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1901-09-13

Senate.

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

QUESTIONS

PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS

Senator GLASSEY

asked the Vice-President of the Executive Council, upon notice -

How many new appointments outside the services transferred to the Commonwealth have been made by the Government prior to and since the opening of the Federal Parliament ? 2. How many of these appointments have been made from the different States of the Union, namely - (a) New South Wales ;(b) Victoria; (c) Queensland; (d) South Australia ; (e) Western Australia ; (f) Tasmania ?

Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

- The information will be obtained and laid upon the table of the House in the form of a return.

CUSTOM-HOUSE, ALBURY

Senator PULSFORD

(for Senator Lt.-Col Neild

asked the Vice-President of the Executive Council - upon notice -

Is it intended to remove the transaction of Customs business from Albury to Wodonga? 2. Is the Government aware that by far the greater portion of the Customs business in the vicinity of Albury and Wodonga is connected with the former town ? 3. Is the Government aware that the proposed change will be most inconvenient to the majority of persons having business with the Customs? 4. Will not the proposed change occasion inconvenience and delay to passengers by the railways ? 5. Will the Government delay the proposed change until those concerned have had an opportunity of representing their wishes respecting the matter ?

Senator O'CONNOR

- There is no truth whatever in the report, nor has there been any ground for the report that it is intended to remove the transaction of the Customs business from Albury to Wodonga. The facts are precisely the reverse.

PROPERTY FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES ACQUISITION BILL

Motion (by Senator O'Connor) agreed to-

That the Bill be recommitted with a view to the insertion of a new clause after clause 44.

In Committee :

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Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

. - I move -

That the following be inserted as a new clause to follow clause 44 : -

The Governor-General may from time to time, by order under his hand, reduce the amounts payable for compensation to the several States, in respect of any property acquired under this Act, or under section 85 of the Constitution, by the whole or a part of the amounts which would be chargeable against those States respectively, if the full amounts of compensation were paid by the Commonwealth ; but so that the reduction -

shall, if the amount would be chargeable against the States in proportion to population, be made in respect of all the States in proportion to their populations, and

shall not in the case of any State exceed the amount of the compensation payable to that State.

The compensation payable to the several States shall thereupon be deemed to be reduced by the amounts of such deductions.

A copy of every such order of the Governor-General shall be laid before both Houses of the Parliament within 30 days after the making thereof, if the Parliament is then sitting, and if not within 30 days after the next meeting of the Parliament."

The object of the new clause is to enable an adjustment of accounts to take place in paying

compensation under the Act. If, as will happen in all these cases of compensation, there is a certain amount payable to the State, and a certain amount payable by the State, it will enable the Governor-General, by this process, to make the deduction, and then to deal with the net amount left after the deduction as compensation. It was pointed out yesterday by myself and others that, in regard to the compensation to be paid under the Act, the States will be both payers and payees. Of course, there will be a difference in regard to the nature of the expenditure. Where the expenditure is really not for the continuance of a transferred service the charge will be made against the State itself. But if it is what may be called new expenditure of the Commonwealth, then it will be distributed over the whole population of the Commonwealth, and will be paid equally per head of the whole population of the Commonwealth. It will be particularly in the latter class of cases that the operation of this clause will be most effectual. Perhaps the better way of explaining the matter to the committee will be to call their attention to some illustrations contained in the printed paper which has been circulated. These tables do not purport to be correct except in a very general way. They are taken from the figures which were before the Statists conference in Melbourne in 1899, and they represent roughly the amount which it is estimated will be payable to the several States as compensation for property transferred, and the population and the ratio of payment by each member of the population of the different States. I am only using the tables as an illustration. It is not to be assumed that the whole amount of compensation or any material part of it is, in the view of the Government, distributable amongst the population of the States, because, as I said yesterday, a large portion of this compensation will probably be in the nature of payments made for the purpose of continuing the service as at the time it was transferred. But as an illustration the tables will sufficiently show the operations of the clause. If honorable members will look at the first table they will see what a difference the population basis makes in the distribution of these moneys. It brings about some rather unexpected results. Take for instance the case of New South Wales, which stands first. The amount of estimated contribution, as the value of the property transferred, is taken to be £3,200,000. The amounts payable to other States are stated respectively against their names, and the total is £10,445,000. That has to be divided amongst the population of the Commonwealth, and in that division it turns out that New South Wales will have to pay £3,788,000, or £588,000 more than she receives. Victoria will receive £2,745,000 and pay £3,267,000. Queensland will receive £1,590,000 and pay £1,356,000. South Australia is also on the right side; she will receive a good deal more than she will pay. Tasmania will be in the position of paying a small balance - £76,000. Western Australia is also one of the fortunate ones, and will receive more than she pays. It is quite obvious that as these distributions are to be made on a population basis, if you want to make a deduction you must make it also on a population basis; that is to say, it must be the same denomination as the payment is. Therefore, in order to make this deduction, where the payment has to be by the whole population of the Commonwealth, you must treat the whole of those payments together. If you do that, and put on one side the amount per head of the population that will be paid, and on the other side the amount per head of the population that will be received, and look down the lines in the tables, you will come to some common factor which may be struck out of both sides. And the object of the clause is by a simple statement of the whole amount of liability in regard to the States, and the whole amount to be received by each State, reducing it to a factor of population both giving and receiving, "to enable you to arrive at some common denominator which may be struck out and leave the balance. I shall illustrate that by the second table, which gives first the population of New South Wales, and then the value of the transferred property. That amount in the case of New South Wales is £2-37 value per head of the population of transferred property. That is on the credit side the amount which each inhabitant of New South Wales is to get. Distributing what New South Wales has to pay - which I have mentioned before as being £3,788,000 - on a population basis New South Wales would pay £2-8 per head of the population. That of course is the same figure right through, because it is taken according to the population of all the States. Following down the list we find that the proportion which Victoria has to receive is £2-36 per head, and she pays £2-8. Queensland receives £3-29, South Australia £4-49, Tasmania £2-39, and Western Australia £4-73. In all cases the amount paid is £2-8.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- Is £2-8 the average?

