

Let me make this suggestion in conclusion. Democratic governments are on trial to-day as never before, and democratic government cannot function without a first-class civil service. After all, members of the house and of the senate are only one part of the democratic system. The civil service is a very important part of the system, and we cannot have good government without a first-class civil service. I believe that in Canada to-day we have a first class service, and I hope that this parliament will do everything in its power to give that civil service a chance to go ahead and do its job.

Mr. W. R. TOMLINSON (Bruce): I did not intend to speak on this question this afternoon, but after listening to some of the remarks that have been made, especially by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth), who describes the committee as more or less a joke, I must say that the members of that committee who sat last year for a period of four months, two hours a day and sometimes four, were not sitting there for the good of their health. I remember quite well going into that committee as a new member of the house, as one who had discussed the whole civil service question with Mr. Parker of the commission in Great Britain, and who had some idea of the civil service in Great Britain, and I had a very high opinion of the civil service commission in Canada. I still have a very high regard for the merit system in Canada. I do not desire anyone in this house or anyone in the country to feel that I have in my mind no other idea than to go back to the old patronage system.

May I here refer to what Sir Robert Borden did in 1918. I did not know him personally but I had read about him and I honoured him. When he came back from Great Britain he immediately placed under the civil service commission all the positions in Canada, but he had no sooner done so than he realized his mistake. He saw that there were certain small positions in regard to which merit did not enter, and we have since seen certain exemptions made. For instance there are positions of \$200 and under which are not under the commission, and there are revenue post offices of \$3,000 and less which are not under the commission. Why are they not under the commission? Because the people are becoming tax conscious; that is why. We set up a civil service commission to make appointments on merit, that is, with regard to positions that require merit. But when you tell me—and I spoke on this question in my maiden speech in this house—that I cannot

appoint somebody to a little lighthouse, a lighthouse keeper who lights the lamp in the evening, turns it out in the morning and cleans it, when you tell me that I am not capable of making such an appointment and that we must have someone from Ottawa, from the civil service commission, travel up there, or have a high school principal in Port Elgin or Kincardine make the appointment, then I say we are simply wasting the money of the people of this country for the reason that members of this house will not take their own responsibility. The people of Canada are to-day conscious of that fact.

During the sittings of the committee I was perhaps the one who brought forward the question of taking out the small positions from the civil service commission. I questioned the chairman of the commission, a man for whom I have a great deal of respect, because he gave his evidence in a straightforward manner. He is a man who knows what he is talking about, and he informed me that the small positions in the civil service caused more trouble than anything else that they had to deal with. I believe that. He said, "We would be glad to get rid of them." That is correct. When the matter came before the committee, as mentioned by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green), the majority of the committee decided that all the positions should be under the civil service. That is ridiculous, but I had to abide by that decision and naturally the report came in with that recommendation.

I did not come down prepared to speak on this subject. However, I do not like the insinuations from the third party in this house in connection with patronage. Nobody in my riding can accuse me of patronage.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. TOMLINSON: Let them prove it. Not one of them can. I do not like that insinuation from parties who have never had the responsibility of government. They have never had that responsibility. But they desire to spread throughout this dominion the idea that they never ask for a favour. Let them stand in their place and tell me they have not asked a favour on behalf of their constituents; I would tell them that if they do not look after their constituents they are not representing their ridings as they should.

Miss MACPHAIL: I should like to ask the hon. member a question. What does he mean when he says that hon. members do not carry the responsibility of their constituencies, do not look after their constituencies?