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1901-09-20

Senate.

The President took the chair at 10.30 a.m., and read prayers.

PETITION

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Senator BARRETT presented a petition from 190 women officers in the Victorian Postal department within the metropolitan area, praying that the Senate would entertain no proposal for a reduction of the £110 minimum salary provided in the Public Service Bill.

Petition received and read.

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- I wish to know from you, sir, in the absence of any standing order, how I can postpone order of the day No. 3 - Parliamentary Evidence Bill - to this day fortnight.

The PRESIDENT

- When it comes on the honorable senator can move that it be an order of the day for this day fortnight.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

.- But it may not be called upon to-day.

The PRESIDENT

- Then it will appear on the paper for next Wednesday.

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- Exactly. Under the New South Wales standing orders the business-paper is called over each day, so that honorable members may place their business, and it is a convenient system. I desire, if I can, to postpone this order of the day, and I shall be glad if you can direct me.

The PRESIDENT

- I perceive the point raised by the honorable senator, but at present I do not exactly see how it can be met. Perhaps we may meet it under the new standing orders. If the honorable senator is not here at the time it is called on, any other senator can move that it be postponed and made an order of the day for some other day.

Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

- Either my honorable colleague or myself will be here, and we shall take care that it is postponed.

Senator Lt Col Neild

- I shall be here to-day.

Senator O'CONNOR

- It is a Bill of some importance, and we shall see that it does not go off the paper. The standing orders to which the honorable senator referred have been found to work very conveniently in New South Wales, and perhaps, sir, they might be considered by the Standing Orders Committee.

PAPERS

Senator DRAKE laid upon the table

Further correspondence re introduction of Japanese into the Northern Territory.

Further papers respecting communications made to the press by Mr. Outtrim, Deputy Postmaster-General of Victoria.

Ordered to be printed.

The PRESIDENT

- I understand that when the Senate orders papers to be printed, if they have already been printed by another House, there is no necessity to have them reprinted.

Honorable Senators. - Hear, hear.

QUESTION

MAIL SERVICE- TASMANIA

Senator KEATING

asked the Postmaster-General, without notice -

Have the inquiries that were being made by him relative to the establishment of a through day mail

service between Launceston and the West Coast of Tasmania been concluded ; and, if concluded, will he place the result of such inquiries upon the table of this Senate ?

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

- Inquiries are being made, but the information is not yet complete.

MILITARY CAMP- HOBART

Ordered(motion by Senator Keating) -

That there be laid upon the table of this Senate -

Copies of all correspondence and documents in the possession of the department of Defence relative to the recent inquiry into the arrangements made for the holding of a military camp at Hobart during the visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York to that city.

Copies of all correspondence and documents in the possession of the department of Defence relative to the recent dismissal of Private McKercher from the Defence Force of Tasmania.

PROPERTY FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES ACQUISITION BILL

Third Reading

Motion (by Senator O'Connor) proposed -

That this Bill be now read a third time.

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Senator Lt Col NEILD

- I cannot allow this motion to go without a final word of protest. Recognising that the Senate has agreed to the adoption of clause 45, I do not think that it would be consonant with its wishes or with my position here to make any lengthy speech in opposition to the will of the majority. Nevertheless, I believe I am justified - indeed I am simply discharging my duty - in adding a word of final protest before the Bill leaves the Chamber, and for this reason : From first to last, until the clause made its appearance, the States were given to understand, and it was generally, I might say universally, understood, that in taking over the properties referred to the Commonwealth would compensate, to use the phrase of the Constitution Act, the States. We now find that under clause 45 of this Bill, a method has been introduced which proposes to deal with capital in the same manner as revenue and annual expenditure are dealt with in the Constitution Act, and that by this means the States are to lose their property. The property is to be taken over by the Commonwealth, and they are neither to be compensated, as provided by the Constitution Act, nor are they to be relieved of the liabilities under which they lie to the public creditor for moneys borrowed in respect of the properties by the States themselves. Under these circumstances, and believing that the clause will give universal dissatisfaction ; that it will be esteemed, at least in the State from which I come, as a great breach of the understanding under which it entered into the Commonwealth compact, I feel it my duty to say these few words in final protest, and to divide the Senate on the third reading. I feel so strongly on the matter, that I have communicated with the Premier of New South Wales and with the principal newspapers in the capital of that State, because I conceive that it will create a feeling of an exceedingly strong if not a violent character.

Senator McGregor

- Will the honorable senator call the military out?

Senator Lt Col NEILD

- It will produce an amount of ill-feeling and dissatisfaction the end of which it is not possible to foresee.

Senator PEARCE

- I trust that no serious consequences will result from the action taken by Senator Neild. As the statement he made is the property of the Senate, I think we are justified in commenting on it. It is hardly the proper manner in which to deal with legislation for an honorable senator, while it is still within his province to endeavour to alter the Bill, to make representations on the subject to a State Premier. It is derogating from the powers of the Senate to make such representations to a State functionary.

Question put.

The Senate divided -

Ayes ... .. 19

Noes ... .. 4

Majority ... .. 15

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read the third time.

## DISTILLATION BILL

Secondreading.

Vice President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

. - I move -

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is one of the measures which are necessary for the due collection of the Tariff to be imposed, and which it is highly desirable to have passed into law at the earliest possible moment. It is the wish of the Government to have all these machinery measures for the collection of taxation made law before the Tariff is laid on the table of the House of Representatives, and I hope that if that object is not accomplished altogether, there will remain very little to be done by the Legislature in regard to machinery Bills at the time the Tariff is introduced. I do not propose to make a very long explanation on the second reading. I propose simply to state the general effect of the Bill, and I hope I shall have the assistance of the Senate in patting it through committee as soon as possible.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- Not today ?

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Senator O'CONNOR

- We need not necessarily finish it to-day, but I propose to go on with the Bill as far as possible. If the matter were new, or if there were any debatable principle involved, I should not ask the Senate to take the second reading so early after the receipt of the measure, but inasmuch as there must be a Bill of this character, as it is founded on the provisions of similar Acts in all the States, and is mere machinery which must be provided, I take it as a matter of course that the Bill will readily pass. As far as the provisions of the measure are concerned, I do not think honorable senators will find that there is anything new or startling in them. In order to collect excise on spirits it is absolutely essential that the whole process of distillation should be effected under the control of Government inspectors ; that no distillation should go on without a licence; that no still should be sold or erected without the knowledge of the Customs authorities ; and that in every process of distillation carried on the officers of the Customs should have the opportunity of being in attendance in order to see that there is no illicit distillation and that duty is paid on all the spirit that is made. The whole of the provisions of this Bill are really aimed at achieving that object. In the first place there are provisions making it necessary for licences to be granted to distillers. There is a general spirit-maker's licence, authorizing the distillation of spirits from any material ; there are wine-distillers' licences, authorizing the distillation of spirits from wine or the lees of wine : there are vignerons' licences, allowing distillation for the purpose of fortifying wine ; and small test stills are also permitted, which are licensed to be used for experimental purposes. Before a licence can be granted the Customs must be satisfied with regard to the bonafides of the distiller, and must have every information as to the method and processes that are to be carried on upon the particular licensed premises. They must also see that those premises are constructed and arranged in such a way that there shall be no risk of illicit distillation, and that there shall be no obstruction to inspection by the officers whenever they think it necessary to inspect. There is a chapter in the Bill which gives very full powers to the officers in regard to the mode in which the licensed premises are to be kept, and the method of carrying on the distillery. There are also provisions preventing the removal of spirits without the payment of duty, and regulating the computation of the payment of duty. The duty is paid on a computation provided for under clause 48. It will be seen that the amount of spirit is estimated immediately after fermentation has taken place, and before the materials are put into the still. There is a chemical rule by which, in the most accurate way, the amount of spirits can be ascertained, and the amount of duty to be paid can then be fixed. There are other provisions with regard to the powers of the officers. They are very full, and are in some cases similar to the powers given under the Beer Duties Bill and the Customs Bill. I think I have stated all the provisions that it is necessary to explain in regard to the carrying out of the object of the measure, which is to insure the payment of excise duty, for which purpose it is necessary that every portion of the operations of the distillery shall be under the control of the Customs officers. There are two features in the

Bill to which I wish to call attention. In clause 5 there is a novelty in Bill drafting, so far as I know ; but it is, I think, a very sensible departure from old methods. That is, there is a short description of the processes, in which all the technical terms are used, so that honorable senators will be able to understand in a moment, when any technical term is used in the Bill, what is meant by it. This clause does not enact anything in itself. It is simply there for the purpose of explanation, and it is one of those features of drafting upon which my right honorable colleague, the Minister for Customs, is to be congratulated. It is a departure from the old hide-bound ways of drafting Acts of Parliament, and is an endeavour to make them intelligible' to those who may have to read them. There is another feature new in drafting, and that is that there is a long schedule which contains a number of regulations for the control of plant, premises, and matters of that kind that are necessary to be complied with before a licence can be granted. The more convenient way of providing for that control is in the form of a schedule. I do not think that honorable senators will find anything unusual in the Bill ; and with these observations I ask the Senate to read it a second time.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read the second time.

In Committee:

Clause 1 (Short title).

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Does the honorable and learned senator intend to go on with the Bill now? We absolutely have not seen it.

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Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

. - The Bill was circulated this morning. I do not think honorable senators will find any difficulty in dealing with it. If the necessity for postponing any particular clause arises, I shall not be unreasonable.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 4 -

This Act shall apply to the distillation of spirits on which any duty of excise is imposed by the Parliament and to the exclusion after the imposition of such excise of the operation of all State Acts relating to such distillation.

Senator O'CONNOR

- The Senate when in committee upon the Beer Duties Bill made a certain amendment by a large majority. Perhaps it is well that there should be uniformity, and I therefore move -

That all the words after the word "Parliament," line 3, be omitted.

Amendment agreed to. Clause, as amended, agreed to. Clause 1 2 (Description of licences).

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- In this clause the distillers' licences are defined. There is a spiritmaker's licence, a vigneron's licence, and a test still licence. I would ask the Minister to tell us which clause fixes the licence-fees to be paid for these licences.

Senator O'CONNOR

- They will be found in Schedule 1 , and are these : -

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - I do not quite understand why there should be a distinction between a vigneron's licence for distilling spirits from wine or lees of wine for the purpose of fortifying wine, and one for general purposes.

Senator O'Connor

- There is a licence of that sort.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Yes ; and I see there is a charge of five times as much for it. There seems to me to be no reason why there should be any distinction. There appears to me to be no object in discriminating between the licence-fees ; and, as a matter of fact, if we do discriminate there will be very great difficulty in following up the spirits of distillation from grape products, to see whether they are used for fortifying wine, or are sold for other purposes. I do not know what provision there is for checking the products from distillation under these different licences. If it were left entirely to the vignerons, it will be seen at once that there

would be enormous loop-holes of escape. I am very glad an amendment has been made, limiting the kind of spirit to be used for the purpose of fortifying wine to grape spirit, but I can quite see what difficulty there might be in checking the product of distillation in vineyards if the matter were left entirely to the vigneron. If they are to be used for the purpose only of fortifying wine, the licence-fee is to be £5, but there might be loop-holes for the spirit being sold as brandy, for the distillation of which a licence-fee of £25 should be paid. At present, it seems to me that it might be better to eliminate the distinction.

