

*Partisanship*

stant, and which I think is of public interest as relating to public affairs. This is the despatch:

Toronto, Feb. 13.—Charges of political partisanship against certain employees of the Dominion government in Ontario are to be proved.

I believe that must be a misprint for "probed."

Mr. COPP: There should be no trouble to prove it.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: The report continues:

Thomas R. Mayberry, of Ingersoll, Ont., has been appointed as commissioner to conduct the investigation. His appointment has been officially gazetted.

I would ask if the substance of this despatch is correct, as the commissioner happens to be a resident of my constituency. Might I also ask, who are the officials against whom the charges have been preferred; and if one, Duncan Marshall, an official of the government who delivered an address at a political gathering in my riding in June last, is among those so charged?

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the practice the government has adopted with respect to any charges of political partisanship against members of the civil service has been to proceed very guardedly, taking care to see that the charge is proved in a manner to which no exception can be taken, before permitting dismissal of the person offending. In that connection the government has followed the precedent adopted by previous governments of appointing commissioners to investigate such charges where there appear to be substantial reasons for believing that they are well founded. I believe Colonel Mayberry has been appointed a commissioner to investigate some charges of political partisanship. Who are the parties concerned I am unable to say at the moment, but I can probably get that information for my hon. friend. He mentions one name that I do not recall as being among the number affected.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Perhaps the Prime Minister will explain why there is such a multitude of exceptions to the rule which he says has been adopted, and why so many have been dismissed without any charges being preferred against them to their knowledge, and without any pretence of investigation.

Mr. BUREAU: There are precedents by the thousand.

[Mr. Sutherland.]

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: In some cases charges have been preferred against certain officials by hon. members of this House. Where an hon. member has been prepared to state to the House that of his own knowledge an offence contravening the provisions of the Civil Service Act respecting political partisanship has been committed, the government has acted under the provisions of the Civil Service Act, which provide that a civil servant guilty of political partisanship shall not be retained in the service. I think that list will cover any of the dismissals to which my right hon. friend has referred.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I presume that that list would cover practically every case, because the statement from any member that a man has been guilty of political partisanship is not very hard to secure from a partisan supporter.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I did not say a statement from any member. I said a statement from an hon. member of this House that of his own knowledge a civil servant had been guilty of a certain offence which was in the opinion of the government sufficient to warrant his dismissal under the provisions of the Civil Service Act.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That of course will apply in future to members of the House on all sides?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Undoubtedly. It always has.

Mr. BUREAU: I make an exception in regard to the Customs department. I will not take any notorious recommendations.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Resign!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

Mr. BUREAU: Say out loud what you want to do. Don't do it behind closed doors.

Mr. SUTHERLAND: The Chairman of the meeting, who is a member of the Liberal executive of the province of Ontario stated that the party referred to by me was asked by Premier King to appear and address this Liberal picnic on his behalf.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I have no recollection of having asked anyone to appear at a picnic, and I do not think I did. But I would say to my hon. friend that in regard to any matter deserving discussion here it is well not to base his information entirely on a press report.