

The Public Interest.

“Turn to the other side. What are they doing? For whom are they working? And what is the test of their efficiency? These are questions for the public of this Dominion. The civil service is the organization necessary to carry on the work of the country. An immense proportion of that work is necessarily of a routine and humdrum character, an eternal repetition of the same thing, until it would appear that except in the highly specialised work of some departments there is no opportunity of human realization in that work. But look outside at the greater part of commercial life, and you find that the means of livelihood of most people is more or less of a humdrum and routine character.

The Commission's Initiation.

“Some years ago, the Government, in more or less of a panic considering that elections were coming on, decided that it was necessary to do something — some scandals having been unearthed and others threatened — rushed through a Civil Service Act which provided for the appointment of a Civil Service Commission. By some strange freak of nature which I have never been able to explain they fastened on me as one of the parties to run this machine. When I asked the members of the Government what it was I was to do and how they expected this system to work out, they held up their hands in astonishment and said: ‘Do not ask us; we do not know; there is an election coming on; here is a copy of the Act and you will have to work it out as best you can; no doubt it can be improved, but do the best you can and the law will be improved later.’ We have had one or two supplementary acts passed, but we are still waiting for the radical improvement of the system. We thought we were within measurable distance of it last year when the Government introduced two new bills

dealing with the system. But now the war has come on and we realize there is going to be delay in these bills which may not even now come into existence as Acts of Parliament, and we shall have to get along as best we can on the present basis.

Responsibility of the Commission.

“Let me frankly state what I find to be the position of the Civil Service Commission in the face of the realization of conditions under the act. . . . The Government can override the Commission's withholding of certificates for appointments and promotions by naming individuals in the estimates and putting them through in that way. The Government could, of course, dismiss summarily any person appointed by the Commission, at least after two months' probation, without giving any specific or definite explanation to the Commission, because the Commission is in no way responsible for dismissals. While, therefore, we have something to do with appointments up to a certain point, and with promotions up to a certain point, we have nothing to do with dismissals or with the freedom of the Government if it cares to over-ride us and is supported by Parliament in doing so. . . .

“There are a good many people who think we have not acted as we ought to have done. . . . Any action in the six years and a half we have performed we may be called upon to justify; and we have acted with that possibility before us; and we are prepared to explain our actions. If they are wrong, we may take another line, or Parliament may dispose of us; that is all within the range of possibility.

Inside Service Only.

“Having explained the machinery so far as that is concerned, the next point is, wherein does this power for the inside service find its limitation and activity? It is confined at present entirely to what is known as the