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Senator O'CONNOR

- It is the amount per head calculated upon the basis of the population of the whole Commonwealth. In order to see how this works out honorable senators will have to look at the next column. Take, for instance, the case of New South Wales. Here I may remark that in order to get the common denominator we have to take the lowest figure on the side of the amount to be received by the States. The lowest is £2-36, in the case of Victoria. It is obvious that we can deduct that from every figure on both sides. The operation of making the deduction will be to reduce the whole amount of the moneys payable to the States by the amount of £2-36 per head of the population. If honorable senators apply that rule they will find the effect shown in the next column. The compensation payable to New South Wales would be £3,200,000 deducting £2-36 per head from that, we get £3,182,000. Then if honorable senators deduct the one total from the other they will find that the amount payable to New South Wales is £18,000, being the balance. In other words, instead of paying £3,200,000 on the one side and getting back £3,182,000 on the other, we perform this operation of striking out on both sides and leave the net amount to be paid to New South Wales at £18,000. In the same way take the case of Victoria. We deduct the same amount, £2-36, from Victoria, and that wipes out her claim completely. In the case of Queensland there is a balance left to be paid of £452,000 instead of £1,590,000. In the case of South Australia, instead of paying £1,665,000, by this calculation we bring out the amount payable to her at £790,000. In the same way we pay Tasmania £6,000 instead of £430,000, and to Western Australia we pay £405,000 instead of £809,000. That is the way in which this proposal will operate. I need hardly point out that it will be of immense importance if we can simplify the accounts between the Commonwealth and the different States ; and there is no reason in the world why these large amounts should be paid into one pocket and out of the other. If we can find a means of bringing out a result of this kind, I am sure that the committee will agree that it should be applied. Every safeguard is provided for full publicity, a copy of every such order of the Governor-General having to be laid before both Houses of Parliament. After the explanation which I have made, as concisely as possible, I leave this clause to the committee, believing that it is really a complete and practical way of working out the money relations between the Commonwealth and the States in regard to this matter of compensation.

Senator PULSFORD

- It is to be regretted that the proposal, which in itself is very important and I believe very valuable, has been made to us with so little time for weighing the matter involved. I also think it is a matter for regret that the proposal for the settlement of the value of the transferred services has not been placed before the various States. In July last, when this Bill came before the Senate, I asked whether the terms then proposed had been laid before the various States for their consideration. I was informed that that had not been done. Now there is another point. The committee will be aware that I have, on various occasions, been pressing upon the Government the importance of having the census returns with regard to several matters made complete. The desirability of having the census returns completed is shown when we come to consider the figures before us. The figures given in the calculations are those which were estimated as for the various States at the close of 1899. But the recent census returns have very considerably varied the relative positions of some of the States, and it is a pity that the Government did not take the latest approximate figures in drawing up these tables.

Senator O'Connor

- As I pointed out before, this is merely an illustration.

Senator PULSFORD

- I know; but I will show at once the effect of taking figures that have not been brought up to date. Last night I took the trouble of casting up some of these figures for myself. I took the census figures, and compared them with the tables presented by the Government. Take the case of Tasmania, where the difference is most noteworthy. The balance to be paid to Tasmania under table 3 is £6,000. The Tasmanian population has been very much over-estimated in the figures used by the Government. As the result of my calculation I found that a balance of £46,000 would be due to Tasmania.

Senator O'Connor

- I have pointed out already that these figures are only used as illustrative. I do not say they are correct as to the population.

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Senator PULSFORD

- I can understand that the figures given by the Government are illustrative only, but what I say is - and it must be clear to" every honorable senator - that had the Government calculated the distribution upon the figures of the census the amount for each one of the States would have been altered in proportion as the census returns vary the figures previously given. That is clear to every one, and in the case of Tasmania it makes a very large difference indeed. In the previous figures Tasmania was shown as having a very considerably larger population than Western Australia ; whereas the contrary is now the case. I am entirely in favour of the proposal by which the equal amount contributed by every one of the States - that is, the equivalent amount per head - shall be swept away ; and I think the Government are entitled to every credit for bringing forward this proposal, which simplifies the matter, very much. Victoria is a case where the population was very largely underestimated, and the result comes out thus. According to the Government division the 2-36 is equivalent to £2 7s. 2d. per head, whereas my calculation brings it out at £2 5s. 10d. per head. The relative position of the various States, according to my calculation, per head is this : - New South Wales, 47s. 4d. ; Victoria, 45s. 10d. ; Queensland, 63s. 2d. ; South Australia, £91s. 9d. ; Western Australia, 85s. 5d. ; Tasmania, 51s. If the Commonwealth deals with every one of the States on the basis of the lowest of these estimates - that of Victoria, £2 5s. 10d. - and writes off the amount represented by £2 5s. 10d. per head, we have only to deal with the balance. From the statement which I reckoned up last night, based upon the latest census returns, I find that there will be a balance due to New South Wales of £100,000. Of course these figures, like the Government figures, are only approximate and illustrative. Victoria will receive no balance at all. In the case of Queensland -there will be a balance of £437,000. In the case of South Australia there will be a balance of £835,000. In the case of Western Australia there will be a balance of £389,000; and in the case of Tasmania there will be a balance of £46,000. That makes a total of £1,807,000. The question arises: how is that £1,807,000 to be settled with 1 The Vice-President of the Executive Council did not make that quite clear, but I take it for granted that the interest will be continued to be charged to the States on the basis at present existing - or rather existing prior to the transfer of these services- for the five years ; and that after the five years the whole amount will be distributed prorata over the whole. So that New South Wales and Victoria, the two main States, will have to contribute a very considerable sum towards the smaller States. I understand Senator O'Connor does not propose that these balances shall be dealt with in any way prior to the five years.

Senator O'Connor

- No ; this is simply a proposal to make up the balances, and the balances will be dealt with in accordance with the Constitution.

Senator PULSFORD

- Just so. Then I think the clause might be simplified a good deal if we were to take out the words "by the whole or a part of the amount which would be chargeable against those States respectively if the full amounts of compensation were paid by the Commonwealth." It appears to me that those words only confuse the meaning of the clause, and I cannot understand what they are in for.

Senator O'Connor

- To make clear the principle upon which the deduction is to be made.

Senator PULSFORD

- I do not know that it is customary to put in an enactment the reason for the enactment, and to my judgment these words only confuse the matter, and call for a very elaborate interpretation clause. I am willing to leave it to the Senate, but I would ask Senator O'Connor to leave the words out if he can see his way to do so. Apart from that, I give the proposal my warmest support.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- When this amendment was circulated I imagine most honorable senators were in the same fix as I was to ascertain what on earth it meant. I read and re-read it, until at last a glimmer of its meaning came to me, and then it appeared to be a very desirable and businesslike way of dealing with these huge figures. It is practically a method of wiping off a large portion of them by a contra entry, and dealing only with the balances. . I think the Ministry are to be congratulated upon this businesslike way of getting over what would otherwise have been more or less of a difficulty. I am unable to agree with Senator Pulsford as to