Senator O'CONNOR

- It will be seen that there is a general licence, authorizing the licensee to distil spirits from any material ; then there is a wine distiller's licence, authorizing the distillation of spirits from, wine or lees of wine. In those two cases the general business of the distiller will be carried on, and it is therefore right as an ordinary matter of business that a considerable fee should be charged. These distilleries will be carried on under the inspection of officers provided for in a later part of the Bill. The vigneron's licences are altogether different, as under them the licensee is entitled to distil spirits only from wine or lees of wine, and only for the purpose of fortifying wine. He will not be able to carry on a distillery business in the ordinary way.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- How is it proposed to check him %

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Senator O'CONNOR

- The checking is provided for in Part 6. Under clause 52 a vigneron's licence cannot be held by any person unless he is the occupier of at least 5 acres of vineyard in bearing, or is the proprietor of a winery. Under clause 53 no vigneron's still is to be used for distilling spirits from material other than wine or lees of wine, and the spirit distilled is to be used only for the purpose of fortifying wine; and then under clause 54 all operations for the fortifying of wine are to be carried on in the presence of an officer. So that all the operations of the vigneron with his still will be under the inspection of an officer, and the fortifying of wine will also be under inspection.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 27 (Supervision by officers).

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - As we have reached a new part of the Bill, I desire, by permission, to direct attention to clause 25. The clause deals with the time within which a distiller is to comply with the conditions prescribed in the Bill as to plant and premises. I wish now simply to say that the time appears to me to be very short, and if before the Bill passes out of committee I find that it is really too short, I shall ask that the clause be recommitted.

Senator O'CONNOR

- The honorable and learned senator will see that the clause refers to licences in force under the existing Act. Those licences will be granted under certain conditions, as to premises, buildings, improvements, and so on, and where it appears to the collector that the conditions prescribed in the Bill with respect to premises should be carried out, the clause fixes the time within which the distiller must comply with them at not less than three months. The collector will not interfere unless something happens which makes it necessary in his opinion that the provisions should be carried out. On reflection I think that the honorable and learned senator will not find any reason to object to the clause. I may say at once that if there is any serious objection to any of these clauses before the Bill finally gets out of the committee stage I shall not raise any objection to a recommitment.

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - I see that clause 25 refers to premises to which existing licences are applicable, and it is necessary that the conditions as to equipment of plant and premises should be brought into conformity with the new law, but it might perhaps be a serious disadvantage in the case of existing distilleries if the distillers had not sufficient time allowed for complying with the conditions. I quite appreciate what the Minister has said. I understand that the Bill will not be taken out of committee to-day, and we shall therefore have an opportunity of dealing with the matter, if it is found to be necessary.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 28 (Accommodation for officers).

Senator DOBSON

- This clause provides that every distiller shall provide, in connexion with his distillery, reasonable office accommodation for the supervising officer. I agree that that is right, but the clause goes on to say - And when required by the collector, board and lodging for the officer.

I would like to ask the Minister if he is satisfied that we have power to compel a distiller to provide board and lodging for the officer without charge 1

Senator O'Connor

- No, not without charge. A subsequent clause provides that he shall be entitled to charge a reasonable price for it.

Senator DOBSON

- I was going to ask also, if it was fair, even if we had the power, to exercise it. It appears to me that the distiller might say that it was not convenient for him to do this.

Senator O'CONNOR

- I think the honorable and learned senator will see that it is reasonable that this power should be given, because the duty of the officer may involve his attendance at all hours of the day and at night. The operation of distilling may be going on at any hour of the night, and that will necessitate the officer being constantly on the premises.

Senator Dobson

- I see now that it may . be a matter of convenience to both parties.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 52 -

No vigneron's licence shall be granted to or held by any person unless he is the occupier of at least 5 acres of vineyard in bearing, or is the proprietor of a winery.

Senator DOBSON

- I should like to ask the Minister in charge of the Bill whether it is reasonable to provide that a vigneron shall not have a licence unless he occupies a vineyard of at least 5 acres. I do not know what the yield is per acre, but it seems to me that this may be an unfair limitation for the small man. Everything must have a beginning, and the limit provided here seems to be a little high. I do not, however, profess to have any expert knowledge on the point.

Senator O'CONNOR

- The reason for the limitation may be readily explained. This clause deals with the issue of licences to distil spirits from wine for the purpose of fortifying wine. Such distillation must be under the inspection of a Customs officer, and it would be unreasonable to say that inspection shall be provided in the case of every vineyard.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I have made some inquiries and have been informed that it is inadvisable to encourage the licensing of small stills ; that the existence of small stills opens the door to very grave frauds on the Customs. I am further informed that, as a matter of fact, a vigneron with less than 30 acres could not afford to distil legally, although of course he could afford to do it illegally. It would pay such a man better to turn his grapes into wine, or sell them rather than pay the fee for a vigneron's licence, and incur the other expenses connected with distillation. This is a matter which affects the Customs. I do not profess to be an expert, but I have had the advantage of conversing with one of the largest experts in South Australia, and it is from him that I have gained this information. Representatives of the vigneron interest in Victoria support that view. A circular in regard to the use of grape spirit has been issued by a conference, and I have discussed the matter with the secretary and another leading man in the movement, who waited upon me. They unhesitatingly condemn the use of small stills. They say it will not affect them, but that it will undoubtedly affect the Customs. The same point cropped up in Victoria some years ago, and the issue of licences for small stills resulted in great fraud.

Senator Dobson

- Then the limit of 5 acres should be increased.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- In my opinion, we should make it 30 acres instead of 5.

Senator O'CONNOR

- Perhaps ' the honorable senator who has just spoken is unintentionally confusing two different matters. First of all, clause 12 provides that wine distillers' licences may be. granted, authorizing the licensee to distil spirits from wine or lees of wine. That relates to the business of distilling, and I think Senator Sargood may perhaps be referring to licences of that kind. Of course, there is no doubt that, unless we insist upon a distillery being carried on under proper conditions, it would be very unwise to issue licences. Wherever a licence is issued, every precaution is taken to see that the ordinary proper conditions and safeguards are enforced. Then this clause provides for the issue of vigneron's licences, which only authorize the licensee to distil spirits from wine or lees of wine for the purpose of fortifying wine.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- That is where the danger occurs.

Senator O'CONNOR

- But the vigneron ' does not sell his spirit, except, perhaps, to his neighbours. When we remember that it is only for the purpose of enabling a vigneron to make his own wine, I think Ave should be careful not to prescribe an area larger than is absolutely essential. It appeal's to us that the man who has 5 acres actually under grapes is really carrying on business in such a way that it would be reasonable to allow an officer to be present while operations are going on at his vineyard. Notice will be given, and an officer will, attend while the operations are being conducted, and when the wine is being fortified. It is quite right that we should see that the revenue is not defrauded ; but, on the other hand, we should be equally careful not to deprive these small vinegrowers of a very great convenience to them and their neighbours. The Government think that 5 acres is a fan' limitation.

Senator MCGREGOR

- I should like to point out to Senator Sargood and to honorable senators who are disposed to claim an extension from 5 to 20 or 30 acres that at present vine-growing is only in its infancy in Australia. Those who know anything about it will bear me out in the statement that at present from 100 to 150 gallons of wine to the acre' is about the average production. But those who have expert knowledge say that this output can be increased, by proper cultivation and propagation of the vine, to 250 or 300 gallons per acre. Such improvements would make a very great difference. Then again a man with a small area under grapes may live in a district in which there are a number of other vigneron's holding small allotments, and it would be a very great convenience if one of those small growers took the responsibility of keeping a still, and of producing spirits for the purpose of fortifying his own and his neighbours' wines.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- Surely he is not allowed to sell. If he does he becomes a distiller.

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Senator MCGREGOR

- Could not the holder of a licence buy grapes from other small vigneron's in the same locality ? It is not really necessary that he should have even 5 acres, as long as the supervision is what it ought to be, and the quantity distilled is not too small to make an unjustifiable charge on the Customs department. My object in rising was to ask the Minister to report the Bill. I have no idea of advancing any policy in regard to this or other clauses, but even this clause is of a debatable character. Honorable senators had no idea when this Bill was before the House of Representatives of the form in which it would be sent up here. It only reached us last night. Many honorable senators require to read the Bill, and to make inquiries from experts as to the operation of certain clauses. I think it is only fair under those circumstances that progress should be now reported. We are all anxious to carry it through, but we have plenty of work for to-day, and I am sure the majority of honorable senators will have time between this and Wednesday next to make the inquiries necessary to enable them to deal with the Bill satisfactorily. I am sure some of them will do so, and will come prepared on Wednesday to take a stand either in one direction or the other. If we report progress now it may save a great deal of discussion that may have to be repeated on a future occasion.

Senator O'CONNOR

- I am quite willing to fall in with the view of the committee that there should be an opportunity for the full discussion . of any clause that may prove to be worthy of future consideration ; but I would suggest to Senator McGregor that his desire really will be carried out if we go through the committee stage to-day, and set down the adoption of the report for Wednesday next.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Do not take the Bill out of committee.

Senator O'CONNOR

- It really makes no difference, because I will undertake to recommit any clause.

Senator De Largie

- But the discussion will be limited.

Senator O'CONNOR

- When we recommit a clause, we take the Bill into committee again, the only difference being that we do so for the purpose of reconsidering a particular clause.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Will the honorable and learned gentleman undertake to recommit the whole Bill 1

Senator O'CONNOR

- There would be no advantage in doing that. If there is any clause which honorable senators desire to have postponed in order that they may have time to make further inquiries, I will undertake to recommit it. We should proceed with the Bill as far as we can, and consider any postponed clauses on a future occasion.

Senator McGregor

- I would ask to have the clause now under consideration postponed.

Senator O'CONNOR

- Very well.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- It would be very much better, I do not say to report progress now, but to go through the clauses of the Bill proforma. That is what I understood Senator O'Connor was prepared to do when I questioned him on the subject before.

Senator O'Connor

- When I said that I would not take the Bill finally out of the committee, I meant that I would be willing to recommit any particular clause.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- But that would be taking it out of committee. It is very much more convenient that the Bill should be reported at a particular stage. Any clause may then be reconsidered.

Senator O'Connor

- Not without recommitment.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Yes ; under our standing orders any clause may be reconsidered before the Bill is taken out of committee.

Senator O'Connor

- The honorable and learned senator is mistaken. On principle, when we have once come to a decision on a clause, we cannot go back on that decision.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- My honorable and learned friend is mistaken. Any clause can be reconsidered. The practice has been found a convenient and an excellent one. The Bill is taken through committee to the stage of considering the title, and before it goes out of committee we can move the reconsideration of any clause.

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The CHAIRMAN

- There does appear to be some inconsistency between the practice and the standing orders. The practice so far has been to recommit the Bill on the reporting stage. But standing order 294 says - A clause that has been passed or amended and passed, cannot, on the same day, be again considered and amended, but whenever it is moved that the report be brought up, the reconsideration of any clause may be moved as an amendment.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON (South Australia). - The standing order to which you, sir, have called attention, has always been acted on in South Australia with great convenience. It has largely facilitated business", and has been greatly in the interest of perfecting measures. A formal motion in the House is always attended with a certain amount of inconvenience, but in committee, at this particular stage, one



can move that certain clauses be reconsidered, and that answers the purpose. I am quite willing that we should go through as many clauses as possible proforma, on the understanding that the Bill is not to be taken out of committee.

Senator O'CONNOR

- I am willing to take either course with regard to clause 52 - to pass it now, and then, if Senator McGregor desires it, later on to reconsider it, or to postpone it. I think it would be better to go right on, and then Senator McGregor may ask for a reconsideration of the clause before the Bill leaves the committee.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Any clause?

Senator O'CONNOR

- Yes ; any clause.

Senator WALKER

- In Queensland, where I resided a good many years ago, the best vineyard in our neighbourhood did not exceed 4 acres, and yet the vigneron had a still. As Senator McGregor says, he got grapes from other vineyards and utilized them. It would be a hardship for such a man suddenly to discover that he could no longer carry on his trade. I suggest that the area provided for in the clause should be reduced to 3 acres.

