

I do not think it is right or fair for one government to try to bind its successors in any way, and that is what hon. gentlemen opposite are seeking to do not only in this but in other measures they have put through. The government has a hard enough job in times such as these, and in fact at all times; they should be given the freest hand possible to deal with public affairs. They are always responsible to parliament and through parliament to the people. Any ministry that would take a course such as that just now suggested by my hon. friend and do what was obviously unfair in the dismissal of a trustee of the Canadian National Railways would find itself defeated at every by-election, and ultimately thrown out of office for such unjustifiable action.

Here we have at stake the whole basis on which parliamentary government rests under British institutions. It is not merely a question of how parliament may view a given matter at a particular moment; there is involved the whole question of the election of representatives to parliament and the basis upon which they are elected, namely, to carry out the will of the people. That is tested in by-elections and at general elections, and it is the one thing after all that is the controlling factor in a government's actions. It is but fair and right, and in keeping with our parliamentary institutions, to ask that a clause which would restrict any ministry in the exercise of its responsibility, I do not care what the ministry's political complexion may be, should not find a place in our statutes. I believe this section should be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Vancouver Centre has presented an amendment to strike out section 7.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Speaking to that amendment, Mr. Chairman, and following the remarks of my right hon. friend, let me say—

The CHAIRMAN: In my opinion this amendment is out of order. The committee must vote for or against the section, so this amendment which would strike out the section is negative, and I declare it out of order.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Then speaking to the section itself, Mr. Chairman, let me say that if we emasculate this bill much further we might as well withdraw it, because it will serve no purpose at all. As I see it the report of the commission and the bill founded upon that report constitute one final effort to rescue the railway system from the bedevilment of politics. It matters not what anyone says in relation to that; go back over the whole his-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

tory and you will find that politics, parliamentary politics if you like, are responsible for the situation in which we now find ourselves. Whether you can get a board of trustees that to some degree will lift this system out of that situation I grant at once to be a question, but if you are to have trustees you must get the best possible men in this country. The chairman of this board will have the biggest job ever assigned to any Canadian in Canada, and the right hon. gentleman opposite suggests that we should go out looking for that man and say to him, "We want you to take this job. Divest yourself of every other responsibility and interest you may have, but remember that you will remain there subject to dismissal in case there is a change in government." It seems to me that is the position. Can we possibly expect to get the type of man we want under those conditions? I conceive it to be impossible.

I am not going to labour that point, Mr. Chairman. My right hon. friend referred to governmental responsibility and the right of one government to tie the hands of another. What is the procedure in regard to appointments to the railway commission? Every single member of that board is appointed for a definite term of ten years. Already we have reduced the terms of appointment under this bill to five, four and three years, which to my mind simply weakens it to that extent. What is the practice in regard to judges, if you like? We might as well say that a judge appointed by one government is to be subject to the will of any other government that may follow. We have many evidences, if we wanted to go back over the past and introduce the political aspect, to show exactly what has resulted from the removal of men—and that in the case of the national railways itself—and the appointment of other men for political reasons. I say therefore that if this bill is to be further emasculated we should withdraw it altogether and wipe out the farce.

Mr. MARCIL: The hon. gentleman is dreaming of a time to come when there will be no politics either in this house or in the Senate. Unfortunately, under the system we now have, the people cannot attend this meeting here but they send their delegates, and they hold us responsible whenever we go back to them; they demand an accounting on our part. The Senate is a very honourable body but it is not under that obligation; its members do not have to go back to constituents. They are merely a court of appeal as it were, and that was the reason for their appointment in the first instance, to protect the rights of minorities in the provinces. That role has not