the desirability of leaving out the words to which the honorable senator has referred, because I confess that without them I should not have been able to understand what the clause meant. They appear to me to give the key to the whole matter, and I think they are very necessary and should remain in. The figures submitted by Senator O'Connor make the matter absolutely clear, and whether those figures be correct or not it does not in the slightest extent affect the principle. They are placed before us to show, assuming that they are correct, that the matter would work out in a certain way. I take it for granted that, when this deduction or arrangement takes place, it will take place in respect of correct figures, not only as to the values of properties transferred, but also as to the population of each State. I think the clause is a desirable one and should pass.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- The essence of the clause, which is a very satisfactory one, is that the Commonwealth under this provision, with regard to transferred services and the property belonging to them, would be under an obligation to each of the States for a very large amount of money. On the other hand, under the provisions of the Constitution, each State will be obliged to pay back its proportion per capita of that obligation. What I understand the position to be is that in making up the accounts with regard to the mutual transactions, the obligation of each State in respect of its per capita indebtedness shall be deducted from the total amount coming to it, and the balance only shall be paid over. That is practically the position. It is a business transaction altogether, and as it is followed in ordinary affairs it ought to be followed between the Commonwealth and the States. There is no use, as has been said, in money being put into one pocket in order to be taken out again. It is an enlargement of the bookkeeping principle, to show the true position and how much ought to be paid by the Commonwealth to each State. It seems to me that the clause ought to go in. The intention of it is clear, and the language is fairly clear. The words to which Senator Pulsford draws attention, if they have no other effect, at any rate direct the notice of readers of the clause to what is the constitutional position, and it therefore seems to me that the clause as it stands might very fairly be inserted in the Bill.

Senator PULSFORD(New South Wales). - I would like to ask Senator O'Connor whether he would not like to make this clause mandatory instead of permissive, so far as regards the transferred services that come under section 85, and then make it permissive as regards all future transactions. If the honorable and learned senator approves of that, I think it probable the committee will also approve of it, but I do not propose to move any amendment in that direction.

Senator O'CONNOR

- In the settlement of these money transactions between the States and the Commonwealth, the larger the discretion we can give to both sides the better. This is simply given as an option, and we may be very well assured that it is an option which will be exercised and applied. I do not think there is any necessity to make it compulsory or to make any distinction between the application in the case of transferred services and other cases.

New clause agreed to.

Bill reported with a further amendment.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL

In Committee(consideration resumed from 12th September, vide page 4800) :

Clause 5 (Appointment of Public Service Commissioner and Inspectors), see page 4781. Upon which Senator Dobson had moved as an amendment -

That the words "some fit and proper person to be Public Service Commissioner, " lines 2, 3, and 4 be omitted.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Last evening we commenced the discussion of this clause 5, which really is the pith of the whole Bill, and Senator Dobson moved an important amendment which seeks to do away with the system of a commissioner and inspectors, and in lieu of that to replace Ministerial control and responsibility. The honorable and learned senator in referring to the Victorian public service, stated that, from inquiries, he had found it seething with discontent from top to bottom, and disorganized.

Senator Dobson

- Those are the words of the newspapers, not my words. I said there was dissatisfaction.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I am not taking exception to the words at all. I know that there is a great deal of truth in the statement. The honorable and learned senator went on to say that to him this appeared to be evidence that the Victorian Public Service Act had broken down. With an intimate knowledge of what has taken place, I want to point out the causes of the present discontent throughout the service. It arises to a very large extent, if not wholly, from the attempts at retrenchment made some years ago during the bad times, when the Government brought in Retrenchment Bills. A number of those who took an interest in the matter thought the mode of retrenchment proposed was unwise. The retrenchment measure brought in effected three objects. One was the stopping of all promotions, then it stopped all increments, and if a vacancy occurred in any department that vacancy was filled up by an officer of a lower rank, but without a penny increase of salary. There was increased responsibility, but no increase of pay. I need hardly say that those proposals were not such as would tend to increase the esprit de corps of any service. Unfortunately, a year or two before amendments had been made in the original Act with regard to the employment of temporary officers. A most dangerous power was given to take on temporary officers, the intention being that they should only be temporary ; but, unfortunately, the Act was so worded that a number of them continued on, to my knowledge, for years and years, and are still temporary officers in the service.

Senator Dobson

- But were they not wanted ?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- If they were wanted for seven or eight years they were wanted as permanent officers. The consequence has been that permanent officers who entered under the original Act, passed the necessary examinations, worked their way up step by step, doing their duty and earning promotion and increment of salary, found themselves suddenly blocked in their promotion by the incursion of a large number of temporary officers brought in by political influence, by Ministerial influence, and, I might also say, by the influence of heads of departments, which is just as bad as political influence. There they are, however, and in the meantime the regular officers are blocked. These four considerations alone will account naturally for a very large amount of dissatisfaction throughout the service. In addition I may say that it was anticipated, and it was stated at first that the reduction of salaries would extend only for a period of three years ; but that time was extended, I think to a most unfair degree. Then it might naturally be imagined that while all these changes were going on, and there was more or less irritation, an experienced Public Service Board would be retained in order to smooth over difficulties, and by their intimate knowledge assist in preventing undue friction. Unfortunately, the Ministry, with a view to economy - false economy, I think - pensioned off these three experienced public officers, and imposed the duty of administering the Public Service Act upon the Audit Commissioners, who knew nothing whatever about its intricacies. " They were suddenly called upon, at a most difficult period in the history of the service, to administer a more or less complicated measure.

With what result? With just the result predicted by experienced members of both Houses of Parliament acquainted with large commercial and other transactions. Errors were made by these new commissioners, without intent, no doubt, but with the result that there has been continual litigation ever since. That litigation is likely to go on for some years to come before the mistakes committed by those commissioners are overcome. In addition to that, the Audit Commissioners were unable to attend to their duties as auditors, and in consequence fraud and embezzlement largely increased. That was naturally expected by those who had had anything to do with large undertakings. These really are the causes of the present discontent and disorganization in the public service of Victoria.

Senator Dobson

- That is a very good argument against the appointment of commissioners.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- No, a great many of these difficulties would not have occurred if experienced men had been retained.

Senator Dobson

- The commissioner for the Commonwealth will have had experience in one State only, so that practically he will be a new chum.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- While the commissioner will be gathering experience month after month and year after year, changes of Ministry will be taking place, and when a new Minister comes in he will have to go over the whole business again.

Senator Dobson

- I take the honorable senator's argument as being against the principle of the Bill.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- But while the honorable and learned

Senator says that the old system worked well in Tasmania, is it not somewhat singular that he has had to acknowledge that quite recently they have found it necessary in Tasmania to pass a Public Service Act? Was that because the Ministerial system had acted so well? Is it not rather an evidence that there must have been something wrong with the old system, and that an alteration was required? As far as I can understand, the alteration has been in the direction of appointing a public service board.

