

a medical man; indeed, I said that he was in a leading position so far as Liberal medical men are concerned.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Then the implication is that a Liberal could not be eminent?

Mr. MEIGHEN: No, I am not saying that at all. What I am complaining of is that the minister by the exercise of patronage has taken the advantage of the work from men who were entitled to it under what is supposed to be government policy, or at least is alleged to be such, of giving the preference to returned men. That is what I complain of. Does the minister think that is right? If so, on whose recommendation was it done? Perhaps I should apologize for asking any question about Portage la Prairie.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I was going to ask the hon. gentleman if he was speaking on behalf of the people of Portage la Prairie or on behalf of the representative of the district.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I am speaking for the public, the great people. Will the minister let me know why that was done and on whose recommendation.

Mr. FORKE: I would suggest that we send for the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Leader).

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I cannot answer my hon. friend because apparently any changes of this character must of necessity, in the opinion of hon. gentlemen, be changes brought about by patronage.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It looks like it.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I may say to my hon. friend however that there was good and sufficient reason for the change, although I have no recollection now of its having been made. Undoubtedly I am responsible for it, but I cannot give any information in regard to the matter because I do not now recollect how it came about. It is very evident, of course, that it was not brought about at the request of my hon. friend.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Hear, hear.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Perhaps the other representative asked for the change?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Do the minister's officials not know any reason why a medical man who was giving good service was dismissed?

Mr. McBRIDE: I might say a word in connection with a medical man appointed in my district.

Mr. MEIGHEN: We had better get through with this one first.

Mr. McBRIDE: I might inform the committee that one of my strongest opponents, a lifelong Conservative, was appointed and no one had any objection to offer.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Can the minister not ascertain any reasons at all for the change that was made in this case? Are we not entitled to know whether or not the public interest was considered in the matter, or whether the change was made from purely party interest? What is the House for if the minister can simply say he does not know and no one else knows? That does not help us very much.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): All I can say is that I have not been in the habit of dismissing people for partisan purposes. I have no recollection of how the change came about, although I assume that I knew all about it at the time. I assume also that the Indians are getting the same kind of service now that they got in the past. I do not think it is incumbent upon me to give further reasons.

Mr. MEIGHEN: What about the returned soldier phase of the question? Does not that appeal to the minister?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Almost in every case, yes.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Why not in this case?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I have already told my hon. friend that I have no recollection of the change having been made, but no doubt it was quite in order and proper. If it was not, why, I have no information to give about it.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I do not know why the minister qualifies his remarks with the phrase, "no doubt." Has his deputy no recollection of the change at all? I can scarcely think he has not. I think the change was wrong. I do not want to be understood as complaining about the medical qualifications of the new appointee; not at all. But if the government really consider the returned soldier in matters of this kind, they should not have made that change; and in any event, when they made the change they should have made it so that a returned soldier would get the benefit.

Mr. JACOBS: It might be consoling to the leader of the Opposition to know that firing good men seems to have been epidemic in Portage la Prairie.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is right.