

under which to correct any working out of the law that may be thought desirable, ample for all purposes; moreover, because of the speech delivered by the Prime Minister in which this resolution is launched before this House, and because of the clear purpose the government has in view in having this committee appointed, I oppose altogether its appointment.

Mr. ROBERT FORKE (Brandon): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Quebec South (Mr. Power), in introducing this resolution, undertook to give the members in this part of the House just a little lecture about the position that they took in the political life of this country. I do not know whether we are politicians or statesmen. I do not think we make any pretences along those lines; I think, perhaps, we are anxious to do the best we can in the interest of the public life of this country, irrespective of what name we may be tagged by.

I have listened with a good deal of interest to the speeches that have been delivered by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen). I am sorry to have to confess that I am not as familiar with this subject, with the whole history of the Civil Service Commission as hon. members who have been speaking this evening. I know something, however, about the old system, what we used to call the "spoils" system, and I hope no one in this House will ever, for a moment, think of returning to that bad old system. I noticed that the leader of the Opposition stated, what I already knew, that the Civil Service Commission came into existence through the efforts of the Union government. It may be rather a sad commentary upon the state of public life in Canada that we know it would have been almost an impossibility for any political party to carry through that measure, unless it had been some sort of coalition like the one we had during the time of Union government.

I am not going to take up very much time to-night in discussing the "spoils" system or the system of patronage, because I think we are all ready to condemn that system. What was it? It was simply a lever that politicians who were in office could use to keep themselves in power. I can remember a time some years ago when public servants spent a good deal of their time working for the party in power, simply in order that they might retain their positions, and we all know that when a change of government occurred, there was generally a clean sweep made of those same public servants. The Prime Minister, in

speaking to-night, stated that public servants should be judged by their efficiency. I cannot understand how it would be possible to have efficient public servants, were they to know that their remaining in the public service was dependent upon the fact of the party which put them there remaining in power. If you are going to have a really good Civil Service, public servants must feel that they have some security of position. I have here a short extract taken from an editorial, in regard to the old country Civil Service. It reads:

"We serve the State", is the motto of the British Society of civil servants, and it might well be adopted, with all it means and implies, by those engaged in the Civil Service of this country. But to serve the State best, those so employed must be contented and efficient.

I claim, Mr. Speaker, that we can never have an efficient public service until our civil servants enjoy security of tenure in their positions. We know something about the degrading effects upon public life that the old patronage system had, and I can assure you, Sir, that, speaking for myself and those in this section of the House, we view with a good deal of alarm any attempt to infringe upon the powers conferred upon the Civil Service Commission by the present act.

I understand that a short time ago a committee of the House did examine into the operation of the act, took evidence and made recommendations. I do not know what has happened since then to cause some hon. members to be of opinion that a further exhaustive examination into the workings of the act should be made at this particular time. The Prime Minister has pointed out some defects in the present act. The government has been in office for some time, and if they have discovered certain weaknesses and defects in the Civil Service Act, it is quite within their province to come before this House and tell us what is wrong with this legislation. We will then examine what they put forward and give our opinion whether we think they are right or not.

I was surprised to hear the Prime Minister state that we ought to have a committee of this House to deal with the Civil Service Act because a certain newspaper in Toronto commented upon a speech which the chairman of the Civil Service Commission had delivered. I do not think for a moment that this House is going to authorize the formation of a committee to investigate the Civil Service Commission or any other department of the public service just because some journal makes certain statements that are not just exactly correct. Indeed, I do not consider it at all necessary