

that. The government is now before the house with its proposals, and we invite the house to give them consideration and to adopt them. There is no justification either in the actions of the government or in the procedure followed to support the right hon. gentleman in the statements that he has made.

The question whether salaries shall be voted at the rate decided upon is now before the committee and we invite discussion and consideration of that matter—the widest possible discussion. I may add that in these estimates, as in nearly all our estimates, there is bound to be a certain amount of salary included in many items. The civil list, of course, is a different matter, being a separate salary list for the civil service in Ottawa. But frequently in the case of estimates for the Public Works department a certain amount of the item is made up of salaries for engineers, clerks of works, and so forth, provided out of these votes. The estimate before us for electricity and gas inspection service provides for service throughout Canada, and we are prepared to give all information desired in regard to it. Throughout the list we are providing for salaries as well as other expenditures, and we are not quarrelling with hon. gentlemen opposite; we are happy to hear their views and invite the fullest discussion. I do however resent the suggestion of the right hon. gentleman that we are acting in the slightest degree unconstitutionally or improperly.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: There has been no decision by this House of Commons to reduce salaries. True, the Prime Minister said that was the intention of the government, and that the government was going to reduce salaries by the amount of 10 per cent. Before he can have his way, however, he is obliged by the constitution to come to this House of Commons and get from it authority for his actions.

Mr. STEVENS: Well, we are here now.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: And that authority has not been given.

Mr. STEVENS: We are asking for it.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: If you are asking for it in this way, you are not asking properly.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No, this is not the way to ask for it. If there is to be a 10 per cent all-around reduction, the proper way to proceed is to pass a resolution in this house to the effect that in its opinion the

salaries of the civil servants should be reduced 10 per cent. The hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario (Mr. McGibbon), or some other hon. member—I am not sure just who it was—had a motion on the order paper which, in so many words, took exception to the government's policy of a straight 10 per cent cut. The motion was to the effect that there should be a graded reduction in salaries.

An hon. MEMBER: That motion has been withdrawn.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I hear someone say the motion was withdrawn. It was on the order paper however, after the Prime Minister had made his statement that there was to be a 10 per cent reduction. When I looked at the motion I felt that to all intents and purposes it constituted a want of confidence motion in the administration because it set out a policy entirely different from and to my mind infinitely more sane than the policy outlined by the Prime Minister. This House of Commons has not yet decided upon any policy in connection with a reduction of salaries, and until one is decided upon the ministry is not justified in asking this House of Commons, by implication, to enact legislation which, after a full discussion here, may not be enacted at all.

The Prime Minister, and the ministry as a whole—if, as they do, my hon. friends the ministers of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Stevens) and Justice (Mr. Guthrie) support him—have acted, it seems to me, in a very arbitrary manner towards the public service in respect to the 10 per cent reduction. The public servants have asked to be given an opportunity to present their case through representatives, a method of procedure which in this day and generation is eminently proper. Surely civil servants, who are to have their livelihood affected at a time when throughout the country there is general hardship, should be entitled to some hearing before this arbitrary cut is made. It appears however that the Prime Minister has stated they are not to be heard. A question was asked as to whether or not there might be a committee of parliament to consider the matter, and if I remember rightly the answer of the prime minister was "No"; that is all there was to it. I think we had better discover whether or not parliament has disappeared entirely and whether or not this country is being run by the will of a single individual surrounded by ministers who support him in anything and everything he does, regardless of how successful or unsuccessful they may be.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

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