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Senator Dobson

- A board consisting of heads of departments.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- A public service board, as distinguished from the independent and uncontrolled action of the Minister.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Senator Dobson wishes to substitute a board consisting of heads of departments for the proposal contained in the Bill.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I am coming to that. Both Senator Dobson and Senator Symon went beyond that. They went strongly for Ministerial responsibility.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- I did, but Senator Dobson did not. I do not want any commissioner at all.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I have listened with some interest to the statements made with regard to the position of the service in South Australia. One would imagine that South Australia was another place in which none of these evils of Ministerial and political influence occur. We cannot shut our eyes, however, to the fact that rumours - whether true or not, I cannot say - are frequently heard of very high-handed action on the part of Ministers in the model state.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Will the honorable senator mention one?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I cannot. This matter was only mentioned last night, and I do not carry these things in my head.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- The honorable senator should not make such an imputation without having some foundation for it.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I dare say that if I took the trouble I should soon be able to find some examples. So far as the position of the service in New South Wales is concerned, it has been notorious for years past that it is in a very unsatisfactory condition. As far back as 1883, when I had charge of the present Public Service Act of Victoria, then passing through the Legislature, I quoted largely from the experiences of the mother colony in supporting that Bill. If anything was wanting to support my contention as to the unsatisfactory condition of the service there, it was supplied by the very report from which Senator Dobson quoted last night. The honorable senator wishes to do justice to temporary officers, and I was surprised that he did not see that in quoting that report he was throwing himself into the hands

Of those who favour a change of system. The unfair appointment of temporary officers was used in New South Wales as an argument in favour of a change.

Senator O'CONNOR

- Under the old system in New South Wales there were some temporary officers who had been in the service for over 30 years.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Yes; I am aware of that fact. The evil has existed in New South Wales to a very much larger extent than

in Victoria. Yet Senator Dobson said that it was most unfair, when Parliament ordered a reduction of £200,000 in the vote, that these temporary officers should have been sent about their business. Who else could have been sent away? Surely if any had to be dispensed with it should have been the temporary officer and not the permanent man who had complied with the Public Service Act, passed his examination, and gone up step by step.

Senator Dobson

- What I said was that these temporary men, who had been over 20 years in the service, were sent away without any superannuation allowance.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- That was not the fault of the Public Service Act. The New South Wales Act provides for a superannuation fund - which, by the way, was said some days ago to be pretty well insolvent - not for temporary officers, but for the permanent men of the service. It would have been monstrously unfair to make grants to these temporary officers out of a fund provided for the permanent men.

Senator Dobson

- They were temporary in name, but permanent in fact.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Then, of course, Parliament had to sanction the vote of £50,000, and rightly so. The appointment of temporary officers has been at the root of the whole disorganization of the service in New South Wales.

My first association with the service of Victoria

Was in 1874, when I was appointed, with the late Mr. Service and other gentlemen, to inquire into a case of disorganization in one of the departments. I then had my eyes opened as to what could happen in the service, which was then under an Act that practically left absolute power in the hands of the Minister of the day. The Act made certain provisions for the examination of candidates and so on, but practically the appointments lay with the Minister. If the Minister was a strong and masterful man he had his own way, and did practically what he liked as long as Parliament would vote the money. Ministers come and go, and they cannot have time to look into the organization of a department. They may not have any organizing capacity or know anything about business matters, and they are undoubtedly placed at a very great disadvantage. Very frequently, with the best of intentions, a Minister may do harm when he is trying to do good. On the other hand, if the head of a department is a strong man he possesses great advantages, and to a very large extent dominates the Minister. At the time of the inquiry I refer to, the head of the department in question was a strong man, and the consequence was that he domineered and tyrannized over its officers; in fact, we had almost to say in our report that he was a perfect slave-driver. I could not have conceived it possible that such a deplorable state of things could exist in the public service. All this was due to the permanent head of the department and not to the Minister. After that we said - "We will do away with Ministerial control and abolish also the absolute control of the department by the permanent head." Matters went on from bad to worse, until, in 1883, the outcry was so great throughout the colony as to the utter disorganization of the public service, that the general election in that year turned solely on the question of its reform. After the election, Mr. Service and Sir Graham Berry coalesced, and the Public Service Bill was one of the first measures they introduced. It was then found that the public servants of Victoria consisted of one-third who had joined in the ordinary way under the Act, while the remaining two-thirds had been appointed ministerially, or departmentally, in violation of the Act. As Mr. Service said - "they had come over the wall." That was the position of affairs, and the question was what should be done. It was utterly impossible to go on under the old system, which was a crying scandal throughout the length and breadth of the land. Officers were punished and suspended, and promoted and dismissed, practically on the dictum of the Minister of the day. That occurred in some departments more than in others. Following as I did one Minister - I am not going to say who he was, but the department he controlled was one which employed a large number of officers, both male and female - I must say that I was humiliated to find such a state of things possible in Victoria. I did not believe that such a serious condition of affairs could exist even in a private establishment, however bad it might be.

Senator Dobson

- In what direction - harshness or favoritism?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- In both. The Victorian Parliament decided that something must be done. It was resolved unanimously that the absolute control of officers in the various departments should no longer be left to Ministers. It could not be otherwise than that Ministers should be subject to the pressure of political influence. A Minister cannot refuse to see Members of Parliament or to hear them.

Senator Dobson

- Surely he can.

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

- They can bring matters before the Legislature if a Minister refuses to listen to them.

Senator Dobson

- Let them do so ; it is ridiculous to say that a Minister must listen to Members of Parliament in administering the Public Service Act.

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I will give honorable senators my experience in connexion with one department. One of the regulations under the Public Service Act is that officials shall not communicate with Members of Parliament, and that Members of Parliament shall not bring influence to bear in connexion with the appointment or promotion of officers. At the time I am referring to that provision was a dead letter. When I took office - I was a young Minister, otherwise, perhaps, I should not have acted as I did. I had copies of these regulations printed. Whenever a Member of Parliament wrote to me requesting a favour for an officer, I sent him a courteous letter, enclosing a copy of the regulations, and asking whether he desired to injure the officer. In a number of cases members had the good sense to ask that their letters should be withdrawn ; but there is a class of members who would never dream of doing such a thing. They will utilize all their power in favour of their supporters. What is the position of a Minister on the eve of an important division which may make or mar a Ministry? It is really unfair that he should be placed in such a position, and it is unfair also that Members of Parliament should be so situated simply because some of them insist upon breaking the law. The Victorian Parliament decided, therefore, that they would not leave this power in the hands of the Minister of the day or of the head of a department. Following the Imperial Act as far as possible, they determined to appoint a Public Service Board, consisting of three members. Two of them were taken from the service. They were high up in the service, and were carefully selected by the Minister. One was selected to represent the large Education department, and the other to represent the general service, while the third was a gentleman with large commercial and mercantile experience, taken from outside the departments. That was the first board appointed. In addition, an officer of one of the departments was appointed as secretary. You will see that on that board there were three officers who had an intimate knowledge of the working of several of the departments and of the public service generally, and there was one outsider who could bring to its assistance, in the interests of the public, a commercial knowledge. It at once took the matter in hand and went round and examined every officer and allocated the value of the work. It was a lengthy job, but it had to be done before the board could carry out its duties and place the service on a proper footing. I well recollect the first Wednesday after its appointment. I do not know whether it was so in other States, but here Wednesday was the day on which Members of Parliament flocked down from all directions inundating the departments and ear-wiggling the Ministers and heads to get this thing or that thing done in favour of an officer. It was a perfect beehive in those days.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Wednesday is rather an evil day in Victoria - for instance, Black Wednesday.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- It happened to be the day on which Ministers did not sit in Cabinet and they were get-at-able. On the first Wednesday after the board was appointed there was perfect quietude over the departments - I fancy that I can feel the quietude even now- - and from that day until comparatively recently the public service was wonderfully improved upon what it had been. The board has carried out its duties in a most admirable manner.

