

for this resolution may lie where it properly belongs, allow me to tell my hon. friends that the resolution was drafted and 5 p.m. placed on the order paper without my having entered into any consultation whatever with the leaders of the party to which I have the honour to give my allegiance. Permit me to say, too, that I await with some little anxiety the announcement of the point of view which the government intends to take on this subject. I am here, however, to represent, in so far as I can, the opinions of the constituents who elected me, provided always that their opinions and views are consistent with and conducive to the best interests of Canada. So far as I am able to judge from the frequent and sometimes rather forcible representations which have been made to me, I am inclined to believe that the great majority of my constituents have not for the Civil Service Act or for the Civil Service Commission the respect and admiration which a large number of my hon. friends seem to have. They do not seem to wish to perpetuate in our statutes as a monument of wise legislation, as a law not to be altered nor assailed, the act of 1918. And it is to represent their views as well as I can that I propose this resolution to-day.

My objections to the Civil Service Act are based mainly on two grounds, which I might call constitutional and practical. From a constitutional standpoint I am and have been a firm believer in the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. I believe that the duty of our ministers is to carry out the wishes of the people, and to be responsible to the people for their every act and deed. There has been a tendency in recent years in this Dominion, as in other countries, to urge that national affairs will be best administered by those who are not responsible to the people, that it is well that those who pay taxes should not have direct control and management of the national purse to which they contribute. This tendency has increased considerably in recent years, and as a consequence we have had a perfect avalanche of boards, bureaux, and commissions, all administering in some degree the affairs of the people, and many of them in no way whatsoever answerable to the nation.

It seems to be generally accepted that whatever may have been his previous record, the moment a person is appointed to a position of public trust where he no longer has to answer for his stewardship, he immediately becomes clothed in a kind of mantle of grace and gifted with all wisdom, and that his decisions, however injurious they may be to the public,

[Mr. Power.]

must be accepted as infallible. With this theory I must respectfully beg to differ.

A number of hon. members in this House and a number of people throughout the country have been preaching democracy, the government of the people by the people, on the one hand, while on the other they have been urging the country to take the administration of the people's money out of the control of the people. This tendency increased perhaps more during the war than at any other time, due, I think, to the theory that a democracy was unable to carry out great undertakings without first sacrificing the very principles upon which it was built and had its being. We heard throughout the days of the war, and we have heard since, that it is impossible for any great democracy to be victorious in war. Sir, we have only to go over the history of the last few years to find that the two most democratic nations on earth, England and France, after four years of struggle emerged victorious over the two most bureaucratic nations of Europe, Germany and Austria. However, in spite of this vindication of the views of those of us who hold that any encroachment upon or curtailment of the rights of the people is dangerous, we have had in Canada the strange spectacle of public-spirited men, men of standing in the community, urging upon us the advisability of allowing our national affairs to be administered by boards, bureaux and commissions.

These attacks on what to my mind is the proper theory of democratic government, namely, representation so far as possible of the people by those responsible to the people, reached their culmination in 1918, when our parliament created the most irresponsible body which has ever been known in the history of Canada. This commission—of course, I refer to the Civil Service Commission—which has power almost of life and death, at any rate power of affluence or starvation, over thousands of our fellow-citizens, and power to expend millions of public money, is not directly or indirectly answerable to parliament. It makes appointments to positions of public trust, fixes salaries, awards bonuses, and distributes favours of all kinds, without being obliged to accept any suggestions of the representatives of the people and without even taking into consideration the recommendations of those best fitted to make them.

Mr. SHAW: May I be permitted to ask the hon. gentleman a question? When speaking about the creation of the Civil Service