

*The Civil Service*

The article says:

Dr. W. J. Roche, chairman of the Civil Service Commission of Canada, speaking before the Rotary Club at yesterday's luncheon, expressed fears for the future of the Civil Service system in Canada and stressed strongly the necessity for the formation in Canada of a league in support of the merit system for federal, provincial and municipal governments.

A little later in the report the following appears in quotations as coming from Doctor Roche, chairman of the commission:

"The fate of this law" . . .

That is, the Civil Service law.

... "however, is beset with dangers due to the insidious, unseen and silent manipulations of the adherents of patronage in political life," he said. "Slowly, but surely, the politicians will gain back to their own control more and more of the service by the process of exemptions. On June 29 last an order in council was passed exempting from the operation of the merit law a great many positions, which affects in all 10,000 persons out of a total of 50,000 employees, thus placing back into patronage one-fifth of the whole public service.

The effort at present is aimed at the return to patronage of the system of promotions which at present has been so splendidly developed by the Civil Service Commission. Technical positions are also under immediate attack, and there can be no doubt that the whole merit law is in danger unless the strong arm of public opinion is organized to oppose its attack.

Now, there is a very serious charge, and if time would permit and, it were desirable to do so, I could show to hon. members of this House not dozens but hundreds of editorials and articles based upon that particular report which have appeared in the press throughout the country. I have here editorials from and communications addressed to the Ottawa newspapers headed, "Return to the Spoils System," and the like, all of which enlarge upon the seriousness of the situation which has developed in consequence of what is supposed to have been the statement of the chairman of the Civil Service Commission.

Let me now read to the House a letter which I received from Hon. Dr. Roche, the chairman of the commission which was sent without any previous communication on my part to him, without mention on my part directly or indirectly to anyone of the particular address which he was supposed to have delivered and from which I have read alleged direct quotations. The letter is as follows:

Civil Service Commission of Canada

Ottawa, December 22, 1922.

Office of W. J. Roche, chairman,

Dear Mr. King,—

Some days ago I received an invitation from the Rotary Club of Toronto to give an address before that club on the question of the Civil Service of Canada, which invitation I accepted and delivered the address last Friday.

It appears that Principal Grant, of Upper Canada College, who takes a great interest in Civil Service matters, before my visit to Toronto supplied certain

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

material to the press of Toronto, the contents of which I was absolutely unacquainted with, with the request that the respective journals would give publicity to the same either by way of editorials or otherwise, and suggesting that an appropriate time would be when my address was being reported in their columns. Apparently neither the *Globe* nor the *Star* had a reporter at the function, but taking it for granted that I would deal with the matters contained in the memorandum supplied by Principal Grant they framed up a speech that I was supposed to have delivered on that occasion. In this instance, however, they made a very bad guess for I did not touch upon a single subject that both the *Globe* and *Star* credited me with, with the exception that in the last few minutes of my address I stated that if we had in Canada a Civil Service Reform League similar to the league in the United States it would be of great advantage in the public life of Canada. I made no mention of exemptions, orders in council, promotions, technical positions, the amount of money expended in public utilities, etc.; in fact I was most careful in my remarks not to reflect upon any party or any government past or present, dealing merely with general principles and the necessity of educating the people to take a greater interest in matters pertaining to the Civil Service of our country.

I am enclosing you copy of Principal Grant's letter which I received this morning which will bear out my statements, and in view of the Ottawa despatch sent out by the *Globe* reporter, which appeared in yesterday's *Globe*, in which it is reported that a member of the government "speaking for many of his colleagues" has expressed his indignation at the remarks I was supposed to have made, I think it only right in justice to myself that my explanations of the press bungle that occurred in this connection should be made known to yourself and colleagues, who I trust will credit me with a sufficient sense of propriety not to indulge in criticism of the character attributed to me in the *Globe* article.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) W. J. ROCHE.

I direct the attention of the House to this particular sentence in the letter of the chairman of the Civil Service Commission to me:

It appears that Principal Grant, of Upper Canada College, who takes a great interest in civil service matters, before my visit to Toronto supplied certain material to the press of Toronto, the contents of which I was absolutely unacquainted with, with the request that the respective journals would give publicity to the same either by way of editorials or otherwise.

Such is the work of this new organization that has been formed, known as the Civil Service Reform League of Canada. The gentlemen connected with the league have assumed very much at heart the interests of the Civil Service and the work of the Civil Service Commission. Doctor Grant is apparently a leader in the movement. I think hon. members will agree in view of what the chairman of the commission has said, that there is ample ground for believing that this so-called reform league is not in the nature of a league the purpose of which is to help and improve conditions in the Civil Service, so much as an organization formed for political reasons, the hope being to undermine public