Senator Clemons

- Have they had their Wednesdays 1

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- No, a communication from an officer must go through the head of his department and not direct to the Minister, and then it has to be noted by the head and sent on to the Public Service Board. That system has gone on for a number of years. It has given the fullest satisfaction to the public service as a whole. Of course there are some men - I am glad to say, a minority - who look upon the public service as being made for them, and not they for it, and they are always trying to pull the strings in their own interests. I am glad to say, however, that they are quite the exception. I am not claiming for the public service of Victoria any more than other honorable senators can claim for the public service of their own State. But with an intimate knowledge of the public service, I can say that until comparatively recently it was a credit to the State, and occupied such a position that we should do all we can in the Commonwealth to emulate that example. Exception has also been taken to the fact that transfers took place from one department to another, and, consequently, occasionally a round peg got put into a square hole. I grant that occasionally, but only very occasionally - it happened. We must bear in mind that nine-tenths of the work in the public service is of a similar character. It is purely clerical, and a man after a few days experience can do the work just as well in one department as he can in another. What is the course of procedure in getting a vacancy filled in, say, the Post-office? A printed form is filled out by the Public Service Board, stating that there is a vacancy in such a department for a fourth-class officer at a certain salary and to discharge certain duties, and on the list, it is stated that the undermentioned officers are eligible for selection. Generally the names of about half-a-dozen officers are given. The form is sent round to the head of each department, and he is asked to state whether he has any officer after those six who, in his opinion, is qualified to discharge the duties. The heads fill up the forms, return their own opinion of the men, the Public Service Board recommends a certain officer to be transferred, and then an Order in Council is drawn up which, of course, the Minister has to sign. The Minister has nothing to do with the selection of the officer of whom he can know nothing. All he can do if, from any cause he thinks an injustice has been done, or an error has been made, is to refuse to sign the Order in Council. I have known one or two cases where that has happened, but they are very few and far between.

Senator Dobson

- Is it not a fact that there are several instances now where the Minister, having refused to accept the recommendation of the board, the office has not been filled up, and where for years it has been filled temporarily?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- I am perfectly aware that that is so, and that is why I think my honorable, and learned friend is simply playing into my hands. That is Ministerial influence. A certain transfer has been recommended, the head of the department to which the officer is going has agreed to it, the board has approved, and the Minister - I have had my own colleagues to fight in some cases - has blocked it. Why? Because he had his friends to serve, and he has continued to block it. That is distinctly contrary to the Act, and if I were Premier when such a thing happened, either the Minister or I would have to resign.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- And will not that happen under this Bill?

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- To a very limited extent.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Exactly the same.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- After all you must bear in mind that the cases to which Senator Dobson referred are not many. I do not believe that half-a-dozen such cases have happened during the last 17 years.

Senator Dobson

- There are not many, so far as I can ascertain, but still a deadlock has occurred, and nothing has been done to settle it.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- There you come in with Ministerial influence, and the Cabinet has unfortunately backed up the Minister.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- And the same thing will happen under clause 31.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Assuming that it does, at all events we shall be very much better off in regard to the other thousands of cases. Those are only isolated cases. It is not possible in any legislation to provide for every case, Nor is it possible to provide in any Bill for practically an illegal act on the part of the Minister. A Minister is backed up by his colleagues, and if he has a majority in Parliament, of course he is backed up there. What is the good of coming to Parliament to complain in such circumstances ?

Senator DRAKE

- The reasons have to be laid before Parliament in that Case and the commissioner may make another recommendation at once.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- That is an improvement. At some time or other an independent board of three persons, commissioners, must be appointed, I am utterly against one commissioner, because that would be very nearly as bad, in my opinion, as to have the Minister. In time a perfectly independent board may have to be appointed, perhaps during good behaviour, which would be better in many respects than for a term of seven years. But in the meantime we have taken over only the Post-office, the Customs, and the Defence department. We have three heads of departments, and while it will be necessary by-and-by to have permanently appointed and well-paid commissioners, as we have in Victoria, and I suppose elsewhere, I do not think it is necessary for us to go to that expense immediately. My own feeling is that we should go slowly, and that the permanent heads of the three departments might very well in the meantime be intrusted as a board with all these duties.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- This will mean a department at £10,000 a year.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- It is a mistake. If we had taken over the whole of the departments, then of course we should have had to appoint a board just as in Victoria, but we took over only a portion of the departments, and although they represent in the aggregate a good many thousand officers, I am certain that with proper assistance given to the three permanent heads, they will have no difficulty in discharging these duties. There will not be in the meantime a large number of appointments to make. Probably there will be a good deal of work to do to get the civil servants put in their proper places. When an amalgamation is made there is always friction, and it requires three men here with technical knowledge and practical common sense to get over the initial difficulties.

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Senator Dobson

- In the Customs and the Post-offices of each State the officers are in their proper places, so that there is no great difficulty.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- The question is how far the conditions in Victoria, say, will clash with those in New South Wales.

Senator Dobson

- It will be time to consider that a year or two hence.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- That, I believe, is one of the first things which will have to be considered. There will be transfers, perhaps not to a very large extent, from one State to another, and that is exactly where the difficulty will arise. But there is no necessity to go to the expense of a commissioner and six inspectors to get rid of a difficulty of that sort, because the three permanent heads are ample. I strongly urge the Minister to give my suggestion a trial. Do not let us rush into a large expenditure, which I venture to say is not necessary in the meantime. It will be necessary by-and-by, but sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Senator Drake

- But the heads of these departments have their own work, to do. Their time is fully occupied.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Necessarily I know something about the heads of departments, and I know that there is not a single head in a commercial firm who, if you give him the assistance of a junior clerk to relieve him of the heavy work, and still more if you give him the assistance of a shorthand-writer - and shorthand writers are not by any means used sufficiently in the public service - could not get through three times the amount of work

and with less trouble. Give the permanent heads a little assistance of that sort and I can assert within my own knowledge that they can do their work and do it satisfactorily, not only to the civil service as a whole, but also with credit to themselves.

Senator Dobson

- And do not let them be bothered with long inquiries about this thing and that thing. Let special boards be appointed for that purpose.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Special boards are an element of weakness.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- They have worked very well in South Australia.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- They worked very badly in Victoria in olden times.