Senator O'CONNOR

- If there is to be a discussion, we had better have it after getting full information. I undertake to have the clause reconsidered before we leave committee.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 54 (Officer's presence).

Senator MACFARLANE(Tasmania).I hope that this clause will also be reconsidered.

Senator O'Connor

- The honorable senator might mention it again.

The CHAIRMAN

- On the motion that I do report the Bill an amendment can be moved that certain clauses be reconsidered. In the meantime I would ask honorable senators to make up their minds as to which clauses they desire to be reconsidered.

Senator O'CONNOR

- Perhaps that would be a little hard on honorable senators. I would like to carry the Bill through today, except the title, and on the next occasion, after the title is carried, but before the Bill is reported, a motion may be made to reconsider any particular clauses.

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - That I think will satisfy every one. The committee will be still seised of the Bill, and on the motion that the Chairman report the Bill an honorable senator who has obtained fresh information, or who wishes to raise any point, can move as to any clause he desires to have reconsidered.

The CHAIRMAN

- I am quite willing to take any course which will suit the convenience of the committee.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 57 (Strength of spirits for fortifying).

Senator Mcgregor(South Australia). - This clause is very debatable. Expert knowledge can be obtained by a great many honorable senators if they will only take the trouble, and weigh carefully the different interests represented by their informants, as to the strength of the spirit which it is most advantageous to use in fortifying. I have no desire to create a discussion now. It is better, in regard to this clause and the following one, if any information be forthcoming next week, to have a discussion then.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 64 (Power under writ of assistance).

Senator Sir FREDERICKSARGOOD (Victoria). - In this clause an amendment will be required very similar to that made in the Customs Bill, at the instance of Senator McGregor. I think the words of his amendment were " in any enclosure."

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Senator O'CONNOR

- I shall note that.

Clause agreed to.

Schedule III.

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - I shall ask for the reconsideration of this schedule after further inquiry with regard to the capacity of the stills which are mentioned under the head of plant. I think that in that respect the schedule will want some modification.

Senator WALKER(New South Wales). - I wish to direct attention to rules 59 and 60, with regard to the marking or branding of cases and bottles. An amendment was carried in regard to locally-produced spirit in the House of Representatives, and it is considered that this provision should also apply to imported spirit. The local blenders are at a disadvantage if they have to give this information, and the importers have not. I move no amendment at this stage, but merely mention the point to Senator O'Connor. I also call attention to that part of the schedule which deals with vigneron's licences. The New South Wales Wine Association, which consists of experts, points out with regard to the size of the stills provided for in these rules that there are no vigneron's in New South Wales who have stills of this size. The size provided in the rules should be the minimum.

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - The whole of the rules under the heading of " vigneron's licences," from rule 84 to rule 93, are allied to those rules under the heading of "plant" to which [ have already referred.

Progress reported.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE BILL

In Committee(consideration resumed from 19th September, vide page 4976) :

Clause 5 - (1.) For the purposes of this Act the Governor-General may from time to time appoint some fit and proper person to be Public Service Commissioner and not exceeding six fit and proper persons to be inspectors. The commissioner shall submit for the consideration of the Governor-General reports as to any matters requiring to be dealt with by the Governor-General under this Act. . . . Each inspector shall exercise, during the pleasure of the commissioner, such powers, duties, and authorities ... as the commissioner thinks fit to assign to him.

Senator MCGREGOR

- In the interests of economy - because we have to consider the charges that any legislation we may pass will impose upon the people - I move -

That the word " six," line 4, be omitted, with a view of inserting the word " three."

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

. - I cannot accept the amendment. I stated when moving the second reading of the Bill that it is not intended that six inspectors shall be appointed. This is only a limit fixed in the Bill. Possibly, during the early years of the Commonwealth, it may be sufficient to appoint three, in order to get the work done, but it is desirable that there should be power in the Bill to increase the number if necessary. It is unwise to have to come to Parliament from time to time to amend a Bill of this description. Certainly in the long run it will be necessary to have six inspectors to carry out the duties required of them. There will not necessarily be one for each State ; but probably it will be found necessary ultimately to have one inspector for each State. Six, therefore, seems to be a convenient number, and as it is a maximum the committee might adopt it.

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Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- I feel very strongly that these inspectors are not needed at all, and that what is proposed is an unduly expensive and cumbrous system of dealing with the public service. I disapprove of the whole of this part of this scheme, which means imposing very heavy expenses upon the people of the Commonwealth. It does not seem to me that Senator Drake has quite answered Senator McGregor when he puts it that it may be inconvenient to come to Parliament in order to increase the number of inspectors. That is just the very thing that ought to be done. We are frittering away the responsibilities of Parliament at the outset of the Commonwealth, and before that state of things is necessary.. I frankly admit that the time may come when the exigencies of the public service and the progress of affairs in connexion with this Commonwealth may require a variety of things to be done. But that time has not arrived yet, and we are launching into expense which is not justifiable at the present stage. There is nothing in the condition of

the public service of the Commonwealth at present to warrant our wantonly contracting very heavy obligations of" this kind, and to require a system of control which is not devised upon the most moderate and economical lines.. I strongly appeal to honorable senators to bear in mind that at the present stage of the Commonwealth we are organizing the service. When the organization is complete, and the machine is, as we believe, fully equipped, then will be the time to minimize the functions of Parliament if we like ; but I think the direct control of Parliament should never be minimized. Now, however, when we are organizing the service, is just the time when Parliament should keep its hand as strongly as possible directly upon the public service. We debated that matter at considerable length on the amendment dealt with yesterday, and when the clause comes to be put in its amended shape, I shall be found voting against it. At present I am content to support this amendment on the grounds put by Senator McGregor. I say we must have some sort of regard to economy. As we are to have a commissioner, surely he will be sufficient to stand as a buffer between Ministerial control and the service, if that is the object of his appointment. The commissioner is to be irremovable for seven years, and is to be established in such a position that he may be without fear of the interference of Ministers or of Parliament. It must be remembered that he will not do everything himself, because he must ".have a staff. All these officers will constitute a part of the system of control, and, having a staff, lie surely can send out a clerk, as is done in the public offices of the different States at the present time, to examine books, and all that sort of thing. Senator DRAKE - Then they will be inspectors.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Yes ; but they will not be inspectors at £800 a year each. Six times £800 is £4800, and these thousands of pounds seem to be treated as if they were only so much dirt.

Senator Pearce

- It is said it is only 1 per cent.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Yes ; but we might deal with all these things in the same way. I disbelieve in this commissioner altogether, and I wish to have Ministerial control, with the control of Parliament over the Minister. But honorable senators think otherwise, and if we have a -commissioner - a sort of human buffer between the Minister and the public service - surely that is all honorable senators want 1 We do not want six inspectors appointed at what I call a monstrous salary, when we have for the assistance of the commissioner six or seven heads of departments and a chief officer in each State as well. The whole business really reminds one of the rhyme -

Big fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'eni,

And these fleas have other fleas, and so in infinitum.

We have the chief officers, the heads of departments, the six inspectors, and then the commissioner. We shall have a service beyond control, and the expenses will mount up in a way which will shock us when we come to see the total.

Senator DRAKE

- I am glad that Senator Symon has told us straight out that he does not approve of the appointment of any inspectors at all. It seems to me that it will be absolutely impossible for the commissioner to know anything of the service in outlying parts of the Commonwealth, unless he has inspectors who will act as eyes and ears for him. Senator Symon objects on the ground of economy, and thinks we shall not be justified in incurring this expenditure. I think we should not be justified in escaping it if it is clearly shown that it is necessary in order to enable the commissioner to know what he is doing.

Senator Symon proposes that there should be some sort of inspection carried out, but, instead . of having inspectors properly appointed for the work, he would allow the commissioner to send a clerk from his office to do it. What would be the saving in having a number of clerks going about doing the work of inspection, instead of having proper inspectors 1 The result would probably be that we should incur about the same expense without getting anything like such good results. We should have a commissioner sitting down somewhere in Australia, having no means whatever of ascertaining facts which should be within his knowledge in order to enable him to correctly discharge his duties. This is economy gone mad. With regard to the interjection of Senator Pearce about 1 per cent., it was shown in the discussion last night, not that the cost of the six inspectors would be 1 per cent., but that the whole cost of providing this method of controlling the public service would not amount to anything like 1 per cent.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Why should it amount to 1 per cent.?

Senator DRAKE

- I do not say that it should ; but I am rebutting an assertion which was almost too extravagant for consideration. Senator McGregor would reduce the number of inspectors to three, and the expense of inspectors to £2,400 ; and, according to Senator Symon, inspection of some sort must be carried on, but instead of having properly qualified inspectors, he proposes to send out clerks from various offices. Senator Symon is supporting the amendment which has been moved by Senator. McGregor with a view to knocking out the provision with regard to inspectors altogether, and I wish that to be understood.

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Senator STEWART

- I am in rather a peculiar position, as I agree with Senator Symon in some of the remarks he made, while I disagree very -strongly with him in others. I am extremely anxious that Parliament should retain its control of the public service, and I am also anxious for economy, and it is for these reasons that I intend to support the clause as it stands. With regard to Parliament keeping its hold on the service, is not the appointment of a commissioner and a number of inspectors the surest way of Parliament being put in possession of accurate knowledge of what is going on in every department of the public service under the control of the Commonwealth? I do not know any other method. My only objection to the clause is, not that it provides for six inspectors, but that it does not provide for a dozen. I believe twelve inspectors will be found necessary. On the score of economy, Senator Symon objects to the expenditure of these few thousand pounds in supervision, and says that the money will be absolutely lost. Do we find private companies so sparing of money spent in supervising the operations of people in their employment ? Nothing of the kind. If our Postal department were in the hands of a private company they would have 40 inspectors instead of half-a-dozen ; every twelfth man would be an inspector - an individual going round, prying upon the operations of the employes of the company ; and all this would be done in the interest of economy. I have been surprised at the position which Senator McGregor takes up. I could understand the honorable senator if he said that he did not believe in inspectors at all, and advocated the entire abolition of the office of inspector ; but the honorable senator advocates the appointment of three inspectors. Three inspectors for the whole of Australia ! Did ever any honorable senator hear of such a ridiculous proposal ? Surely Senator McGregor imagines that he is still living in South Australia, a little obscure corner of the Australian States. Has the honorable senator forgotten that we are now a nation - that we have east, west, north, and south, and Tasmania as well coming within our jurisdiction ? I would ask honorable senators to allow their minds to expand with the altered conditions. It appears to me that they are still under the shadow of provincialism. Can they not get out of the rut, and on to the broad highway of the Commonwealth ? Let them for once abandon their old ideas, and come out into the light, and then we shall have some statesmanship, and we shall have the affairs 15 b 2 of the Commonwealth managed upon broad, comprehensive, and, I hope, also upon economical lines. If we go on with the old system and have no inspectors, I believe that the result will be that every department under the control of the Commonwealth will be overloaded with men. For that reason I support the clause as it stands, and I hope the Government will not abandon a single inspector.

