

do not wish to interject politics into the question, but in reply to my friend I would say that the present deputy ministers were appointed under the Administration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and all but one, I think, are Liberal deputies! I do not say that to their detriment, for I am not prepared to assert that these men are acting unfairly; but I do say it would be unfair at the present time to allow these men to recommend who should be promoted or who should be appointed to office. That would be simply to transfer to them the patronage that was exercised by the men who I still believe ought to exercise it; for I am not now, and never have been, in favour of what has been done in taking the patronage out of the hands of the representatives of the constituencies, elected to look after the interests of the people. In taking from the people's representatives the right to recommend Government appointments, what have you done? You have changed a democratic system into a bureaucracy, and now the men who have been elected by the people have absolutely nothing to say regarding the appointment of the humblest postmaster in a rural district. Some ridiculous things have occurred, honourable gentlemen, in regard to the appointment of some of those rural postmasters, as you can understand. Instead of a member of Parliament being relied upon to recommend a suitable man, recommendations have been obtained from sources all over the country. I know of one man who was recommended for a position in a Manitoba constituency under this bureaucratic system, and who, after he had been appointed, was found to be a ticket-of-leave man. I do not believe that this change will ever work out in the best interest of Canada; but as the Government has adopted it and the people seem to want it, I am willing to give it a fair trial, and in order to give it a fair trial we ought to make the Civil Service Commission absolutely responsible by removing any possibility of interference by the deputy heads of the departments making recommendations.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: The honourable gentleman's amendment would seem to confine the commission to a conference with only one individual, whereas at present they are free to confer with that individual and with any others from whom they may receive advice or instruction.

Hon. Mr. BRADBURY: This would make it compulsory to confer with the chief of the branch or division concerned.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: I would not have a strong objection to a mere conference with him; but the amendment goes further; it provides that the commission must prepare jointly with him the examination papers. I would be opposed to that; I do not see any necessity for that. It is not to be supposed that the Civil Service Commission is a walking encyclopedia of universal knowledge; therefore it would not be expected of them that they in themselves, either collectively or individually, possessed complete knowledge on every branch to which it would be necessary to appoint an officer. They are obliged to call in expert advice with regard to technical positions. They do that. It would not be fair to assume that they would do anything unreasonable, and I think that the matter should be left to them.

I want to reiterate my statement regarding the position I take on this question. I hold strong opinions, and I desire to impress upon the House that I am in earnest. In the first place, like my honourable friend from Selkirk (Hon. Mr. Bradbury), I am in favour of having the patronage of recommendations of appointment to public office in the hands of the men who are responsible to the people. I am glad to know that my honourable friend from Selkirk is of that opinion, because when that matter came before the Senate, I think the records of the Senate will bear me out in saying, I was the only person who took a stand against the present system and in favour of that. But we have adopted this principle, and I now feel it to be my duty and I think every honourable senator should feel it his duty, no matter what his private opinions may be with regard to the advantage or disadvantage of this system to try to make it as nearly perfect as possible and not to throw into the machinery any sort of monkey-wrench that would interfere with its smooth operation. Therefore we must remove from the commission every vestige of control, or what might be sinister influence, and give them a free hand in this matter.

Hon. Mr. SCHAFFNER: We would understand the situation better if my honourable friend could tell us by whom the examinations for technical positions are now set.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: As I understand, the commission call in expert advice.

Hon. Mr. SCHAFFNER: That is the information I wanted brought before the House.