Senator Dobson

- I mean boards to save heads of departments time and trouble.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- The difficulty is that if you have a special board appointed for each case you have no uniformity of decision.

Senator Sir John Downer

- The honorable senator has shown us how the Audit Commissioners made a mess of it. Will not that same argument apply to the heads of departments if they have such an amount of work thrust upon them

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Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- If in addition to the heads of departments, you have a small board to deal with all cases of appeal in that State, you will give full satisfaction to the public service, and give it at a cost which will not be by any means excessive, because it will represent very little more than a salary of, perhaps, £200 or £300 a year, for three men. I shall vote in favour of the amendment of Senator Dobson, but with a view to put in the words "permanent heads."

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Senator O'KEEFE

- Seeing that there are so many honorable senators who have had great experience in their respective States regarding the administration of the civil service who have not yet spoken, I should not have risen at this early period in the debate had it not been for the purpose of disabusing the minds of honorable senators of the ideas they may have with regard to the civil servants of Tasmania, after listening to Senator Dobson's speech. It is regrettable that the honorable and learned senator, who comes from the same State as myself, should have given the committee such a good destructive speech instead of one of a constructive character. Senator Dobson tried to make the committee believe that in Tasmania we do not require anything in the nature of a Public Service Board. In reply to an interjection, he said that in Tasmania we have only just got a Public Service Board, and he did not think we wanted it. While I could understand Senator Dobson, as a conservative head of a former conservative Government, taking that view of the situation, yet, seeing that we have entered into a new condition of things, and that Tasmania is a State of the Commonwealth, the honorable and learned senator would have been doing more justice to the civil servants of that State who have been transferred, if he had expressed his willingness to accept at least some portions of this Bill. But he wishes to have the measure shelved until, at all events, next session. Senator Dobson based* his arguments mainly on the fact that the public service system proposed to be brought into existence by the Bill will be too expensive for his State, at any rate. Although in the opening portion of his speech he said that he felt humiliated because the Bill strives to remove proper responsibility from the Ministerial heads of departments, if honorable senators followed him as I did - and as I was justified in doing, being a senator from the same State - and examined the idea underlying his remarks, it was that if this Bill is passed into law there will be higher salaries paid to the civil servants in Tasmania who form a part of the services transferred to the Commonwealth.

Senator Clemons

- Does the honorable senator think there will be 1

Senator O'KEEFE

- In answer to the honorable and learned senator, who I am sure has a grip of the public servants' grievances of Tasmania, and wishes to place them in a fair position as compared with their fellow officers in other parts of the Commonwealth - because he well knows that many of them have been entirely underpaid for many years - I say that I certainly do think so. I am sure Senator Clemons agrees with me in thinking that there should be a levelling-up, which I believe will take place under this Bill.

Senator Clemons

- I think there ought to be a levelling, but I cannot see that it will happen under this Bill.

Senator O'KEEFE

- If Senator Clemons believes there ought to be a levelling, unquestionably there are provisions in this Bill in regard to classification and grading which would bring the Tasmanian civil servants who belong to the Commonwealth into a better position than they occupy today.

Senator Drake

- The Bill will certainly improve the position of all.

Senator Pearce

- That is not dependent upon the appointment of the commissioner.

Senator O'KEEFE

- My fellow senators who, I am sure, believe that "the labourer is worthy of his hire," and that every servant should be paid a fair salary for his services, may take exception to the system indicated in clause 5 ; but I am dealing particularly, just now, with the speech made by Senator Dobson last evening - a speech which displayed remarkable destructive ability but no constructive capacity. The whole tenor of that speech was that this Bill should be shelved for at least six or twelve months. Is that not so ?

Senator Dobson

- I said I would like the question, to stand over until next session, but I suggested a board of heads of departments.

Senator O'KEEFE

- The honorable and learned senator, who wants to see this Bill laid aside until next session, and says there is no necessity for such a measure, is not, if I may be excused for saying so, so well informed as to the state of the civil servants of Tasmania, or their status, as I am myself. Perhaps I have been brought more closely into contact with many of them than he has. I am satisfied that in the interests of the transferred civil servants of Tasmania there is great need for such a measure as this - a measure which will place them on an equal footing and give them an equal status with their fellow servants in other States. Does the honorable and learned senator mean to tell us that under the present system in Tasmania, where Ministerial responsibility exists, there is no social influence ? Surely he must be aware of the social influences at work in Tasmania to-day. Taking one part of Tasmania, I know of cases where civil servants in the Post and Telegraph department have been for ten years in the employ of the State; their efficiency has never been called in question, but they are only receiving at the very utmost about £120 per annum, whereas in Victoria officers who have had the same length of service, other things being equal, are receiving £220 a year. That is an instance showing the need for such a measure as this, which will bring uniformity into the ranks of the civil servants in each of the States.

Senator Clemons

- I am afraid the honorable senator is very sanguine if he thinks this Bill is going to do that.

Senator O'KEEFE

- I am sure that this measure will have a tendency towards uniformity.

Senator Drake

- It certainly will have that tendency.

Senator O'KEEFE

- I know of officers in the Post and Telegraph department who have been in the service eighteen years, and the highest salary any one of them is getting is £180 a year, whereas I believe that in Victoria and New South Wales, officers with a similar length of service, other things being equal, are receiving about £250 a year.

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Senator Dobson

- Our civil servants need to be levelled up ; there is no doubt about that.

Senator O'KEEFE

- Will Senator Dobson allow that levelling up to remain in abeyance for another twelve months by shelving this Bill 1

Senator Dobson

- I object to clause 5.

Senator O'KEEFE

- The honorable and learned senator went further than that last night, because he wanted to shelve the whole Bill. Probably I am in unison with him to some extent with regard to clause 5. To show again the necessity for a measure which will give uniformity under regulations, if I read the Bill, aright, there will be a system of transfers from one part to another. That is very much needed in Tasmania. There are civil servants who have been living and working in one of the worst climates on the face of the earth for nine or ten years, and have never received one penny more per annum for having to live in that climate than has been received by men who have lived in the milder and more beautiful portions of the same State.

Senator Sir FREDERICK Sargood

- No extra allowance 1

Senator O'KEEFE

- No. As I have lived there for many years, perhaps I am justified in saying that I know of no worse climate in Australia than that of the West Coast of Tasmania. There the average number of days on which rain falls is 260 out of the 365, and we do not measure our rainfall by inches, but by feet.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- The Civil Service Commissioner could not interfere with that !

Senator O'KEEFE

- This Bill would remedy some of those grievances under which civil servants living in such a climate are now existing. At present the only benefit that any of the officers living in a certain part of that State derive from their long and faithful service there has been that they have got out of touch with the heads of departments, and have perhaps laid in the foundation for rheumatism and all kinds of lung complaints in the future. Under this Bill, many of those evils will be remedied. I do not mean to say for a moment that I think clause 5 is perfect. If any honorable senator during the course of this debate can show me - and I am open to conviction - a better method of controlling the public service, I am willing to accept it.

