

GOVERNMENT HANDS ITSELF A BOUQUET

**Congratulates People on Fine
Administration.**

KEEPS PATRONAGE SYSTEM

**Spoils System Inimical to Highest
Efficiency of Public Service, Says
Mr. Rowell, but Majority Declines
to Believe it.**

Mr. Rowell's attempt to have the Government adopt a resolution calling for reform in the Provincial civil service was defeated in the Legislature yesterday on an amendment introduced by the Prime Minister.

The Opposition leader instanced the benefits that had come to the public service in Great Britain. It was the surest way of securing the elimination of the patronage evil in political affairs and would attract a better class of employees into the service. Mr. Rowell was not inclined to accept the Government's statement that the spoils system had not been introduced, and pointed out the well-known dismissal of License Inspector Hastings in Toronto when the License Commissioners resigned, and a Conservative newspaper declared that the "spoils system is in control."

Sir James Whitney characterized the proposal contained in Mr. Rowell's resolution as absurd, and provoked a round of laughter by asking what kind of competitive examination could be set for a Registrar of Deeds or a Division Court Clerk.

Spoils System.

Mr. Rowell's motion was: "That in the judgment of this House the spoils and patronage systems are inimical to the highest efficiency of the public service and to the best interests of the country; that the public interests demand the immediate creation of a non-partisan Civil Service Commission with ample powers, and that all appointments and promotions in the public service shall be by merit after competitive examination, except in those cases where the conditions of the public service render this impracticable."

Premier's Amendment.

The following is the amendment substituted by the Prime Minister:

"This House congratulates the people of the Province on the fact that under the administration of public affairs by the present Government no such system as the spoils system has any place; recognizes the difficulties which would surround the operation of a system of so-called civil service over a small number of officials, and that it would be wholly unwise and practically impossible to bring under such a system the various officials in the service of the Province, including such officials as Registrars of Deeds, Sheriffs, and County Crown Attorneys.

"This House recognizes the fact that success in a competitive examination is in no way a guarantee of pre-eminent or ordinary fitness for Government service, and this House recognizes the wisdom of and fairness with which the Government has dealt with appointments and promotions in the Government service."

In opening his address, Mr. Rowell said the time had arrived when, in the interests of the Province, the Government should establish a non-partisan Civil Service Commission, so

that all appointments would be made after a competitive examination, except to minor posts in the outside service. This system had worked to advantage in Great Britain, the United States and at Ottawa. The Indian service to-day was the envy of every Government in Europe, and the splendid character of that service was in no small measure responsible for the beneficial results of British rule in India.

"Under the existing system," continued Mr. Rowell, "promotions are made and salaries are raised on the recommendation of the Ministers. I am prepared to assume that the Ministers do what they believe to be best in the public interests, but they are often not in a position to know directly which ones of the office-seekers are most deserving."

Appointment and promotion by competitive examination would mitigate to a very large extent the patronage evil. Members of the House, he said, no doubt suffered more from this evil than from any other. How they were pestered and bothered by people wanting offices!

"We don't mind that," came several voices from the Government benches.

"Well, some of the hon. gentlemen no doubt enjoy it," returned Mr. Rowell. But, he pointed out, public sentiment in Britain had seen the evil of the patronage system and had done away with it.

If Ontario should follow suit, the members of the House would have a larger measure of time to look after the public interests.

It would further have the effect of encouraging more men of public spirit to enter public life, as the patronage system was probably a greater discouragement than anything else.

Agrees in Part.

Sir James Whitney was inclined to agree with a portion of Mr. Rowell's argument, but he would not go all the way with him. Everybody would admit that if the elimination of patronage could be brought about some benefit could be derived from a reorganization of the system. It was impossible, however, to deal with an abstract matter with academic speeches. In a civil service composed of such a small number of persons as the Ontario service, no practical good which could be observed by an onlooker could come by the adoption of such a law as had been suggested.

The great public service departments of Great Britain and the United States were out of all parallel with the situation in Ontario. In a large service competitive examinations might be advisable, but they would bring no advantage to Ontario.

"The advice of the Deputy Minister of a department is of far more consequence as to the efficiency and promotion of an official than all the examinations you can record in the space of fifty years," declared the Prime Minister.

Motion Overdue.

"If this motion is in order now it is several years overdue," said Hon. Mr. Hanna. Since he had become head of his department there had not been one dismissal for partisan reasons, although at the time the Government took office 99 per cent. of the officials in Provincial institutions were Liberals. Mr. Hanna went over a list of Provincial institutions and pointed out various officials appointed by the late Government who had received promotion, because the Government preferred to continue the employment of men they knew rather than experiment with strangers.

Mr. Rowell pointed out that Mr. Hanna vindicated the principle of promotion, which was the spirit of his resolution.

Mr. J. C. Elliott took exception to the statement of the Prime Minister that there was not a sufficiently large number of civil servants in the employ of Ontario to justify the making of appointments by examination. He pointed out that the number of people in the civil service was rapidly growing.

Mr. W. J. Johnston (West Hastings) thought Mr. Rowell's resolution was "the joke of the session."

Mr. Allan Studholme said that labor stood solid as the rock of Gibraltar for the appointment of civil servants according to merit.