposition to non-partisan appointments for civil service positions in general. If he did I must say that I do not subscribe to that policy. It is a great blessing that we have not in force in the Dominion of Canada a patronage system without any qualification attachments thereto, and I for one shall not advocate such a system. But I am free to say that many improvements might be made in the system which now prevails, particularly in two respects: (1) Eliminate from the so-called merit system minor positions where physical effort and physical labour are required; and (2) change the whole basis of examination for many of the minor positions in the civil service in respect of which examination now prevails.

Mr. ANGUS MacINNIS (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I have I think been on every special civil service committee that has been appointed by the House of Commons since 1930. I sat on the committee last year, and I am rather sorry to hear the hon. member for Témiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) say many of the things he did this afternoon. It was reminiscent of some of the committee's meetings last year. I think he will agree with me that after the committee had had a number of sittings and said a number of things, some

[Mr. Lawson.]

of which I think should not have been said, we got down to business and I believe did some very good work.

I was also sorry to hear the hon. member for Témiscouata make certain references to employees under the civil service commission. I do not think the evidence given by these persons when they appeared before the committee last year bears out the statements that he made in regard to them to-day. If there was anything that stood out in the committee last year it was that these employees demonstrated to the committee that they were fully qualified to deal with the matters with which they were called upon to deal.

I do hope that when this year's committee is organized and gets down to work we shall give our attention wholly and solely to matters with which it is necessary to deal in order to have the civil service function in the best possible way. I have too much respect for the business instincts and business ability of most members of the cabinet to think for one moment that they are not in favour of the merit system, and of appointments to the civil service being made on the basis of ability and merit. The patronage system would make their work even more difficult than it is to-day, and we must all admit that it is difficult enough as it is.

The hon. member for York South (Mr. Lawson) referred to the great blessing of not having an absolutely unqualified patronage system. Now if it is a blessing to have a merit system, even if it is not a complete one, if we have a good system through having eliminated a great deal of patronage, surely we could have a better system if we eliminated all patronage. That is a matter which the committee can go into this year. Before I sit down I must again say that I deeply regret that the hon. member for Témiscouata made the references he did in his remarks to-day to certain members of the civil service.

Mr. C. B. HOWARD (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to detain the house on this question at the present time. I am entirely in favour of setting up a special committee on the civil service this year, as there are certain defects in the present system which I think it is important to remedy and in respect to which I hope the committee now to be appointed will recommend appropriate action.

On the question of patronage I would say to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth) that I cannot see that it would be worse to place the patronage in the hands of the elected representatives of