

interesting, however, to see how the rise and fall of ministers came about. To describe this most interesting evolution, I will rely on an article in the *Economist* in 1947, entitled "The Twilight of Ministers". Its opening paragraph reads as follows:

The principle of complete royal subjection to ministerial control was firmly embedded in the British Constitution in the course of the nineteenth century. Though theoretically all-powerful, the monarch had, by the end of Queen Victoria's reign, completely accepted the position that he could do nothing without ministerial advice and, indeed, that he could not refuse to do anything that his ministers advised him to do.

In Canada, a similar evolution took place at about the same time. It started in 1791 and reached a very important moment in 1848 when the principle of responsible government was recognized. The Byng incident in 1926 merely served to formalize what was already implicit. But this rise of ministers to a position of great influence ceased with the outbreak of World War II.

The correspondent of the *Economist* goes on to say:

But there is no such thing as finality in human development. The cabinet had no sooner removed the last formal check on its power than it began to move elsewhere. Ministers, in the middle of the twentieth century, were subject to three pressures which together made it impossible for them to fulfil the role that the Constitution, as then understood, assigned to them. In the first place, with the advent of socialism—

I am speaking, of course, of Great Britain.

—the subject-matter of state action was enormously extended. Secondly, the subject-matter of public affairs became more technical and difficult and this, coinciding with the growth of belief that it was a positive advantage for a politician to have spent his formative years in a mine or at the bench, made it a rarity for a minister to be able to understand the papers that were put before him, even if he had time to read them.

Thirdly, the number of personal appearances required of ministers—in Parliament, at conferences, and at lunches, dinners and meetings of all kinds—increased so greatly that even these activities, hitherto pre-eminently those of

the minister himself, came to be beyond the powers of a single man, except with the assistance of a public relations officer.

Under these pressures, the minister gradually became a figurehead.

The author goes on to say, referring to people like the Honourable C. D. Howe, or our present Leader in the Senate, that:

Only those ministers who combined the most forceful personalities with a willingness to work cruelly long hours could really be said to be responsible for their own words and actions, let alone those of the department they nominally controlled.

The author continues:

But this gradual change was not apparent for many years. The permanent civil servants while engrossing more and more of the reality of power, studiously preserved the outward forms of ministerial supremacy—as indeed, ministers in their turn, did the King. Just as laws were still enacted "by the King's Most Excellent Majesty" and ministers spoke of their "loyal duty" to the Crown, so also the most eminent and powerful civil servant would still refer to his minister as "my master", and would begin his letters "I am directed by the Secretary of State..."

This long quotation sums up very well also what happened in Canada. I wish to recall just a few landmarks which illustrate the fall of ministers and the rise of civil servants.

The civil service began to emerge as a new force with the recognition of the merit system and the creation of the Civil Service Commission in 1917. Fifty years later, the peak of its power was reached, I believe, when in 1967 full bargaining rights were granted by Parliament to staff associations.

Hon. Mr. Martin: Was the Civil Service Commission not formed before 1917?

Hon. Mr. Lamontagne: It began in 1911 under Sir Wilfrid Laurier, but the Civil Service was organized on the merit system only, I am sorry to say, under Sir Robert Borden's Government in 1917.

Hon. Mr. Flynn: Why sorry? There is nothing sad about that!

Hon. Mr. Lamontagne: When I said that I was sorry I was speaking to the Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Martin).