Senator Dobson

- A board of heads of departments has been suggested.

Senator O'KEEFE

- We shall probably hear more of that from honorable senators who have had experience in the other States. Allow me to say in passing that it was a real treat to listen to the calm and deliberate speech in which Senator Sargood gave his experience of the history of the public service in Victoria. The honorable senator evidently favours a board composed of the heads of three departments, and that might be an improvement upon the system proposed in the Bill. In spite of what Senator Dobson said last night, the Public Service Board existing in New South Wales might be a better system than this proposal for one commissioner and six inspectors, because when there is objection taken to political influence upon Ministers, it is not at all certain that the commissioner under this Bill would not be quite as subject to social influence as a Minister is to political influence. The commissioner will have under him six inspectors, being one inspector for each State.

Senator Drake

- Not necessarily.

Senator O'KEEFE

- I think it will be so, because if one State has an inspector appointed for it, we may be sure that all the other States will be clamouring for a similar appointment. I take it that that would be a very cumbrous system. Senator Dobson referred in drastic terms to the working of the Public Service Board in New South Wales, and gave us many instances of grievances existing there, and of tyranny and injustice done under the board. I have the authority of a gentleman, who by reason of his being a pressman and journalist, and having been brought into close contact with the working of that board for many years, is worth taking notice of, for saying that prior to the establishment of the Civil Service Board or the commissioners in New South Wales there were tremendous evils existing in the public service there, and

although there may have been many cases of injustice and tyranny occurring under the board, taken all round that board of three commissioners has immensely improved the public service of New South Wales. I do not think it is fair to pick out examples of injustice and tyranny under the system. We ought to look at the matter from a broad stand-point.

Senator Dobson

- The civil servants do not want injustice and tyranny.

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Senator O'KEEFE

- Quite so. I take it that civil servants, like ourselves, would prefer a system of control which would be best for all parties, and would stand the test of time. The civil servants themselves would not try to make us believe that because isolated cases of injustice or tyranny existed under a certain system that system was altogether wrong. Those isolated cases will occur under any system, while human nature is constituted as it is. I am not very much in disagreement with Senator Dobson upon this aspect of the case ; but I repeat that if during this debate - which I take to be one of the most important debates that can take place during the session, because it deals with the interests of a very large and deserving class of the community of the Commonwealth - any senator can show me a better system than is provided for in clause 5, I am willing to accept it. I appeal to honorable senators, however, not to be led away by the too drastic speech of Senator Dobson, who wishes to have this Bill shelved for twelve months, but to allow it to go through committee, and in doing so to endeavour to make it, if not a perfect measure, at least as perfect an instrument for the management of the public service of the Commonwealth as it is possible for us to make it.

Senator PLAYFORD(South Australia); - I desire to say one or two words upon this exceedingly important subject. The Commonwealth has taken over two very large departments - the Customs department and the Post-office department, and it seems to me that, as soon as we reasonably can, we ought to have a uniform Public Service Act governing those two departments. It is only right that we should, as soon as possible, place all the Commonwealth officers in the various States on precisely the same footing so far as regards their being received into the service on proper examination ; so far as regards a uniform and fair plan upon which they shall receive promotion ; so far as regards their salaries and every other matter connected with their service. It must be borne in mind that, at the present time, there are different Public Service Acts operating in the various States. Different conditions of service exist in different States, and men in the Commonwealth service in one State are very likely, under the circumstances, to be placed at an advantage over men performing precisely the same duties in the other States. Whether it should be done now or should be postponed, as proposed by Senator Dobson, is a different matter ; but there is no honorable senator who will dispute the fact that, as soon as we "reasonably can, we should pass one uniform Public Service Act for regulating the control and management of the public service of the Commonwealth. The question around which most of the debate has centred is as to whether the service should be under Ministerial control, as in South Australia ; whether it should be under a commissioner, as proposed by the Bill; under a board, similar to the board existing in the State of Victoria ; or whether it should be under a board temporarily appointed, at the present juncture, as suggested by Senator Sargood. I entirely disagree with the proposal of the Government, that there should be one commissioner with a certain number of inspectors under him. The commissioner will be as liable to all sorts of influence as the Minister. The mode of appointing him is such as to make him practically independent of Parliament and independent of the Ministry. He is so independent of the Ministry that if a Minister should disagree with any particular recommendation of his, he can compel the Minister to put his disagreement in writing ; in precisely the same way as we compel an officer of the Customs department who seizes some one without a warrant, to give him in writing a statement of the reasons for his arrest. We make him a perfect autocrat, and for seven years he is practically beyond the control of Parliament. It is perfectly true as stated that everything may depend upon the character of the man appointed as to how he will carry on the control of the public service. But our knowledge of human nature is such that we can say the chances are that we shall not get, in the appointment, the very best man for the position. If we got a man of extraordinary ability, great force of character, great love of justice, and a man who would be hardworking and honest, and would take a great interest in his duties, I have not the slightest doubt the whole thing would work very well. It would very often happen that a man with powers like these, as a monarch in a

despotic country, could do, and do quickly, what could not be done so well in a democratic country where there are Parliaments and checks, and I admit that where we can get that kind of man, " one-man government " is the best form of government I know of. The chances are that we shall not get him. Then there will be this trouble in connexion with him. It is said that under the Bill we shall place him as far as possible outside political influence, and to that extent we shall be, so far as Parliament is concerned, taking power away from ourselves. We may think that by doing that we shall have accomplished everything ; but we shall have done nothing of the sort. Under the proposal of the Bill the commissioner is to be appointed for seven years. And do honorable senators mean to say that if he desires reappointment he will not be under the control to some extent of Members of Parliament, whose good wishes he may desire to secure t

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- He will try to make his calling and election sure.