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Senator WALKER

- It was quite refreshing to me to hear Senator Stewart give utterance to his views. I, for once, find myself in perfect accord with him. If we are going to have a public service commissioner, he must have eyes, and the inspectors will be travelling eyes for the commissioner. An inspector should not be continued too long in the work of inspection in the same district, and if, for instance, he spends one year in inspection in Queensland or in New South Wales, he should the following year go to another part of the Commonwealth. Under such a system, the six inspectors should, after a time, have a very fair knowledge of the personnel of the whole of the public service. They would then be able to see that different parts of the Commonwealth require different treatment. In the case of a man who is expatriated, if I may so call it, to Port Darwin or Thursday Island, an inspector will be able to see the necessity of giving him a special climate allowance. Having myself spent some time at Normanton, I am fully impressed with the necessity for climate allowances, and I strongly supported them in an institution with which I am connected. Men

living in a comfortable climate like that of Tasmania, where living is cheap, ought not to be treated in exactly the same way as officers who are obliged to live at Port Darwin. The inspectors will be able to give most useful information to the commissioner and to Parliament. I am delighted with Senator Stewart's remarks, and, as I said last night, I am sorry that there is a limitation in the number of inspectors to be appointed. For a time, six may be sufficient ; but the number is not greater than in my opinion will be absolutely necessary.

Senator MCGREGOR(South Australia). - I am amused to witness the enthusiasm of Senator Walker when he finds a convert to his own way of thinking. His advocacy of inspectors reminds me of an incident that I once saw. I remember seeing a poor packer on a railway line trying to straighten a fish-plate, and he had the engineer-in-chief, the resident engineer, the district foreman, and his own ganger looking on. That was inspection with a vengeance. I should like to ask Senator Walker and Senator Stewart what all the officers in the departments are doing at the present time. Let us take the Postal department as an illustration. Is there no one looking after the telegraph boys? Is there no one looking after the young women at the telephone switch-board? Is there no one looking after the postmen ; and is there no one looking after those who are looking after them? Yet Senators Walker and Stewart desire to have somebody to look after these officers. They wish to have the Commonwealth service consisting principally of officers, and of very few men who do any work. That is why the people of Australia are so disgusted with the Commonwealth at the present time. They say that we are spending all their money on high officers, and are starving the service so far as we can. I do not want such a state of affairs to exist. I may tell Senator Stewart why I prefer three inspectors to six. As a matter of fact, I do not want any inspectors at all, nor do I want a commissioner. I know the temper of the committee, however, and I know that it has been decided already that there shall be a commissioner. In these circumstances I think there is more likelihood of an amendment being carried to reduce the number of inspectors to three than to do away with their appointment altogether, and I hope I have common sense enough to move something which there is a possibility of carrying. The Postmaster-General has said that ultimately it may be necessary to have six inspectors. Ultimately, when the population of Australia attains to something like that of the United States of America, it may be necessary to have a good many more alterations. For many years to come, however, three officers will be ample - if there is any necessity for inspection other than that which is going on at the present time, and what ought to go on, every officer in a department doing his duty, seeing that his subordinates are doing their duty, and reporting to the Minister controlling the department. I wish to reduce the number of inspectors, because I think it will be in the interests of economy to do so.

Senator GLASSEY

- I do not find myself quite in accord with Senator McGregor as to the appointment of three inspectors. Like Senator Stewart, I wish honorable senators would remember that we are no longer individual States ; that we are now a union of States. Senator McGregor, generally speaking, is a practical man, and I wish to ask him whether he thinks it will be possible for three men to inspect thoroughly - and I think that the inspection should be thorough - no fewer than 6,000 post-offices scattered over an enormous area of country. Of course, we do not say that an inspector is wanted at every post-office ; we say singly that where there are 6,000 post-offices and 200 Custom-houses scattered over a very wide area ; where there are to be Defence offices and Marine offices, and other departments which have not yet fully come under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth, there should be inspection. In the interests of the far outlying portions of Australia, where vast numbers of persons are employed who are seldom visited by heads of departments, and whose claims do not come under the notice of those in authority, it is highly essential that we should have sufficient inspectors. I certainly think that six are not too many.

Senator WALKER

- It is true economy.

Senator GLASSEY

- I entirely agree with Senator Walker that it is true economy. The commissioner with the six inspectors will save more than five or six times the amount of their salaries every year.

Senator Pearce

- Then the services of some permanent heads ought to be dispensed with.

Senator GLASSEY

- Certain honorable senators seem to think that some heads of departments have arrived at such a stage

of efficiency that they require no supervision. It is in regard to some of these very officers, however, that the supervision of inspectors is necessary, in order to see that they do their duty thoroughly. The claims of persons who have been located for years in the northern parts of Queensland and other places will also receive some consideration if inspectors are appointed.

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Senator McGregor

- Will the honorable senator require any one to inspect the inspectors ?

Senator GLASSEY

- It is just possible the committee will see that there is sufficient supervision over the commissioner and inspectors, and over the Minister who will be the political head. Honorable senators have talked about the extra expenditure involved. If the whole staff for which the Bill provides were established today the expense would be only £6,300 per annum. Is that a sum to be cavilled at ? I have been more than astonished at some remarks made by Senator Symon in regard to what he is pleased to call this enormous expenditure. With six States having a population of 4,000,000, is an expenditure of £6,300 per annum to be a heart-break - shall I say " a neck-break " - to the people ?

Senator Charleston

- But there are only two departments to control.

Senator Stewart

- The Chief Justice of the Commonwealth will want about as much for himself.

Senator GLASSEY

- Of course, a clerk could be sent out from the Post-office in Melbourne to inspect some of the suburban post-offices, but would it be possible to send a Bureau officer to Townsville or Rockhampton, to Cammermewal or away into Blackall or some of our far distant post-offices on the southern and western border, or right up to Burketown ? It would be absolutely impossible to do so. The officers stationed there are just the people who require some consideration. They want inspectors to call upon them, to look into the salaries they receive, and see how they have been banished practically for years.

Senator Playford

- That could be found out without sending an officer to those places.

Senator GLASSEY

- No ; it is impossible. I have received letters from North and West Queensland and other places as to the small salaries received by many officers banished there. Senator McGregor, with his ideas of economy, cannot see anything beyond South Australia, which, having regard to its population, is only a small State. He, with other honorable senators, seems to centre everything on some one particular State, without taking into consideration the fact that we are now a union of States. The enormous number of employees scattered over this tremendous continent surely require some inspection . They should have some means of communicating with the commissioner, and through him with the Minister, and thence to Parliament. I certainly do not think we should cavil at the expense. From my knowledge of the extensive State from which I come, I am certain that the appointment of this staff will lead to a saving four, five, or even ten times greater than the salaries they receive. Their appointment will certainly be an advantage to officers banished away in remote parts of Australia, far distant from centres of civilization.

Senator HIGGS

- I simply wish to point out a weak point in Senator McGregor's armour, and that of his colleague from South Australia. We have been led to believe that everything is right and proper in South Australia, but I think that the instance quoted by Senator McGregor just now shows that everything is all wrong there. When he says that the chief engineer, the resident engineer, the foreman, and a ganger were watching a poor fellow straightening a fishplate on the railways-

Senator McGregor

- I did not say that was in South Australia ; the incident happened in Victoria.

Senator HIGGS

- It indicates, at all events, that inspectors are required to see that the affairs of the State are carried on in a more economical way.

Senator EWING

- I do not desire the appointment of a commissioner or of inspectors, but seeing that the committee has

resolved that a commissioner shall be appointed, I think that he really should be the commissioner and the judge. To test the question, I should like, if Senator McGregor will temporarily withdraw his amendment, to move the omission of all the words after "commissioner" in the first sentence of the clause.

The CHAIRMAN

- The honorable senator can test the feeling of the committee by the vote upon Senator McGregor's proposal to omit the word "six," which is the question now before the committee. The amendment which he wishes to propose would preclude the honorable senator for South Australia from afterwards re-moving his amendment.

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Senator EWING

- These inspectors are persons who are to be appointed for a term of seven years, and are also to a certain extent to be over the head of Parliament which created them ; so that we shall have practically, independent of Parliament, not only a commissioner but six inspectors. What sort Of officer will the commissioner under this clause really be I take it that he is to sit in his office in Melbourne, while the inspectors go round the country to gather information and make recommendations, which the commissioner, in nine cases out of ten, will not be in a position to question. The inspectors are the men who will go about amongst the civil servants, and who really will be the commissioner. Let us have a commissioner who will be one in truth as well as in name, and let him go and gather information from the various departments.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- A travelling showman.

Senator EWING

- I do not wish that we should have an ornamental person. I want somebody who will not sit in an office in Melbourne, but will go out and do administrative duties.

Senator O'Connor

- He will not have time to go anywhere.

Senator EWING

- If the commissioner is going to accord facilities to, and classify the civil service of Western Australia, surely he will have to go to that State? There are inspectors there; indeed there are inspectors throughout the length and breadth of the civil service. Every department has officers in certain positions of control, who are just as competent, if not more competent, to report to the commissioner as the six inspectors he will send flying all over the Commonwealth. The departmental inspectors are more in touch with their officers than the proposed inspectors could be, and would be able to give the commissioner information on which he could act. If a dispute arises they will give their evidence to him, and he really will be their judge ; whereas if we appoint six inspectors over the head of Parliament as one is to be appointed to each State, the inspector for Western Australia will to all intents and purposes be the commissioner for that State, because the commissioner himself will not be in a position to question the wisdom of his reports. Senator Walker and others have told us that it is desirable to have persons who will inspect the civil service. True, but we have them all over the Commonwealth in the various departments. For instance, in Kalgoorlie there is an officer in a department who is the chief officer of that district, and who is in touch with the business in his district.

Senator Sir John Downer

- But his report is not to be conclusive on the Commonwealth.

Senator EWING

- No.

Senator Sir John Downer

- Does not the honorable and learned senator think we ought to have some outside authority to see whether he is doing his work ?

Senator EWING

- The report of the inspectors will not be conclusive. The intention of the Bill is to provide some person to gather evidence for, and report to the commissioner. The man who can report best to the commissioner is the man who is in closest touch with his officers. An inspector would be appointed for the whole of

Western Australia, and how could he possibly be in touch with all the departments of that State and their various officers ? The present system of inspection is quite sufficient and is more effective, because the inspectors of the various localities are local residents, in touch with the officers in their departments, and consequently infinitely better qualified to report to the commissioner who is to be the ultimate judge than any flying inspector can possibly be. If, as has been suggested by Senator Walker and others, the absence of these inspectors would, mean the want of inspection and control, I could accede to their proposition, but Senator Glassey will see that their absence will not mean the want of inspection and control.

Senator Glassey

- But I know in many instances it will absolutely.

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Senator EWING

- It cannot be more effective than the present system of district inspection, and by reason of the isolation of many of the officers and the isolation of localities, undoubtedly there must be, to a large extent, an absence of inspection whatever system we adopt. For instance, we might divide Western Australia into twenty districts, with a superior officer, certainly one of the officers of the departments, controlling each district. That man would be infinitely better qualified to report to the commissioner than, and his report would be of much more value than that of, any man sent from the eastern States, who would travel through Western Australia, gather his evidence, but know nothing of his own knowledge. What benefit can be a report from a man of that kind ? May I suggest to Senator Glassey that the inspector will come into touch with the chief men in a locality and will never come into touch with the rank and file of the departments ! He will never know the rank and file.

Senator O'Keefe

- It will be his duty to do so.

Senator EWING

- Theoretically, I agree that it will be.

Senator Sir John Downer

- Why should he not be a local man ?

Senator EWING

- That is just what I am arguing for ? If we adopt this system we are to have one man for Western Australia, but I hold that one man cannot be a competent inspector for the whole of that State, and that it is infinitely better to adopt the departmental system of a division of the State into various districts..

Senator Smith knows that in Kalgoorlie there is one officer who is head officer of that district.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- And absolutely inefficient.

Senator EWING

- That is an argument against the administration. Surely any one can see the distinction between a bad administration and a faulty system. The argument that the man in Kalgoorlie is an incompetent person is an absurd one to intrude upon the committee.

