

provinces, and I protested against men being dismissed because of their political activities. While I believe there are limits beyond which a public servant should not go in his capacity as a citizen, still every citizen ought to be permitted to hold whatever political and religious opinions he desires. Political patronage tends to prevent that being done and helps to discredit our democratic institutions.

Hon. FERNAND RINFRET (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I admit candidly that it was not the intention of the government to precipitate a debate this afternoon on civil service matters; the desire was merely to obtain the assent of the house to reviving the committee which I think accomplished excellent work last year. It was thought desirable to continue the work of this committee during the present session. I would point out that one of the reasons why the government is recommending this to the house was the first recommendation made by the committee in its report to the house last session. This recommendation reads:

1. Your committee deems it expedient and in the interest of the public, the civil service and the civil service commission that a standing committee on civil service matters be appointed at the commencement of each session of parliament, and therefore recommends to parliament that standing order 63 be amended by adding after clause (k) of said order, the following clause (l): "on civil service matters to consist of fifteen members, nine of whom shall constitute a quorum."

We were not quite ready to recommend the appointment of a standing committee, and we thought the next best thing would be to recommend the reconstitution of this committee. In our opinion it had not completed its work, and we thought that during the present session it might serve the purpose recommended. We did not feel that the membership of the committee should be reduced to fifteen. I think it is desirable that on a committee to deal with civil service matters all parties, provinces and groups should be represented. After discussing the matter with the Liberal whip, who had been in touch with the whips of the other groups, I came to the conclusion that a committee on civil service matters should consist of twenty-five members. The representation of certain groups would be reduced considerably, if they had any representation at all, with a committee of only fifteen members. If the committee to be reconstituted should renew the recommendation of the previous committee for the setting up of a standing committee on civil service matters, I suggest that consideration should be given to whether the limiting of the membership of such a com-

mittee to fifteen would not be a mistake. I would point out to hon. members that there was no time last session to consider the report submitted by the committee. The report was submitted on June 29 and, as all hon. members know, parliament prorogued two days later. Without prolonging the session there was no opportunity for a careful consideration of the report, much less for taking any action in connection with it.

During the recess I have had several interviews with the chairman of the civil service commission. He pointed out to me that of the twenty-five recommendations made by the committee, only five would require parliamentary or legislative action in order that they might be implemented. In most instances a change in regulations would bring about the purposes sought by the committee. I was told that the civil service commission had given study to this matter and had carried out a number of the recommendations made by the committee. In all fairness I think I should state that the former chairman of the committee took the stand when I met him that this was an optimistic statement, and that the commission had not carried out the recommendations to the extent mentioned.

I believe it should be one of the first duties of the new committee to call in representatives of the civil service commission, possibly the chairman, to find out exactly what action the commission has taken in connection with the recommendations which could be carried out by regulation. I must say also it has been suggested to me that two of the points raised in the report should be submitted to the committee dealing with superannuation because of its connection with this work. One of the recommendations is in regard to the eighty per cent of permanent employees in the different departments. It has been pointed out to me that if the present regulation were done away with, for which course quite a number of members have expressed a desire, this would add materially to the charges on the superannuation fund. The other recommendation is in regard to the age limit of sixty-five years.

I do not intend this afternoon to discuss any of these points. Although I respect your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I take the stand personally that the motion at present under consideration is to relieve the house of the discussion of many of the points which have been brought up this afternoon, and I propose to leave them for the committee to deal with. I merely remind the house that we have already in the civil service a regulation whereby a civil servant is not supposed to serve after sixty-five years of age. The recommendation