

way Commissioners and the president of the exchequer court shall prepare a list from which the appointments would be made. It seems to me that that is as far as you can hope to get if there is an earnest desire to eliminate purely political factors. I think the view of those who are responsible was that if we could we would remove temptation which might arise from the desire of those who felt they had claims upon the government to have such claims recognized by appointment to such a position as this. It is true that the government has a majority but if a substantial body of this committee is of the opinion that the panel system as indicated in this bill is not desirable, we are not concerned about it. However, I want to put it fairly to the committee.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I submit that my right hon. friend has used a phrase which hardly describes the situation accurately. He asks whether it is desirable to have future appointments made by a political party. I submit that what he should have asked was whether it was desired to have future appointments made by the government of the day. It is the government and not political parties that makes appointments and the government of the day is the one body to which the people have a right to look for appointments. What the complexion of the government of the day may be rests entirely with the people of the country and it seems to me that their voices should be heeded in these matters. I must say that I think it is a very unfair reflection for the Prime Minister to make when he assumes that, when any political party comes into office its members are not going to be actuated by motives quite as high as those which have actuated the government of which he himself is the head. I said the other day quite frankly that we all agreed with the Prime Minister in his view that it was difficult enough to obtain for those high positions men who were equal to the task and that if such persons were secured any government, it seemed to me, would be only too pleased to retain them in office; there would not be any desire to change them. I think that is quite true. I say to my right hon. friend that I believe we might well agree that all governments will be actuated by motives equally honourable, that the obligation upon one government should be just the same as upon another, and that full responsibility should go with office in the matter either of retaining those who may in part be administering the nation's affairs or in replacing them. The

[Mr. Bennett.]

government cannot free itself from that responsibility, and the only way in which it can properly be held responsible is by leaving it free to act as it thinks best.

As regards this panel, I do not think it amounts to anything; it is a mere sham, a mere pretence and for that reason it is worse than nothing. No one will believe that appointments are being made as a result of a non-political panel when those who are filling the offices that are named as those of the persons to select the panel, have all been appointees of one political party. Apart from that altogether, I submit that the president of the exchequer court, however able he may be, does not begin to have the same knowledge of the persons best equipped for the position of trustee of railway, that members of a government have. I do not see why a government should give to some group, inferior to itself, the responsibility of making what perhaps would be the most important of all the appointments to be made. I would ask that, so far as possible, the fundamental principle of ministerial responsibility be observed in these appointments.

Mr. BENNETT: I wonder whether the right hon. gentleman realizes that by his observations in the last part of his speech he contradicted the first part of it and he used exact words in contradiction. He said that appointees were the appointees of the government; then he said that the two, who would have to be half of the four, are appointees of one political party. Which does he mean? The first or the last? If he means the first, then he separates the government from a political party. If he means the last, he and I are wholly in agreement. He said that he thought I was reflecting upon the honourable capacity of governments to make selections. I was pointing out that governments selected those who generally supported their political party. The words he used were that the two would be appointees of one political party and that they would select as additions to the board men who were in accord with their party. It was in order to prevent that, if possible, that this provision was inserted. It is in order to provide that by the joint selection of four men a panel might be prepared that would not necessarily be merely the selections of one political party. It is always well to discuss practical matters in a practical way. I could cite as an outstanding illustration of what I mean the commission that constructed the National Transcontinental. It was a political commission.

Mr. MALCOLM: Certainly.