Senator Pearce

- We might have an incompetent inspector.

Senator EWING

- We might have an incompetent inspector or an incompetent commissioner, but still that would not affect the system ; that is a matter of administration. I suggest that the present system is better than one which will create the inspector stationed in Western Australia the commissioner, while the commissioner himself will be simply a conduit-pipe through which the inspector's opinion is put into effect. It would be just as reasonable to have six commissioners for each State as to have one commissioner for all the States, who will know nothing except that which he is told by his six inspectors. The commissioner would not be able to listen to the local men. Perhaps the inspector would go up, and be treated very well. We know how inspectors travel through the country, and when the whole affairs of the departments are in their hands, do you think they will ever get to a man with a grievance ! They will never see the poor man who is being ill-treated, and he will not get justice. Suppose, for instance, that the postmaster at Kalgoorlie has a dozen men in his employ. He may know when the inspector is coming round, but his officers will know nothing



about the coming visit.

Senator Glassey

- How will he know 1

Senator EWING

- The inspector may come and go half-a-dozen times before the junior clerks can know anything about it.. In passing this clause we are providing really for six commissioners, and if Senator Glassey really believes in the control being fixed in one man, let him have it done effectively. I do not know of any court which will allow hearsay evidence to be given. If we appoint six inspectors we shall practically appoint six commissioners. It is infinite!)' better to allow the commissioner to gather his evidence direct from the officers of the departments - that is, from the local inspectors - than to let it filter to him through the medium of men who practically know nothing about the conditions with which they are dealing.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- I think Senator Ewing has fallen into the provincialism which Senator Stewart attributed to some others. The general assumption is that all our departments are perfectly managed, that we have exquisite heads, that we can always depend on their reports, and that now that the States have handed over the responsibility of these departments to the Commonwealth, it ought to accept that responsibility with the burden of the provincial officers who are to report from time to time. It comes to this - that the Commonwealth, in taking them over with the service, is to exercise no authority over them, and is to leave the control of the departments to the identical persons whose interest it may be to make the Commonwealth pay, and reduce the liability of the States. Is that fair 1 Does that appeal to my honorable and learned friend, Senator Ewing ?

Senator Ewing

- It does not, because the officers become Commonwealth officers immediately. They do not remain State officers when they become Commonwealth officers.

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Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- Yes,. submodo, they do, but they remain officers in the States. There may be some ethereal time in the future when none will be for the States, but all will be for the Commonwealth, but we have to deal with things as we find them, and the immediate result will be that every State officer taken over will consider himself a State officer rather than a Commonwealth officer, and may be fairly expected to have a little more sympathy for his own particular State than for the Commonwealth. What do we propose to do? We are to have one head, whose actions are to be subject to revision by Parliament in every shape and form. He is not the ultima ratio, but very nearly so. He is to occupy a very important position. Senator Ewing says that this officer will simply do what the inspectors tell him. Very likely. In certain circumstances, I suppose he will. The question is - whose would be the best advice 1 Would advice be better coming from the multiplicity of heads of departments, with all their prejudices in respect of their particular States, or would it be better coming from inspectors appointed by the Commonwealth, whose interest it would be to act for the Commonwealth and not for a particular State, and who would have to report as to the whole of the departments of the Commonwealth without reference to any particular State ?

Senator Ewing

- The intention evidently is to station one inspector in each State.

Senator O'Connor

- No, that is not the intention.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- I will assume that that is so. Suppose an inspector is stationed in each State, just as a bank inspector may be, in order to supervise the whole of the departments in that State. Suppose it should turn out that in the end the Chief Commissioner would simply be the mouth-piece of the particular inspector stationed in a particular State. Does Senator Ewing not think that better justice would be done if the commissioner simply acted upon the views of his subordinates who would be in an independent position, and who would be supervising all the affairs of all the departments, than upon reports of heads of the departments coming straight to himself? I should think so. I should think that when the Commonwealth takes over departments in the various States differing in detail, some large and some small, the least it can do is to have its own supervisory authority to report as to what expenditure is right and what work is being done.

When we take over the departments we do not leave them to the States, but they become Commonwealth departments. The suggestion now is that the departments are already managed admirably. Probably they are. I make no reflection from that point of view. But I do say that if any one of us, or any company, or any great institution, were taking over a department, it would not be considered satisfactory to take it over without some knowledge of what was going on. It would be said - "As we have taken the responsibility, we are going to have a supervision." It may be said at the same time that some of the existing head officers will be employed in similar positions in the future. Some of them may be so exquisitely suited, from their ability and industry, to their positions, that they will be selected as a matter of course. There is no inconsistency in that. But the Commonwealth has a right to say - "We have the responsibility, and we must have the inspection." Nothing could be more economical than the provision here made, and I agree entirely with the proposal of the Government.

Senator CHARLESTON

- I shall support the striking out of the word "six," because I am opposed to the appointment of any inspectors at all. One would suppose, from the arguments advanced here, that we were dealing with an entirely new and unorganized institution, instead of dealing with departments that are to-day thoroughly organized.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- And that soon would become disorganized.

Senator CHARLESTON

- I have been amazed by the remarks of Senator Sargood on the public service of Victoria, and I have also been astonished by the remarks of the Postmaster-General respecting some branches of the public service. We have a right to suppose that the public services of the various States are well organized today.

Senator Glassey

- And very capable of improvement.

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Senator CHARLESTON

- They may be capable of improvement with the machinery we already have, and I believe that if we strike out all reference to the appointment of inspectors we shall be doing a good thing for the departments taken over by the Commonwealth. I see no reason why we should depart from the methods adopted to-day. We have various workers engaged in certain classes, and should a vacancy occur in any class it is made known throughout the service, and applications are sent in for the position. Who should know better than those who have been in charge of the applicants what are their qualifications? It is impossible that any man who just goes through a place perhaps once in four, five, or six months should know the qualifications of officers as well as the man who is in charge of them from day to day, and I fear that under the system provided for in this Bill, instead of officers being promoted according to ability and seniority, we shall find other elements introduced. Why did the Postmaster-General select Mr. Scott to be the permanent head of his department? Was it not simply because he thought Mr. Scott was the man best fitted throughout the Commonwealth to serve him in that position, and because he considered that Mr. Scott had a thorough knowledge of the working of the Postal department?

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- Had no other heads of the department the same knowledge?

Senator CHARLESTON

- I presume Mr. Scott was selected because, in the opinion of the Postmaster-General, his knowledge was greater than that of any of the other heads. I would not do the Postmaster-General the discredit of supposing he had any other motive in the selection of Mr. Scott. In Mr. Scott, then, have we not as permanent head a man thoroughly conversant with the whole of the working of the department? Will he not also have under him the chief officers in the various States, men who have been managing in the department for years, and are thoroughly conversant with the internal workings and requirements of the service? With the advantage of reports from these chief officers, and with his own knowledge of the department, how can it be said that Mr. Scott would not be in a position to know whether any branch of the department was overmanned or not? He will know the work of every branch, the number of letters passing through, the number of men employed in it, their hours of work, and so forth, and surely he

should be in a position to organize that branch efficiently, if it was not so organized before 1 "Why under these circumstances should we heap up this enormous expense upon the various States ? I see no reason for it, and at this early stage, and at least during the time we are passing through the preliminary bookkeeping stage, we should cut down expense as much as possible, consistently with efficiency. Are these inspectors, as Senator Glassey suggested, to go into the various outlying districts of the Commonwealth to inquire if there are any grievances ? There will not be Custom-house officers in these inland districts. We may have in a town of 3, 0 or 4,000 people two or three persons engaged in post-office work, who may at the same time be carrying on a grocery business. Is an inspector required to go to these people and ask them if they have any grievance ? It seems to me that the more power we give to inquire into grievances in that way the more grievances we are likely to create. We have heard of the instance of an inspector or visitor going into a lunatic asylum or some other place inquiring if any of the inmates have any grievance. Is it to be supposed that if any subordinate officer has any grievance he will step out in front of his superiors and pour out a lot of minor complaints to an inspector? Under existing systems, if any officer, however inferior his position may be, believes that he has a grievance, he puts a statement of it in writing before the head of his department, and it is investigated - by whom? By a person who is only interested in the thorough efficiency of the whole department. I see no reason why we should be heaping up expenses for inspection in the way this Bill provides. It seems to me that we are practically condemning ourselves. Senator Walker has plainly stated that he is afraid to trust other senators in the matter of being influenced on behalf of civil servants.

Senator Walker

- -Not senators specially, but Members of Parliament generally.

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Senator CHARLESTON

- The honorable senator told us he received a letter asking for the exercise of his influence. I know that to be quite true, because I saw the letter and the honorable senator's reply to it. The letter asked Senator Walker to use his influence to obtain employment for the writer in some branch of the federal service. The honorable senator's reply was that he was not a federal senator to find employment for any citizen, but to make the laws of the country. If Senator Walker can trust himself to give a reply like that, why should he not be prepared to trust me and every other honorable senator to do likewise? And why should he not be prepared to vote against these courts of supervision, which will only burden the whole machine? I consider that a grievous wrong will be done to the Commonwealth by removing the responsibility that ought to be laid upon the Ministry. We call ourselves a representative Parliament, and we elect an Executive Committee to carry out the work of conducting public affairs. Why should we, after paying high salaries to members of the Executive, remove from them all responsibilities, as we shall do if we pass this Bill 1 This is only heaping buffer upon buffer to stand between Parliament and the Ministry. How can a Public Service Commissioner, who will probably be located in Melbourne or wherever the seat of government may be, have the knowledge of the working of the various departments that the chief officers of the departments will have? We know also that the permanent head is placed above all political influence equally with his commissioner, and why should not the responsibility of organization be placed upon the permanent head ?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- He has not a seven years' tenure.

Senator CHARLESTON

- He has a very much better tenure. He has a tenure during good behaviour, and that is much more secure. What will be the result at the end of the seven years' term for which the Public Service Commissioner is to be appointed ? Will it not be that in the case of any difficulty arising in any department at that time the commissioner will be found on the side of popularity in order to secure re-appointment? In the interests of economy and efficiency in the various departments, this amendment ought to be agreed to, with a view to striking out all references to inspectors altogether. I can well imagine that the commissioner, whoever he may be, will be chosen because he will be considered one of the best organizers we can possibly get for £1,500 a year : but I point out that the head of a department is chosen for just the same reason, and in addition he will be thoroughly conversant with the branch of the service over which he presides. The commissioner may be taken, for instance, from the Customs department,

and may not be conversant with the Post and Telegraph department at all, and he would need to acquire a knowledge of the best methods of conducting that great institution successfully. I can see no reason why we should provide twelve eyes and twelve ears for the commissioner, when, if he is a thorough organizer of industry, he will, by walking into an office, be able to ascertain whether the men there are fully employed, and the work is properly organized, and there is no reason why he should not travel through the length and breadth of the land and make a report to the head of the department, who, having an intimate knowledge of the working of the department will be able at once to judge whether the commissioner is correct in his recommendations or not. By placing these continual buffers between ourselves and the Ministry we are neutralizing our power as a Parliament, and destroying the whole principle of self-government and of responsible government.

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- As one of those who think it is absolutely necessary for an efficient service that we should have inspectors, I am prepared to support the clause as it stands. I am not prepared to say how many inspectors are necessary, but under the Bill it is provided that the number shall not exceed six. The necessity for inspectors is that we want to thoroughly re-organize the departments that have been transferred to the Commonwealth.

Senator Dobson

- How can the honorable senator say that, after they have had Public Service Boards organizing them and disciplining them?

