

Dismissals—Mr. Mackenzie King

(Mr. Bennett) has said, for the simple reason that, as all hon. members know, there is probably no more controversial question than that which relates to appointments to and dismissals from the public service. That is my first reason for not attempting at this time to go into the different cases which he has mentioned.

Mr. BENNETT: I would not expect the right hon. gentleman to do so.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: In the second place, I do not feel that it is necessary to do so because in all that my right hon. friend has said he has not intimated that the government itself has departed in any way from the principle which he has enunciated as the one that previous administrations—

Mr. BENNETT: Oh, yes.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: —followed or were supposed to follow, namely that of taking the word of a member of parliament with respect to dismissals for political partisanship and acting upon it without further question. My right hon. friend is now laying down, for the present administration, a course of action which I do not think was followed by himself—

Mr. BENNETT: Oh, yes; we gave an investigation.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: —during the time he was in office. In the five years that my right hon. friend was in office there were, according to a return that was submitted to this house on June 10, no less than 6,352 dismissals from the public service. Of this number, as many as 1,370 were from the Department of the Interior, 1,600 from the Department of Marine, and 1,093 from the Post Office Department. But that does not begin to indicate the extent to which changes were made in the public service which resulted in men being dismissed or losing their positions without having any investigation at all.

Mr. STEWART: Will the right hon. gentleman allow me to ask him how many of those were dismissed because of reorganization?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am coming to that.

Mr. BENNETT: We abolished the positions.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend asks how many were due to reorganization. Perhaps I cannot better illustrate in what fashion they were due to any "reorganization" than by giving figures with respect to the Department of Agriculture. According to the [Mr. Bennett.]

figures brought down there were 187 dismissals from that department. There was another return with respect to appointments in the same department, which showed that the number of appointments made in the Department of Agriculture was 2,725.

Mr. BENNETT: That figure is cumulative, of course. Those were temporary from year to year.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No doubt that was "reorganization."

Mr. BENNETT: No, no; that was merely from year to year, covering temporary employees who came in during the spring and went out in the fall.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not want to go into this in any controversial spirit, because I believe my right hon. friend himself has been careful to avoid that. Moreover there is no opportunity at the present of hearing the other side of the cases cited or from the hon. members concerned. Further, at an earlier stage in the session I intimated that at the beginning of next session the government would ask the house to appoint a special committee to go into the whole question of appointments and dismissals under the Civil Service Act. That will be the time, I think, when matters of this kind can be taken up and gone into more fully and carefully.

That covers, I think, all I wished more particularly to say, namely that the course which my right hon. friend is now suggesting is not one which, up to the present, has been regarded as in accordance with the general practice. I do not wish to say that there may not be much to be said in support of the position taken by my right hon. friend. Where it can be shown that anyone has been dismissed from the public service obviously without any cause, as long as we have such a thing as justice, which is what above all else government stands for, the government would desire and wish to see that justice was done.

Mr. BENNETT: Hear, hear.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I cannot do more than say to my right hon. friend that the government will be glad, during the period of the recess, to consider carefully the representations he has made. As to indicating what further action, if any, it may be advisable to take, that will have to await a more favourable opportunity for intimating the results to the house.

SOCKEYE SALMON INDUSTRY—CLOSING OF
HATCHERIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. H. J. BARBER (Fraser Valley): Mr. Speaker, before you leave the chair I desire to draw to the attention of the government