

In reply to the question put to me by the hon. ex-Minister of Finance (Sir Henry Drayton) as to wherein the Civil Service Act has increased the expenditures of government, I cannot give a better example than by again referring to the particular order in council passed on the recommendation of the Civil Service Commission, which I have already mentioned, removing from the operation of the act large numbers of classes of employees to be appointed to the civil service. The last recommendation from the commission came to the Cabinet on the 14th December last. In other words, with the exception of the last few weeks, during the whole of the past year, the Civil Service Commission had been making appointments of different classes in accordance with the methods which it adopts but which it has found to be impracticable. These methods imply competitive examinations, advertising the positions, correspondence between the departments and the commission as to the necessity of particular positions, followed by further correspondence between the commission and the departments advising them of the persons whom it is about to recommend for appointment.

Hon. members will see that all this means a large amount of work for the staff of the commission. I need not re-enumerate the many classes of which these particular recommendations make mention, but I should like the House to bear in mind what I have just said, as respects all of them: that if the commission had been doing its duty in accordance with the terms of the act it would have been advertising the positions, setting examinations for those who were seeking to be appointed to them, and conducting all the correspondence necessary in connection with such examinations. Up to the end of the year, after having pursued their own methods for that length of time, the commission comes to the government—it was not a case of the government going to the commission—and says: In our opinion these many classes of employees should never have come under the Civil Service Act, and we ask the government to withdraw them from its operation altogether.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that if those classes of employees had never been put under the act, and if the commission had not had to advertise those positions, examine the various applicants and correspond with the departments in reference to them, we would have saved many thousands of dollars which have been simply wasted as a result of the measure being in the form in which it was originally drafted. If that is true—and it is beyond gainsaying—in regard to these classes, why may it not

be equally true in regard to certain other classes which are still under the act?

As a matter of fact, more than one recommendation was made by the Civil Service Commission to the government to withdraw certain classes from the operation of the act. I have here a further order which came before council, in which the Civil Service Commission recommends:

That the Order in Council above mentioned (P.C. 1053) be amended by adding to this list, the classes of fireman, fireman's helper and fireman labourer, the commission being of opinion that it is not practicable to prescribe a system of examinations or tests as required by the Civil Service Act, 1918, for making appointments to positions of this nature.

If the experience of the commission itself during the past year has shown that the act as drafted goes too far, I think it is reasonable to assert that in other particulars as well the act may go further than was intended, and that it would be very much in the public interest, as well as in the interests of the commission itself, that its workings should be made the subject of examination by a committee of this parliament.

I have another reason, Mr. Speaker, for suggesting that parliament should have an opportunity of inquiring fully into the methods by which the commission is carrying on its work and the relations between government departments and the commission as well as between the government and the commission. There are grounds for believing that there has been commenced in this country an insidious campaign the purpose of which is not to improve the working of the Civil Service Commission but rather to undermine the confidence of the Civil Service and of the public in the government in its relation to the Civil Service Commission. I think that the sooner the gentlemen who are associated with this movement have an opportunity to state before a committee of this parliament the grounds on which they base a view of that kind, the better it will be for all concerned. That hon. members may have reason to feel that what I am saying is not without justification, I would remind them of an article which appeared in a Toronto paper, and which has been largely quoted throughout this country, with reference to an address that the chairman of the Civil Service Commission was supposed to have delivered before the Rotary Club in Toronto in December last. A Toronto paper, reporting this alleged address, came out with the heading:

"Strong Element Favours Patronage. Doctor W. J. Roche Expresses Fear regarding Future of Civil Service."