

it is an order based on a recommendation of the Civil Service Commission itself, with which recommendation the government had nothing whatever to do. It came to the government from the Civil Service Commission and this is the language in which it is worded:

Section 38B of the Civil Service Act, 1918, as amended, prescribes:

In any case where the commission decides that it is not practicable nor in the public interest to apply this act to any position or positions, the commission may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, exclude such position or positions in whole or in part from the operation of the act, and make such regulations as are deemed advisable prescribing how such position or positions are to be dealt with.

The Civil Service Commissioners are of opinion that the following classes of positions should be exempt from the operation of the Civil Service Act under the above section, namely:

1. All positions where the salary does not exceed \$200 per annum. (The Order in Council P.C. 1694 of the 19th August, 1919, is hereby cancelled.)

2. All positions for which the compensation provided is fees of office and positions of an honorary character to which no compensation is attached.

3. Positions of orderly in the office of the Governor-General's Secretary.

4. Positions of Indian interpreter, Department of Indian Affairs.

5. Positions of physician performing the duties of port physicians, under the Department of Health at the following points: Province of Nova Scotia, province of New Brunswick, province of Prince Edward Island, province of Quebec, province of British Columbia.

A large number of centres are enumerated.

6. Positions in the following classes of skilled and unskilled labour and domestic service.

Then follow two or three pages of different positions, all of which are enumerated and which run up into hundreds. What is said in regard to these positions? This is said not by the government, but by the Civil Service Commission, as a result of its experience of the act as in operation:

The Civil Service Commission is of opinion that it is not practicable to prescribe a system of competitive examinations or tests as required by the Civil Service Act.

In other words, the act as passed, placed upon the Civil Service Commission the duty of making all those appointments. The commission struggled with it; they sought to fix examinations and competitive tests for those classes, and after having struggled with it for months, they come of their own accord and ask the government to exempt those positions inasmuch as they find it is not practicable to prescribe a system of competitive examinations for such appointments. If the Civil Service Commission itself makes an appeal to the government to free from the operation of that act thousands of appointments in the public service of Canada, there is, I submit, strong justification for what my

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

hon. friend has just suggested, that the act requires some revision, and I think it is very much in the interest of the country as well as of the Civil Service Commission and the government that a committee of this parliament have an opportunity of discussing with the commission and with the deputy ministers, as the government has done, the various phases of the act, in order to see whether in some particulars amendments cannot be made which will help to make the act more efficient, more economical in administration, and of greater service.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

After Recess

The House resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Speaker, when the House rose at six o'clock, I was making mention of a few reasons which seemed to me to justify the consideration by a joint committee of this House of the present Civil Service Act, with a view of seeing if it were not possible to have the act amended in a manner which would make it a more efficient and economical instrument of government. I was making particular reference at the time to a recommendation from the Civil Service Commission, in virtue of which a number of classes of employees were removed from the operation of the Civil Service Act, and I pointed out that a good deal of misconception had arisen in the public mind as to the attitude of the government towards the Civil Service Commission, largely as a result of references to that particular recommendation.

I hope I made it very clear that I would strongly oppose any move to abolish the Civil Service Commission. I think some commission or other body should have the power to see that the members of the Civil Service are duly qualified for their positions before being appointed to them, and that those who are already in the service should receive promotion and salaries in accordance with merit. This is wholly in the public interest, and I would do anything in my power to prevent any amendment to the act which would destroy those all-important considerations. On the other hand, I believe that the Civil Service Act as it was placed on the statutes in 1918 went lengths which have rendered it in many particulars far from workable and have caused it to operate in a manner quite the opposite to that which the framers of the measure either intended or expected.