

I wonder whether many hon. members have read a small book called *A Message to Garcia*. It is by Elbert Hubbard, and I take the liberty of quoting a few lines:

And a man who, when given a letter for Garcia, quietly takes the missive, without asking any idiotic questions, and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or doing aught else but deliver it, never gets "laid off," nor has to go on strike for higher wages. Civilization is one long, anxious search for just such individuals. Anything such a man asks shall be granted. He is wanted in every city, town and village—in every office, shop, store and factory. The world cries out for such; he is needed and needed badly—the man who can "carry a message to Garcia."

I wish to apply those words to the hon. members who sat with me on the committee last year. I appreciated their work, which at times was both painful and arduous. We knew nothing about the operation of the Civil Service Act; we received a message from the house, and it was our duty to discover whether the operation of that act was a joke on the house and the country or whether a good purpose was being served.

Now, sir, may I say that I do not know at all what I will do this session. I have informed the government that I want the report of last year, which was unanimous on the part of members representing all parties, submitted to the house. We worked very hard, at times seven days a week, in order to reach conclusions which we thought would be in the best interests of the service and the best interests of the country. That has been done, and I hope the matter will be very seriously considered in the light of the public welfare.

Mr. J. S. WOODSWORTH (Winnipeg North Centre): A few months ago, Mr. Speaker, I objected to a discussion of this kind being carried on when we were supposed to be considering a more or less formal resolution with regard to the selection of a special committee. However, since the discussion has gone on I should like to say that it does seem to me highly improper that in connection with this resolution the hon. member who has just taken his seat (Mr. Pouliot) should have attacked civil servants who have no chance to defend themselves.

Mr. POULIOT: Let them run in my constituency.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Quite so. The hon. member has been making a violent attack upon civil servants, calling them all sorts of names without, of course, those civil servants having any chance whatever to defend them-

[Mr. Pouliot.]

selves in this place. But that is not the worst of it; he has made an attack on the whole merit system.

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Yes; he stated that the merit system had been promoted to satisfy the greed of certain persons.

Mr. McLEAN (Melfort): The civil service commission—

Mr. WOODSWORTH: That is what we are discussing just now.

Mr. McLEAN (Melfort): —not the merit system.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I would say the whole question involved was the merit system, which is the basis of the work of the civil service commission. The hon. member said it was a joke. I took this down, and I think I am quoting him correctly; he said the merit system had been promoted to satisfy the greed of certain persons.

Mr. POULIOT: The so-called merit system, which is very different.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: He was referring to the system under which we are operating at the present time. He said the commission was essentially a patronage distributing body, and even at this late day in our political development he pleaded that patronage should be kept in the hands of those who have knowledge of local conditions, which in effect means that patronage should be almost entirely under the control of the local politicians.

Mr. POULIOT: Mr. Fielding said that.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: It may have been said by Mr. Fielding but I fancy the hon. member who spoke is quite in sympathy with Mr. Fielding in this regard.

Mr. POULIOT: Surely.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Well, whatever may have been true in the earlier days of our history I submit that to-day the people of Canada as a body are heartily sick of the patronage system even to the extent to which it now exists. We are never going to get very much further in the way of cleaner politics as long as the patronage system exists.

Mr. MULOCK: Under the civil service commission.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: As long as it exists, I say.