Senator Keating

- Not on uniform lines-

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Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- At the present time in the Post and Telegraph department we have six systems at work. We want to bring the whole service to a high state of efficiency, and we want one continuous policy throughout the Commonwealth with regard to these transferred services. I cannot see how we can have uniform administration unless we have inspectors to go round and reorganize the service, and report to the commissioner, who, after considering their reports carefully will recommend to the Minister what alterations are necessary. The Minister can get a report also from the permanent head of his department, and with these two reports he can formulate a policy on just and correct grounds. What will be the effect if we have no inspectors? We shall simply have matters in a state of chaos and inequality, as they are at the present time, and things will go on exactly as in the various States, with the exception that in the various States in the past the Minister - in the Post and Telegraph department, for instance - has had the advantage of conferring directly with the chief officer of his department. Now that the Minister is domiciled in Melbourne, the chief officer will be an absolute autocrat. He will manage his department exactly as he likes.

Senator McGregor

- Will he not manage it according to the Act?

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- He will manage the department according to the Act, but the Act deals with the salaries to be paid and similar matters, and does not go into the internal administration of the service. The commissioner will write to the head of the department, or to the permanent head; he could not write to a petty officer, because that would be subversive of all discipline. The commissioner without inspectors would be like a man sent to fight without weapons. He is to have an intimate knowledge of the general working of the various transferred departments throughout the Commonwealth, and to advise and recommend the Minister and the Governor-General in everything, yet it is proposed that he shall get his information from only the permanent heads. He would be in a position of absolute inutility unless he had these inspectors to gather for him the information required. Senator Symon has admitted that it is absolutely necessary to have inspectors, but he would take a clerk from an office and send him round. For instance, in the case of the Postal department, Mr. Scott would say to a clerk - "I want you to go and report to me how the system is working in Western Australia." Such an inspector would be absolutely amenable to the head of his department - his creature, and would not be likely to report in a hostile manner as to its working; whereas the inspectors provided for in the Bill will, be absolutely untrammelled, and amenable only to

Parliament. Therefore they will be able to act fearlessly, and to make reports advocating drastic alterations. I am quite certain, from my knowledge of the public service in some of the States, that drastic alterations are absolutely required. We do not want any drones in the public service. If we are to get a cheaper service the cheapness will come from efficiency. Senator Ewing said that we must have the present inspectors, many of whom are not qualified for the work, and were appointed not by the permanent head, but by the chief officer of the State. Are they likely to report to the commissioner that the system is inefficient? They would probably get the sack the following week if they did.

Senator McGregor

- The honorable senator has a very poor opinion of civil servants.

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- I want to have all possible safeguards against unfair treatment, and in the interests of the Commonwealth we must see that these men, whom we are going to pay well, shall do the work of the Commonwealth to the best of their ability. If we consider this matter carefully we must see that inspectors are absolutely necessary. I can understand a difference of opinion as to the necessity for a commissioner, but when we have decided to have a commissioner I cannot understand how persons can say that it is not absolutely necessary to have inspectors to go round and obtain information. The Minister will receive reports, recommendations, and suggestions from the commissioner, and he can go to the head of the department and ask for a report, as provided for in the Bill. When he has reports from two sources he will be in a position to ascertain what the service is like; but without the aid of the commissioner and the inspectors he will be at the mercy of the heads of the department, who will be absolute autocrats in the various States. I cannot see how the system can be made efficient and continuous throughout the Commonwealth, unless we adopt this means. I sincerely hope that the committee will see its way to adopt the provision in the clause.

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Senator BARRETT

- I wish to say a few words in justification of my vote, because at a previous stage I said that on the score of economy I should be prepared to see the chief officer take the place of the inspector. In the meantime, I have carefully considered the position, and must confess that I have had reason to change my view. On this occasion I shall vote for the clause as it stands. I believe we want some one beyond the chief officer, and I believe that the best method of arriving at what we desire is to appoint inspectors. The amendment of Senator McGregor limits the inspectors to three, and I think it is unnecessarily tying the hands of the Government. In my opinion, six inspectors will be required from the first. When we consider the nature of the Commonwealth service, and remember the large area over which it extends, we must make up our minds that six inspectors will be appointed, and will be absolutely necessary. Senator Ewing has said that aggrieved officers would never be able to see the inspector, and would not be able to get a redress of their wrongs. I should say, from the definition of the duties of the inspectors in the Bill, any Government employe will be able to get redress of wrongs.

Senator McGregor

-The inspectors have nothing to do with the redress of wrongs.

Senator BARRETT

- Their duty is to hear complaints, and to report on all matters in connexion with the public service.

Senator McGregor

- On the efficiency of the civil service.

Senator BARRETT

- These are matters which, in my opinion, relate to its efficiency. I believe the provision in the clause is the best under the circumstances, and consequently I shall vote for it.

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Senator O'KEEFE

- To me the creation of six inspectors is the vital principle of the Bill. When the debate opened a week ago I said I had a perfectly open mind, and wanted to gather experience during the discussion before making up my mind as to which would be the best method of control, and I believe that several other senators ' said the same thing. I must admit that none of the suggestions put forward appeal to me as being so likely to obtain what we require as the suggestion in the Bill. Having voted for the creation of the commissioner I

am more forcibly of the opinion that we must provide for inspectors, and I hope six of them will be appointed. The two things we have to secure are, first, the efficiency of the service, and, secondly, justice to the public servants. As regards economy, we all take that for granted. I think we are all equally desirous of having a public service in every department conducted on as economical lines as is consistent with efficiency and justice to the officers. I am just as desirous as Senator McGregor of securing economy in the public service, but when I weigh the question of economy with the question of efficiency and justice to officers it makes me pause, and no other method which has been suggested for controlling the service appeals to me with such force as the system of having six inspectors. I cannot see how it is possible for the officials in the remote portions of the Commonwealth to be brought directly in touch with the Minister except through the channel of the inspectors. It is impossible that they can be brought into touch, and that their grievances can be remedied, or have the chance of being remedied, except through the medium of inspectors travelling to remote places in every State, and gathering up the threads of the service, and, in spite of what Senator Ewing said, coming into contact with the poorer men in the service, as well as the heads of departments. I am satisfied that if the inspectors do not come into pretty close touch with at least the majority of officers they will soon be brought to book. It is suggested by some that we can well afford to leave the control, as it is now in some States, to the permanent heads. I do not like the idea of the control remaining in their hands. I know that in some States where this system exists, not only are many injustices perpetrated, but it has not tended towards the economical or efficient working of the departments.

Senator GLASSEY (Queensland). - I wish to offer a few remarks in reply to Senators Charleston and Ewing. As a rule Senator Ewing thinks fairly deeply, and does not come to rash conclusions. But on this occasion he certainly has not expressed himself with the same force and clearness as he usually does. He does not believe in the commissioner, and he thinks if it is necessary to have one commissioner for the Commonwealth, it is necessary to have a commissioner in each State, and he urges very forcibly, though not very logically, that the commissioner must, of necessity, take his information at second hand, unless he becomes a travelling commissioner. He drew rather an unfortunate comparison when he spoke of this commissioner, who will sit in Melbourne and gather his information from the States through the inspectors, and asked what would be thought of a Judge who would decide a case on second-hand information. That seems very plausible, but really, is there anything in it? In the first place the commissioner is not a Judge in the ordinary sense. He certainly does not try criminal cases, and I am not aware that he tries libel actions or cases of breach of promise of marriage or petitions for divorce. What he will do will be to cull the information he receives from the inspectors and present it to the Minister, and thence to Parliament. The commissioner and Judge do not stand on all fours. Take our present system.

Does the Minister for Mines in any

State travel over the State and examine the mines for himself? I challenge honorable senators who wish to draw this parallel to cite an instance where the Minister or his Under-Secretary does that work. The Minister and the Under-Secretary merely act on information which is gathered by the inspectors. Again, does the Chief Inspector of Factories travel and inspect? Not at all. He merely depends on the information which is gathered from his sub-inspectors, in nine cases out of ten. Does the chief inspector for Victoria travel? He presides over his department, and gathers his information from sub-inspectors who travel and investigate. Does a Chief Inspector of Stock travel? No. He depends on his sub-inspectors. Does the Auditor-General for each State travel?

Senator Playford

- In our State he does very often.

Senator GLASSEY

- So he does in Queensland to some extent. But in a territory such as ours - a territory as big as Germany and France put together - with its ramifications of Government, no one man could do all the inspecting, and the Auditor-General must of necessity take his information from the inspectors who travel in the different parts of the State.

Senator Playford

- Why should we not take our information from the heads of departments?

Senator GLASSEY

- Because the heads of departments in some instances require inspection themselves. Sometimes they

are the very persons who are responsible for the mischief that exists in the departments.

Senator Charleston

- Some of the inspectors may require inspecting.

Senator GLASSEY

- Yes, and some Members of Parliament require inspecting ! It would not be a bad line if we had an inspector appointed for the two Houses of Parliament ! The inspectors, as the Postmaster-General wisely said in introducing this Bill, will be the eye<sup>3</sup> and ears of the commissioner, and will convey to him the information they collect. Acting upon that information the commissioner will make recommendations to the Government, who will be responsible to Parliament, and if the Minister does not adopt those recommendations he will have to give some reasons why they have not been adopted. Therefore the Parliament and the Government do not lose their control. Taking the Government scheme as a whole, it is framed upon plain and reasonable lines, and is calculated to bring about the very best results for all parties concerned. My strongest reason for supporting the proposal is that it contains this provision in respect of the appointment of six inspectors. That number is little enough. I do not agree with the Minister in saying that at the beginning it may not be necessary to appoint six. My opinion is that the requirements of the Commonwealth will demand the appointment of the whole six.

Senator Dobson

- The Home Secretary has practically pledged himself to appoint not more than three.

Senator Drake

- I think not.

Senator GLASSEY

- At any rate this committee should take into consideration the duties that will devolve upon the inspectors, the vast territory they will have to travel over, and the number of civil servants that will be under them. In the State of Queensland we have officers spread over a great territory. We have no fewer than 83 Custom-houses, and many post and other public offices along our sea-board, which is about 2,000 miles in length, to say nothing of the great interior. I cannot understand honorable senators who come from States which have large territories opposing this proposal. They must know that it is impossible for the heads of departments to visit the different places where there are officers under their control.

Senator Charleston

- They have done it in South Australia.

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Senator GLASSEY

- Even in "the model State" I venture to say that some of the hinges in connexion with the work of the departments want a little greasing to make them work smoothly. I know that in supporting this proposal I am supporting a scheme which will bring about improvements, not only in my own State, but even in "the model State" and throughout the Commonwealth. As for Senator Charleston saying that Members of Parliament should have backbone, and ought not to do this and that, I venture to say to him that I believe that he, like other Members of Parliament, has often had to approach Ministers and ask them to do certain things. I challenge the honorable senator to get up in his place and say that he has not. I have had to do so on various occasions, and, if the present system prevails, may have to do it again. I venture to say that there is hardly a single Member of Parliament who has not received communications of that kind, and I can safely say that there is not one of them who will, in a holos-bolus manner, declare he has not done so. It is all moonshine and humbug for an honorable senator to get up and talk of his backbone when he knows what he himself has had to do, particularly at election times, when Members of Parliament have a wonderfully sympathetic heart and a remarkable way of finding their way to a Minister to put a word in his ear and secure his influence. I dare say there may be some bright exceptions, but that is the rule. I sincerely hope that the clause will be carried as it stands, and I have no hesitation, in saying that Ministers ought to entertain no nonsense with regard to not appointing the six inspectors. Six are absolutely needed if the departments are to be worked in an efficient manner, and if the officers of the service in the outlying parts are to receive consideration and assistance to a greater extent than they have had in years gone by.

