

Commission, is he referring to the commission under the act of 1908 or under that of 1918?

Mr. POWER: I am afraid I did not make myself quite clear. The Civil Service Commission was created in 1908—my hon. friend is quite right; but the exceptional powers which it received in 1918 are those to which I object. I was saying that this commission is under no obligation to accept even the slightest recommendation from those who are in the best position to know the wishes of the people and to state what in any locality under any given circumstances should be done. The commission goes even further, as do its friends, and contend that no recommendation of the people's representatives can be acceptable to it—a contention in which they take great pride. As I understand it, we have been called here to advise His Majesty the King on the carrying out of the affairs of state and to vote supplies for the administration of the country. When we by our own act neglect to carry out the duties which are imposed on us by our mandate as members of parliament, I do not think we are faithful to the trust which has been placed in us by the constituents whom we represent. We allow an independent body to usurp the functions which should, properly speaking, belong to those who advise in the administration of the country and those who should vote supplies for the carrying on of the government of the country.

It is true there are a number of us who say we do not wish to be bothered by patronage; that we only make enemies by distributing patronage; that if we give a position to one we offend ten others who are seeking the same position. I submit, Sir, with all respect that we are not doing our duty unless we fearlessly tackle all the problems which confront us. To shirk our responsibility by saying that we do not wish to have the burden of patronage is, to my mind, unworthy of our position.

It will be said, I think, during the course of this debate that the present act, the Act of 1919, was endorsed by the electorate of Canada on two occasions. Sir, I think you and any of those who took part in the election of 1917 will readily admit that other issues were involved; that public opinion was more agitated by other questions than it was by those which had reference to the Civil Service of Canada. It will be said, perhaps, that the 1921 election was an endorsement of the Civil Service Act of 1919. Permit me to recall to your memory, Sir, the fact that during the whole course of that

election the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and his colleagues appealed to the people from every platform throughout the length and the breadth of the land to free them from autocratic and bureaucratic control. To my mind it was due in large measure to those appeals, and to the fact that there was in Canada a reaction against the arbitrary methods of ruling which had been employed during the war and shortly after, that the Liberal party is in power today.

The present system of making appointments under the Civil Service Commission is, as I have said, impracticable. I should like to quote a few words spoken by a man who is, without doubt, one of those most experienced in the public life of Canada. In a speech which he made when this 1918 act was first proposed in the House of Commons—a speech which might have been made after instead of before the advent of the present commission—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding, speaking on the Civil Service Amendment Act, on April 12, 1918, said:

I think we are getting away from the purpose for which the Civil Service Commission was created. It was never intended to be a patronage distributing body, but a body with distinct purposes, a body to hold examinations and to take means of guaranteeing the qualifications of applicants for the public service.

He goes on further:

Where is the Civil Service Commission going to get information regarding all the virtues of this man who is to fill the office of postmaster away out at Blankville, in Cape Breton County? I do not know what the experience of others has been, but I have had some of the worries of my life in getting a capable man to accept the position of postmaster, and how these excellent gentlemen in the city of Ottawa are going to get a postmaster for Blankville better than any one of us, I fail to comprehend.

The hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) at that time failed to comprehend how the Civil Service Commission was going to make these appointments and make them properly. I think he will admit that in the light of experience it has been found that the Civil Service Commission is not able to make these appointments properly and judiciously, and that every word he uttered on that occasion has proved to be true.

I have here also, in order that my hon. friends of the opposition may not be disappointed in my not quoting from some of their leaders, the words of a gentleman with whom I have had occasion to differ at times, but for whose capacity, energy and fighting ability I have the highest regard; I speak of the Hon. Mr. Edwards. He said:

I also, Mr. Chairman, want to repudiate the suggestion that I am one wrapped up in the theory that "to