

employers and employees; and the consideration of a myriad of similar details necessary to transact such an intricate business before it can be expected to function with any degree of satisfaction. All of this requires some staff and organization, and since this commission is dependent upon the civil service commission for the appointment of all our officers, clerks and employees, and has so far received none, our business has been practically at a standstill for some three months.

It has been possible for the two commissioners appointed on behalf of working people and employers respectively to occupy their time with matters of special concern to these two groups, but for the chief commissioner, not charged with the duty of representing any particular interest and therefore without any special business to administer, there has been a period of over two months of almost complete idleness.

With this background you will appreciate my feeling that the situation lacks evidence of that cordial cooperation between the government and the chief commissioner without which it would be difficult if not impossible for anyone successfully to administer such a delicate business. Appreciating the difficulties confronting a new government and realizing the importance of this measure to so many people in Canada it was my desire to pursue a course that would cause no embarrassment and would not jeopardize the future of the plan. Reluctantly it has been borne in upon me, however, that neither pressure of business nor accident explain the total failure of communication for a period of three months, and that my association with the commission may not be helpful to the cause of social improvement provided in this measure. I have decided therefore to terminate my connection with the Employment and Social Insurance Commission. To leave the field free for such action as the government may wish to take appears the course best suited to the circumstances that have developed.

You may accept my assurance that I have no feeling in this matter but quite the reverse and shall be glad, if you desire me, to assist my successor as far as lies within my power.

Yours faithfully,

G. S. Harrington.

That letter is addressed to the Prime Minister.

I wonder what the committee think of this correspondence, and what the country will think of it, in the light of the fact that to neither one of those letters did the Prime Minister, entirely contrary I think to his custom, contrary I am sure to his own better judgment, to his own sense of courtesy, send any reply.

I shall not comment further on these letters. They speak for themselves. They were written by a public servant with a high sense of his responsibilities who felt not only that he had been absolutely ignored but that the system of social legislation, of social improvement which he was earnestly desirous of serving, and which he was perhaps better able to serve than any other layman in Canada, was prejudiced. I made the statement advisedly the other day—

I have since had additional evidence to sustain it—that no man in Canada has given more serious consideration to social questions, questions of sociology, of social insurance, than had this gentleman who was selected for that position. Yet the Prime Minister, for some reason which has never been divulged—so far as I know this is the first time these letters have been made public—for some reason unknown to us, unknown to Colonel Harrington, has never yet answered or acknowledged them, and the public are left to judge, to take whatever inference they may from the Prime Minister's silence. I suggest to the Prime Minister—and I am speaking as one gentleman to another—that he as a gentleman and Colonel Harrington as a gentleman has a right to know from him why he treated him in this manner.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Chairman, first let me clear up any matter of discourtesy between my hon. friend the leader of the opposition and myself in relation to the correspondence which he has just read. It is true my hon. friend asked for a return of the correspondence. I was as much surprised as he was when I found that the correspondence had not been tabled on the afternoon on which he asked for it. I immediately sent over to my own office to ascertain why the correspondence had not been tabled when the return was asked for some days earlier. I was told that the correspondence had been sent from my office to the Department of the Secretary of State, which is the department which makes the returns of correspondence when it comes from two or more different departments. I found that the Department of the Secretary of State had been holding it to table it at what the department evidently believed to be the right time. The return may have called for correspondence from more than one department in which event it would be held till all departments concerned were heard from. I then sent word to my secretary to secure the correspondence so far as it related to the Prime Minister's office from the Department of the Secretary of State so that I could table it myself without further delay, and the correspondence came to me during the afternoon while my hon. friend was speaking. Before six o'clock I tabled it, explaining that it was the correspondence that had been asked for in the afternoon.

As a matter of fact, my own staff had not spoken to me of or shown me the communications that were on the files; I had no personal knowledge of the request. If I had had, I would certainly have tried to follow the matter up immediately. Those are the facts with respect to the delay. However, the delay has not in any way prejudiced the position of my hon.