

that a committee should be appointed on such grounds.

After all, the main question is: Have we got an efficient Civil Service? If not, what fault have we to find with it? The Prime Minister has stated that the government must not be manacled and shackled. Well, what does it mean? Does it mean throwing the whole service open again, with the government empowered to make and unmake civil servants just as they please? I do not see any other alternative. We must either have a civil service commission with sufficient power to function properly, or we might as well not have any civil service at all.

It is apparent from the evidence we have had to-night that there already exists a way of making some reforms in the methods of the Civil Service Commission. We have seen the long list of positions which have been withdrawn from the operation of the act upon the recommendation of the Civil Service Commission itself. If in the opinion of the commission that list is too small, it seems to me that there is a way to enlarge it.

When the Prime Minister first spoke I thought there might be something in the suggestion to appoint a committee for the purpose of examining into all the conditions surrounding the civil service. But I did not know at that time that there had been a committee examining into the same matters in 1921. It seems to me that the proper course for the government to take now is to recommend to this House what changes they think should be made in the act, and we will then give those recommendations due consideration, examine into their merits or demerits, and give our decision.

But I do not believe that at the present time it is in the public interest to appoint a committee to inquire fully into the operation of the Civil Service Act. I cannot help being suspicious when I realize the character of the resolution moved by the hon. member for Quebec South (Mr. Power). It was only upon the suggestion of the Prime Minister that it was amended. This shows that there may have been some thought of blotting out the Civil Service Commission altogether. Therefore I am just a little afraid that this may be the thin end of the wedge, the taking the latch off the door to reintroduce the old spoils system, although I do not believe for one moment that the Prime Minister really intends such a radical change. However, I am afraid it would lead in that direction, and I am therefore opposed to the appointment of a committee as proposed.

[Mr. Forke.]

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Will my hon. friend allow me to correct a misapprehension he is labouring under? I did not like to interrupt him while he was speaking. He mentioned that he understood there had been no Civil Service Commission until the Union government was formed. As a matter of fact a Civil Service Commission was appointed in 1906 by the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. That commission was confined entirely to the service in Ottawa. The Union government extended its operations to the outside service.

Mr. FORKE: Mr. Speaker, I understood that perfectly well. The right hon. leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) made it very plain that the first Civil Service Commission was appointed by the Laurier government. But its powers were very limited, and it never had any wide powers until the Union government was in office. I think I am correct in that.

Mr. BUREAU: It never had the arbitrary powers.

Mr. E. R. E. CHEVRIER (Ottawa): I think it is a rule of this House, Mr. Speaker, that when it pleases you to name as the second order of a resolution one of the hon. members that may be sitting next to the mover of the resolution, it is not to be taken as an expression of his concurrence of opinion therein. I say that at the outset because I want to dissociate and free myself from some of the opinions that the hon. mover of the resolution has given expression to. The resolution as it now stands is that the Civil Service Commission be abolished. To that I cannot subscribe. I would willingly subscribe, however, to the motion as amended, namely, for a return to the act of 1908 as far as present circumstances may warrant.

Having made that clear, there is another point I want to establish, and it is this. There is no thought in my mind at present, and there will be no thought in my mind during the course of my remarks, that can be construed in any other way than as simply, sincerely and honestly wishing for the promotion of and the maintenance of efficiency in the Civil Service. I say that because it has pleased a number of hon. members sitting opposite to lightly use the term "distorted mind," and I, Sir, will not allow that anyone with a distorted mind should read into my own thoughts ideas that I do not entertain. Therefore, I wish to say clearly that I stand on this particular occasion as I have always stood in the past on the question of civil service reform, namely, that any reform