Senator DE LARGIE

- I was opposed to the appointment of a commissioner in the first instance, for a very good reason - because I thought that proposal took the whole control of the civil service out of the hands of Parliament. But now it has been decided that there shall be a commissioner, I do not see how this officer is to be of any earthly use to the Commonwealth unless he has a staff of inspectors, as it is proposed to give him. I take it that now that the service is to be taken away from the direct control of the Government, something will have to be put in the place of that system, and the appointment of an inspector for each State will, in my opinion, be absolutely necessary. If the service is to be made a concentrated service, it is impossible to expect one man to control it, and it will be necessary to have an inspector in each State to assist him in the work. I do not agree with Senator McGregor and those who think that a lesser number than six is at all possible. If we look at the working of any service that requires inspectors we shall see that it is impossible to do with less than six. Take the operation of any Mines Act and apply that to what is likely to be the case in regard to our civil service. For instance, in Newcastle, where there are about 6,000 miners, at least three inspectors are required to do the work that is necessary in that district, which is a small one so far as area is concerned. That is a very fair instance by means of which we can judge what is to be expected where we have something like 12,000 civil servants scattered all over the great area that comprises united Australia. I hold that a lesser number than six inspectors will be insufficient to do the work. If a fair trial is to be given to the new system of controlling the Commonwealth civil service by commission instead of by direct ministerial control, the commissioner must have the assistance of inspectors, one at least in each State, so that the service can be organized into concentrated form with the headquarters of the commissioner at the seat of the Federal Government. The heads of departments and the State officers that have been taken into the Commonwealth service will continue to view matters very much from their State stand-point ; but it is reasonable to expect that the commissioner and inspectors, whose offices are Commonwealth creations, will look at matters from the federal point of view. Therefore, I shall vote for the appointment of inspectors.

Senator MCGREGOR(South Australia). - I want to appeal once more to honorable senators on the ground of economy. Perhaps. I shall appeal in vain, but if I am not successful I can at least protest. Several honorable senators have been grievously misled by the arguments that have been used. Some have actually supposed that the appointment of six inspectors will necessarily result in the civil servants receiving fair play. Others have said that this proposal means that the civil servants are going to have some one to listen to their grievances. I believe that the proposal will have no such results. The six inspectors are not to be for the purpose of listening to the grievances of public servants, nor for going about and seeing whether the civil servants have anything to complain about in Western Australia, or Central Australia, or anywhere else. Their functions will be to see that the service is properly managed.

Senator O'Keefe

- What about clause 8?

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Senator MCGREGOR

- All that I agree with, but it can be efficiently attained under the Bill as it stands. I ask any honorable senator who has had experience among the people whether the complaint has not always been that we should trim down from the top of the tree, and that we have too many highly-paid civil servants. The service is top-heavy. That is the general complaint, and any honorable senator who says otherwise has not listened to the opinions of the people who have- to pay the money to maintain the civil service. But we are going to add to this top-heavy service by appointing other highly-paid officers. Some honorable senators say they support the Government proposal for the purpose of saving money. I would point out to them that no money is going to be saved in this direction.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- We are going to promote efficiency.

Senator MCGREGOR

- We are not going to promote efficiency any more than that can be done at the present time. I want to refer now to some of the comparisons which have been made. Senator Glassey has talked of the vast territory of which he has knowledge. Are we going to send inspectors all over this vast territory ?

Senator Glassey

- Why not1!



Senator McGREGOR

- To catch butterflies or kangaroos? Why, they would lose themselves, and it would cost the Commonwealth thousands of pounds to fit up expeditions to go and look for them ! The inspectors are not going to the out-of-the-way places where, there is no one living. They are not going into the wilderness of Western Australia, or of Queensland, or of Central Australia. There are no officers there. Much of the territory is unexplored. There are thousands of miles in this Commonwealth where a white man has never trod.

Senator Glassey

- Not a single mile of Queensland is in that position.

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Senator McGREGOR

- Queensland is not the whole Commonwealth. We have had the illustration of the position of the Minister and the Mines Acts. Inspectors of mines, however, go to inspect mines or other places where there is a possibility of mines being developed in the future. They are not sent for the purpose of inspecting officers. Senator De Largie says that in Newcastle, where there are about 6,000 miners, there are three inspectors. They are not there to inspect the miners, but to see that the appliances are in order, and that everything is carried on as far as possible with safety to the individual. Are the six inspectors under this Bill going to inspect Government offices to see that the stairs are properly carpeted, or that the balusters are all right, and all that sort of thing? Nothing of the kind. They are going to do nothing in the shape of what has been stated. They are not going to Tasmania for the purpose of promoting officers who have been unjustly treated for the last 20 or 30 years. We are passing a Bill to regulate wages, promotions, and everything else of the kind, and that will have nothing whatever to do with the inspectors or the commissioner. I hope honorable senators will look at the question from a common-sense point of view, and see that this is only putting more weight on an already top-heavy public service. For that reason I hope they will at least reduce the number of inspectors.

Senator HIGGS(Queensland).- I do not wish to prolong the discussion at any great length, but I am sure Senator McGregor must have overlooked clause 8, which defines the duties of these inspectors. They must inspect each and every department, examine so far as practicable the officers thereof, and ascertain their duties, and the value of their services ; hear and inquire into all matters and things affecting -or' relating to the working of the departments, and furnish in writing to the commissioner a full report as to every such inspection, examination, or inquiry, including therein recommendations for the consideration and determination of the commissioner. There are several other clauses dealing more fully with these duties. One of the clauses refers to the duty of inspectors to report where there may be, in their opinion, officers in excess of those required in any department. Surely that is all quite contrary to the impression Senator McGregor would give as to the duties of these inspectors ? These inspectors would, amongst other things, have to go along the railway line mentioned by the honorable senator in case the kind of thing he referred to was taking place in Victoria or anywhere else, and it would be their duty to make a report on the subject to the commissioner. I do not think for a moment that one inspector will necessarily be sent to each State. It must be remembered that there are seven departments - External Affairs, Attorney-General, Home Affairs, Treasury, Trades and Customs, Defence, and the Postmaster -General's department. It may happen that something is going wrong in any one of these departments, and the commissioner may send along three, four, five, or the whole six inspectors, if he has them, to make an inquiry and bring up a report for him to work upon. I propose to vote in favour of the clause as it stands.

Senator PEARCE

- I should not have risen to speak upon the amendment ; but, owing to the stone\* wall that has been raised by opponents of it, it is right that those supporting it should not give a silent vote. I desire to remind my friends on the left, who may generally be found advocating anything in the direction of State socialism, that one of the chief objections raised against that principle is that wherever the State takes up a department of work it is always found that a number of fat billets are created, which are filled by incompetents ; that the service is overloaded with men who are paid high salaries ; and those who actually do the work are overworked and underpaid. That is one of the stock arguments against State socialism, and yet we find those honorable senators supporting this proposal to create fat billets for persons whose duties are very ill-defined. We find various opinions as to what the duties of these

inspectors are. According to Senator Glassey, they are to form a sort of professional exploring troupe, who will travel to the unexplored portions of the Commonwealth to examine the conditions of out-of-the-way officers. In this connexion I would ask the Postmaster-General whether the chief official of the Post and Telegraph department in Western Australia has not the means at present of informing himself as to the conditions under which the telegraph operators at Broome are working ? Is it not a fact that we were able to place such information before the honorable and learned senator with respect to these officers, so as to enable him to make certain changes in the Postal department of Western Australia 1 That only goes to prove that this information can be got without sending an officer direct to the spot, and making him return to the seat of the Federal Government to report to a commissioner. As regards clause 8, if Senator Higgs will, in reading it, read "chief officer " for " inspector " he will see that the chief officer can do all that an inspector is asked to do under the clause, and he could do the work much more thoroughly. Surely the chief officer of a State, who has administered the department, will be much better able to say whether men are wanted in a particular district, or whether a particular branch of the service is overmanned, than an inspector whose duties are divided amongst a number of departments, who cannot devote the whole of his attention to a particular department, and whose knowledge of any department can only be a surface knowledge at the best 1

Senator DRAKE

- Does the honorable senator suggest that a Deputy Postmaster-General could leave his office to do this work of inspection 1

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Senator PEARCE

- There is no need for him to leave his office. In the case of Western Australia, for instance, his district superintendent at Kalgoorlie can inform him as to whether the telegraph offices in that district are overmanned or not, and if the district superintendent cannot be relied upon to give a faithful report, he should be sacked, and another man put in his position. If it is said that we cannot rely upon our district officers, and upon the chief officers sending reliable reports to the head of the department in Melbourne, it means simply that we have a lack of faith in the existing officers of the Commonwealth. We have it on the authority of Senator Sargood that the Postal department of Victoria is in a splendid state of efficiency. Senator Glassey is the only honorable senator who has made any charge of inefficiency against a State department. That honorable senator would lead us to believe that in the State of Queensland the Postal department is not well administered. A fair comment upon that is that, if it is true, it is very strange that the two chief officers who are to administer the Commonwealth department of the Post-office should have been chosen from the State of Queensland. The inference I have drawn from their appointment is that the Postmaster-General, in choosing those two officers, has chosen them from a State where the Post-office department has been well administered. I prefer to place that construction upon the action of the Postmaster-General. With respect to the question of grievances of individual employes, I may say that I am in thorough sympathy with Senator O'Keefe in his anxiety that officials in the lower grades of the service should get just treatment, and should have some medium by which they can place their grievances, if necessary, before the heads of their departments. I believe that the best way to provide for that would be by having a board of appeal, and I shall do all I possibly can, in dealing with the subsequent parts of the Bill, to see that provision is made for a board of appeal. I point out to Senator O'Keefe that to exchange the rule of the permanent head of the State for the unknown quantity of the rule of an inspector will give no justification for believing that those in the lower grades of the service will be treated any better in the future than they have been in the past. It will be exchanging the rule of one Caesar for that of another, and because a person happens to be called an inspector that will be no guarantee that he will give the employes referred to any better treatment than they have previously had from the permanent heads in each State. I am not at all satisfied with the treatment meted out to some grades of the Postal department in Western Australia by the existing chief officer of that State, but I am not satisfied either that an inspector under this Bill, working in the State, would recommend for them any different treatment. I believe, however, that if there were an appeal board to which these officials could go, there would be a chance of their getting justice. If we had such a board, constituted as I should like to see it constituted, they would be directly represented, and could rely upon getting a fair trial. For these reasons, and also on the score of economy, I am opposed to the appointment of inspectors. I do not think there is any great

force in the proposal to reduce the number to three. I see no logic in reducing the number. If we admit the principle I should be prepared to go for the whole six, because if any inspectors are necessary I believe that six would be required. I believe that the average civil servants will in these inspectors have no better channel as an outlet for their grievances than at present exists, and I am sure than an appeal board would be a far more satisfactory way of dealing with their grievances. When reference is made to the necessity of appointing inspectors to secure uniformity I would say that a conference of the chief officers of the various States might be called as soon as this Bill becomes law, and they could draw up a plan, to be approved by the Minister, for carrying out the recommendations and instructions laid down in the Bill.

Senator Drake

- The honorable senator would recommend a conference of Deputy Postmasters-General?

Senator PEARCE

- Yes, I suggest that. They would be men in touch with the work of the department in the various States, while under the Bill the Postmaster-General may get a number of men who may be novices in the working of the department. We have no guarantee that the inspectors appointed will be men who are connected with the public service. I would ask honorable senators to strike out the provision for inspectors, on the ground that we have all that we require in the existing means for acquiring information, and if a channel is required through which the grievances of employees can filter, it will be best found in the appointment of a board of appeal.

Motion (by Senator Macfaelane) agreed to-

That the committee do now divide.

