

reintroduce the practice of political patronage. I was not at all alone in that impression because throughout the length and breadth of Canada the press took alarm and viewed it in the same way; so much so that protests were made, and these grew so extensive and vigorous that we had not been in session very often in that committee before the words which I have quoted were eliminated from the bill. But the majority of the members of that committee devised something else and I speak deliberately when I say, that, in my opinion, the changes which were made in the bill, even after the elimination of the words which I have quoted, while not apparently alarming in themselves, were, according to the wording, intended to carry out exactly the ideas which were first in the minds of the government when they did insert the original words. Clause 38 of the Civil Service Act, 1918, read as follows:

Provided, however, that in any case where the commission decides that it is not practicable. . .

And I would draw your attention to the word "practicable"—

. . . to apply this act to any position or positions, the commission, with the approval of the Governor in Council may make such regulations as are deemed advisable prescribing how such position or positions are to be dealt with.

If it was not practicable, the clause stated the commission could, in effect, exempt those particular classes from the operation of the bill and, I presume, such classes as it might think it was not practicable any longer to control by the commission should be placed back into the hands of the government and thus, to that extent, restore patronage. And the change that was made was this:

In any case where the commission decides that it is not practicable or in the public interest. . .

And then the rest of the clause reads very much as it did before. The only change made was to insert the words "in the public interest." Now hon. members may judge for themselves whether the addition of these words "in the public interest" widens the power or whether it does not. The vice-chairman of that committee, the Hon. Mr. Calder, a member of the Cabinet, stated that he thought the power wider than if those original classes—the professional, technical and other classes which I have spoken about before—had been included. But that was passed in the House. Now the point I desire to make is this: The previous government drew up what they thought was a perfect act in 1918. They either found that it was not practicable, that it was not workable, that it was not for the advantage of the public service, or else the pressure upon the govern-

ment for the return of patronage by their followers was so great that they found it could no longer be resisted. The evidence, as shown in that committee by the actual introduction of that bill, was at least as strong an indication of the desire on the part of the then government to return to patronage as is indicated by any remarks made this evening by the Prime Minister.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a further suggestion. The hon. leader of the Progressive party (Mr. Forke) has stated, I think, his opposition to the appointment of a committee. I should like to see him alter that attitude, for this reason: it is amply shown, I think, both by the action of the previous government, and by the instances which have been quoted by hon. gentlemen who have spoken before me, that there are conditions in the operation of the Civil Service Act which might very well be improved. What then is the natural and logical thing to do? Instead of debating the matter here, instead of examining instances, which we cannot do in any great number on the floor of the House, is it not the most natural thing that representatives of all the groups in the House should gather together, take evidence, satisfy themselves of weaknesses in the present act, and make such recommendations as they may see fit to make?

I think that is perfectly logical. I would add to that the statement that during the meeting of the committee, when it was finally decided to add these words "in the public interest," I know as a matter of fact the chairman of the Civil Service Commission was very much opposed to it. He would have preferred to wait a year—these are his own words—to see how the act would work out. My own impression was that it might very well go on for some time longer, and then the commission itself, and the various officials of the department, including the deputy heads, might very well make the recommendations to the government as to what remedy might be applied to make the act more workable. We have now waited two years more. It is time to review the whole situation.

A statement has been made that by order in council some ten thousand employees have been exempted from the operation of the act. I do not know whether that number is correct or not. I believe that there were certain classes of employees that could very well, and with public advantage, be exempted from the operation of the act; for example, such as country postmasters, who, I believe, are now exempt. I do not think hon. gentlemen will argue with any great force or conviction that