Senator Dobson

- The last question was put so quickly that I had not an opportunity of saying that I have an amendment to move before that upon which the committee has been asked to divide.

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The CHAIRMAN

- That cannot be helped now, as the question that the committee divide has been carried.

Question- That the word "six" proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause - put.

The committee divided.

16

AYES

10

NOES

Majority ... .. 6

AYES

NOES

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Senator PEARCE(Western Australia). - It is provided in the first sub-clause that -

Each inspector shall exercise during the pleasure of the commissioner such powers, duties, and authorities of the commissioner or inspectors as the commissioner thinks fit to assign to him.

But further on it is provided that the inspectors may be removed from office by the Governor-General.

That seems to me to imply that the commissioner would have the power to suspend an inspector from carrying out any of his duties. If it does, I would move the omission of the word "commissioner," but before I take that course I would like to hear .an expression of opinion as to whether that construction can be placed on the words I have read.

Senator DRAKE

- An inspector in certain circumstances may be suspended, but until he is suspended he has to carry out and exercise such powers, duties, and authorities as are laid down for him by the commissioner.

Senator Pearce

- Can he be suspended by the commissioner ?

Senator DRAKE

- Certainly not.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- The Minister has not read sub-clause (5) of clause 6.

Senator DRAKE

- I had overlooked that provision. The commissioner I see may suspend the inspector, and until such time as he is suspended he has to carry out such duties as are laid down for him by the commissioner. The commissioner prescribes for him his duties, and if they are not properly attended to may suspend them.

Senator PEARCE(Western Australia). - I move -

That the word " commissioner," line 11, be omitted with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word "Governor-General."

If that alteration is made, I propose to move a consequential amendment in sub-clause (5) of clause 6. The inspectors should be independent of the commissioner. They have to report to him, but they are practically appointed on a level. Inspectors are appointed by the Governor-General in Council, and can be removed in the same way as the commissioner can be removed. The point raised by Senator Ewing was that the inspectors would be practically commissioners in each State - that they would have very large powers, and really do the work which the name of commissioner carries with it. If that is so we should place them beyond the power of being suspended by the commissioner, because the report of some inspector might conflict or clash with his previously expressed opinion or his policy. The inspector would not feel free to act if the commissioner had power to remove or suspend him. The power of suspension should be placed in the hands of the Governor-General. The commissioner should recommend the suspension of his inspector, but it should be for the Governor-General to take the necessary action.

Senator DRAKE

- Surely Senator Pearce does not desire to put the inspectors in the position of commissioners or sub-commissioners in the States, with the possibility that there might be, as he said, a conflict of opinion between them. Not long since he was objecting to the appointment of inspectors at all, but now that the committee has decided to appoint inspectors who are to act as the eyes and ears of the commissioner he desires to lift them into the position of commissioners or sub-commissioners, so that they may assert their views as against his. That is entirely foreign to the idea of the Bill, which is to have one commissioner, and the inspectors are under him to do such duties as he allots to them, and to report to him.

Senator EWING(Western Australia). - The Postmaster-General has said that the suggestion of Senator Pearce is contrary to the idea of the Bill. I would like very much to know what the intention of the Bill is, because I see in sub-clause (1) of clause 6 that -

The commissioner or any inspector may be suspended from his office by the Governor-General, but shall not be removed from office except as hereinafter provided.

The commissioner and the inspector are appointed in the same way and for the same term, and are removable in the same way. The effect of the amendment is not to have two persons able to suspend an inspector. Either the Governor-General or the commissioner should have the power of suspending an inspector, but not both of them. What is the method of suspension of the commissioner or inspector - The commissioner or any inspector may be suspended from office by the Governor-General.

That is distinct, but a later clause says that the commissioner may suspend an inspector at any time. Surely this power should be in the hands of either the commissioner or the Governor-General.

Senator Drake

- Why not both ?

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Senator EWING

- I have never heard of such a power being placed in the hands of two persons. Supposing that one thinks that an inspector ought to be suspended, and the other does not - where is the finality to be?

Surely it should be placed in the

hands of one person or the other, and not in the hands of two persons.

Senator Sir JOSIAHSYMON (South Australia). - It is very difficult indeed to understand what the principle of this extraordinary supervisory system is. The basis of it appears to be in the first instance that inspectors and the commissioner are to be on the same footing as permanent officers, altogether lifted up above Ministerial influence, or, for the matter of that, parliamentary influence, except in the prescribed way, during seven years. That principle is sought to be given effect to in subclauses (1) and (2), so that you have the commissioner and the inspectors absolutely on the same footing as regards their tenure and the permanency of their appointments. If that is the scheme, then we can understand, when we come to

clause 6, that they are both on the same footing as to suspension or removal. The commissioner is not to be suspended from office except by the Governor-General, nor is any inspector. That is perfectly clear and intelligible, and they ought to be on precisely the same footing, because their appointments are identical in terms and tenure - seven years irremovably, except for such misconduct as lays the basis for what really is a kind of qualified impeachment. If we have that system let us adhere to it consistently. Then by clause 6 we place the inspector in a totally different position - in the position of a member of the administrative branch of the civil service.

Senator Drake

- No - "like action" it says ; it does not put him in the same position.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- You put him in identically the same position so far as regards the power of the commissioner to suspend him. They are human beings in the public service, and you have to prescribe for their frailties, fallibility, and all the rest of it. So with the commissioner. He is not a kind of god who is not liable to the same influences and passions as the other members of the public service. There may be a difference of opinion, and the commissioner may then immediately relegate the inspector to the position of an officer of the administrative branch. You give the commissioner a power by the stroke of his pen to suspend the inspector, when in an earlier clause you put him in the same position as the commissioner, as he should be if he is to be effective and independent. You say that he is to be liable to suspension and to be dealt with, not by Parliament - by whom he is dealt with if he is suspended by the Governor-General - but by a different process. I think Senator Pearce is justified in asking which is to be the principle of this scheme. Is it to be that the inspectors are, according to the terms of their appointment, to be on the same footing, so far as regards independence of each other and the commissioner, as the commissioner himself ? - or are they, so far as regards suspension, to be in the position of subordinate officers in the administrative branch, liable to suspension at the mere ipse dixit of the commissioner ?

Senator STANFORTH Smith

- Who confirms or rejects that suspension ?

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Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Where the suspension is by the Governor-General the Minister has to lay before both Houses a full statement of the grounds of suspension. That gives Parliament control, and does not make fish of one and flesh of the other. It is placing the inspectors on exactly the same footing as regards the control of Parliament as the commissioner. Under clause 6 the commissioner may suspend an inspector, and under clause 46 an inquiry is to be made. And then, on receiving the recommendation of the commissioner, the Governor-General may fine the inspector or deal with him under sub-clause (1) of clause 6. It is a kind of mixed and double arrangement. On the one hand, you place the inspectors on the same footing as the commissioner, with both subject to the power of suspension, qualified by the condition that the grounds of suspension must be laid before Parliament. On the other hand, you place the inspectors for this purpose in the position of subordinate officers of the commissioner, liable to suspension at his hands, to an inquiry by a board, then to fine and so on, or it may be to some subsequent suspension, the case having been prejudged in the meantime by the commissioner - by his first suspension, and by the report of the board, on which the Governor-General may not act. He may either fine him or abstain from acting. In either case we have engrafted on the original scheme of commissioner and inspectors independent except of suspension by the Executive, and subject to the control of Parliament, a suspension by the commissioner as though the inspectors were subordinate officers. Surely one or the other ought to prevail. I think 15 c z the criticisms of Senators Pearce and Ewing are amply justified.

Senator DRAKE

- J really cannot see how Senator Symon can contend, on the consideration of sub-clause (1) of clause 5, that we have put the inspectors on anything like the same footing as the commissioner. That sub-clause expressly defines the position of inspector with regard to the commissioner. How can it be contended, therefore, that by that provision we put the inspector practically on the same footing as the commissioner

1

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- As to tenure.

Senator DRAKE

- The fact is simply that the Governor-General appoints them. In the same provision it is expressly provided that each inspector shall exercise during the pleasure of the commissioner certain powers, duties, and authorities.

Senator Ewing

- That only deals with his duties.

Senator DRAKE

- It shows the relative positions of the inspector and the commissioner.

Senator Ewing

- Look at clause 7.

Senator DRAKE

- It shows perfectly clearly that this clause does not put the inspector on anything like the same footing as the commissioner.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- On exactly the same footing as to tenure and suspension.

Senator DRAKE

- Certainly not, so far as tenure is concerned. They are both appointed by the Governor-General for a fixed term. Then we find in sub-clause (1) of clause 5 that an inspector is made entirely subordinate to the commissioner.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon. - No.

Senator DRAKE

- - Certainly.

Each inspector shall exercise during the pleasure of the commissioner such powers, duties, and authorities of the commissioner or inspectors as the commissioner thinks fit to assign to him.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- That prescribes his duties.

Senator DRAKE

- It shows clearly what his position is in regard to the commissioner. Is there any inconsistency that we should provide afterwards that the commissioner in certain cases may suspend him ? What the committee has to face in connexion with the point which has been raised is whether or not it is desirable to put the inspectors on a footing with the commissioner. The Bill makes the inspectors subordinate to the commissioner. If you alter the Bill in that direction, you will put the inspectors practically on the same level with the commissioner, and instead of having one commissioner, and three, or four, or six inspectors, you will have four, or five, or perhaps seven commissioners, with perhaps more prospect of dissension and trouble than we have had in some of the States with three commissioners. That is what the amendment means. It is not an amendment which deals directly with the alteration proposed to be made ; it is an amendment which certainly will lead up to another that will tend to put the inspectors on the same footing as the commissioner. I think it is most undesirable that anything of the kind should be done.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- In clause 7, the duties of the inspectors are laid down, but surely there must be some means taken to decide when and how they are to be performed? Surely it is not intended that the inspectors, irrespective of the commissioner, are to wander all over the place at their own sweet will, and do just as they like, restricted only by the duties laid down in clause 8 ? There must be a head, and surely he must have the power of directing what duties shall be done, and how they shall be done, and not have each time to appeal to the Governor-General to decide whether an inspector should be sent to Western Australia or to Queensland to look into a certain case? I am at a loss to understand on what ground the honorable senator can have proposed to insert " Governor-General" in lieu of "commissioner." There are six inspectors, and some one must tell them what their duties are, and how those duties are to be discharged.

Senator Pearce

- The Minister will do that.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- The Minister cannot possibly do it. The Public Service Commissioner knows best what the duties of the

staff are, and how the officers can best be allocated. He should be the authority to decide whether the inspector shall be in one place or another.

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Senator EWING

- I think that Senator Sargood does not exactly appreciate the extent to which Senator Pearce goes. "During the pleasure of the Governor-General" means that the inspector shall act only until he is removed by the Governor-General. But the amendment does not go to the extent that Senator Sargood suggests. It will still leave the commissioner to assign to the inspector the duties that he thinks fit, but he will act through the Governor-General. That means that none but the Governor-General can remove him.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- This has nothing to do with removal.

Senator EWING

- "Bach inspector shall act during the pleasure of the Governor-General," means that the Governor-General is the man to remove the inspector, if it means anything. If a man is to serve in an office during my pleasure it means that I am the man to remove him. The commissioner assigns the duties to be exercised by the inspector, and the inspector performs those duties until he is removed by the man who appoints him, namely, the Governor-General. It does not mean that the Governor-General has to assign all the duties that the inspectors are to exercise, but simply that the inspectors are to act as the commissioner directs, and to carry out those duties during the pleasure of the Governor-General.

Progress reported.

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15:48:00

Senate adjourned at 3.48 p.m.