Senator PLAYFORD

- Certainly; and he will be under the control of the Minister who may happen to be in office when his own term of office expires. Do not honorable senators think that under circumstances like these we may have influence of the very worst possible character brought to bear upon this man 1

Senator O'KEEFE

- We cannot get away from the exercise of influence.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- We cannot get away from it. If we get away from political influence on the one hand, we may fall into social influence on the other. The next proposal is that we should have a board. I am not very much in love with boards. As a Minister, my experience of boards is that they are very often exceedingly good buffers between the Ministry and Parliament. By means of a board a Ministry can shunt off some responsibility and shelter themselves. My experience of the working even of permanent boards is that they are unsatisfactory, unless under certain conditions. I take the example of one board in South Australia in connexion with the Savings Bank there. It is a large board that has done an immense amount of good, and is a most popular institution - but why t because at the head of that board was one man, the late Sir Henry Ayers, who for a very large number of years was the board. There is no doubt that in that case it was one man rule after all, although he had a board with which to consult. He took an immense amount of interest in his work, he was a man of great ability, and, as the other members of the board deferred to him entirely, the institution was managed in an exceedingly creditable and satisfactory manner. So it has always been in my experience, and where we have a board working satisfactorily we have practically a one-man board. We will find in such cases that there is one man who takes an immense amount of interest in the work, who studies the details of it, and has the whole of its business at his finger ends, and to whom the other members of the board defer with beneficial results. But where on a board we have two or three men struggling for a kind of mastership, where we have one man opposing something which has been said by another, and where the members are men of practically equal ability and intelligence, we have a fighting board, the members of which are constantly at loggerheads one with another, and as a result we have very bad administration. My idea in connexion with the matter is to throw the whole of the responsibility upon the Ministry. There is such a thing in the world as Ministerial responsibility, and I say to members of this committee that, if between the Ministry and ourselves we place a third party, we shall be taking away a power which rightly belongs to us. Ministerial responsibility is a very important thing in connexion with Parliament. If we throw the responsibility upon Ministers we are always able to check them and bring them to book, where they exceed their powers in connexion with the public service. I may say with regard to this Bill that a very great majority of its provisions appear to me to have been exceedingly well considered and well drawn. The provisions relating to promotion, subdivision into various classes, so that there shall not be any very great difference between one class and another - as unfortunately there is in South Australia - appointments and other matters of detail, appear to me to have been drawn up in an exceedingly satisfactory way in this Bill. If we lay down rules in an Act of Parliament governing appointments and promotions, and so on in connexion with the civil service, a Minister will not be able to break them except at his peril. He will be bound by those rules. Some honorable senators, and especially Senator Sargood, have alluded to the most unsatisfactory way in

which the civil service of Victoria was managed in past times. I am perfectly astounded to think that such a state of things could have existed. It shows - I will not say the existence of corruption - but I will say it shows that Members of Parliament were not alive to their duties, and that Ministers acted in a corrupt and wholly improper manner. Such things could not have happened if Parliament had been properly alive to its duties. In the State from which I come - and naturally we all speak of our own States, because we know them best - we have never had a Civil Service Board or a commissioner. We have had a Public Service Act under which Ministers have worked, and we have had very little political influence brought to bear in connexion with appointments of an ordinary character. The appointments in regard to which political influence is sought to be exercised are those which are expressly excluded from the provisions of this Bill. The Judges, Audit Commissioners, Magistrates, and so on, are practically excluded, and it has been in connexion with appointments to such offices that most disputes as to whether they were right and proper have taken place. In the case of ordinary appointments there has been very little grumbling. There will always be some grumbling however, whether we have the service under Ministerial responsibility or not. A vacancy occurs in a department ; the man next on the list for promotion on the ground of length of service naturally applies for the vacancy ; but the Minister, acting in the best interests of the community, appoints another man who really deserves promotion, not because of his length of service, but because he is better fit for the position. There is nothing particularly bad against the other man ; but he is not smart ; he is not a good man for the position ; and the Minister overlooks him for an officer who has not been so long in the service, but who, he thinks, can do the work better. He does that in the best interests of the service and of the community, but with the result that the man who thinks his length of service entitles him to the position rises up against the Minister, with all his relatives and friends. On the other hand, the Minister may appoint the long-service man. Then the smarter man is immediately against him, and, with other members of the service, he complains of the action of the Minister in appointing what they call a "duffer" to the position. Therefore the Minister cannot please any one. I know there is a general opinion entertained by the public that Ministers are exceedingly fond of patronage. No greater mistake could be made. Ministers would prefer to have no patronage at all.

Senator Sir FREDERICK Sargood

- Some of them would.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- As a rule those who want it are those who ought never to have it, because they would abuse it. Most Ministers, however, would rather be without patronage. They would rather shelter themselves behind a board or a commissioner or some other third party in the way proposed by this Bill. If we lay down general rules to govern promotions in the service, and everything connected with it, Ministers will not be able to go outside them. Take the case of promotions in my own State. Let me refer to one of the last promotions made. A vacancy occurs in the Agent-General's office in London. The Government propose to appoint some one who is next on the list, and very properly he goes up for seniority, a very able man for the position. Then that officer's position becomes vacant. The Government advertise the fact throughout the service that they want a clerk in the London office to perform certain duties at a certain salary, and with certain automatic increases until a stated remuneration is reached. They invite applications for the office. The claims are all considered by the responsible Minister, and then an appointment is made. It is well known in the service that the Minister does not go behind the backs of men. In South Australia we make the appointments precisely on the lines referred to by Senator Sargood as those adopted in Victoria. I contend that a Minister could do all this without assistance, but if honorable senators desire that he should have the assistance of what we might call a board, consisting of heads of departments, such as that proposed by Senator Sargood, I would have no very great objection. The Minister would, in that case, have the advice not only of the head of the department in which promotion was to take place, but the experience and knowledge of two other heads of departments outside that particular branch of the service. Such a system would practically amount to Ministerial responsibility with the addition of a board to advise the Minister instead of the advice coming from the head of the department.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- There are practically only two heads of departments.

Senator PLAYFORD

- But then there is the military.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- But they have only about 50 men.

Senator PLAYFORD

- I would throw the responsibility on the Minister and the various heads of departments. If we have a commissioner, who will be the man knowing most about the officers in any particular department? Certainly the head of that department. If he was not brought into immediate contact with any particular sub-department, the head of that sub-department would be able to give advice. Honorable senators will find, in the majority of cases, whether it is a board or a commissioner, that where no unfair or undue influence is brought to bear the advice given by the board or commissioner to the Minister will really be the advice of the head of the department affected. Why should not that advice go straight to the Minister? Why on earth should it filter, in all cases, through a board or commissioner? We are proposing to appoint a commissioner who will be simply a pipe to conduct certain correspondence and minutes from the head of the department to the Minister, instead of the head of the department doing the work himself. He is going to be paid a large salary, and I see no necessity for him. Senator Dobson, in the course of his remarks, alluded to the fact that it very frequently happens under the civil service regulations of some of the States that a man in a small department is promoted to another, with the work of which he cannot be well acquainted. The honorable senator thought that, in itself, was wrong - that each department should be practically considered alone.

Senator Dobson

- With exceptional transfers.

Senator PLAYFORD

- The adoption of such a course would mean, that in a State possessing two or three very large departments, and two or three very small ones, a man who entered one of the latter would have, practically, no chance of promotion.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- Or else very rapid promotion.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- If many deaths took place, he would. Such a system would be very hard on a young man who entered a small department as a cadet. In South Australia we have a department of Stock and Brands, in which only two clerks are employed, under Mr. Valentyne. Of course there are a number of inspectors travelling through the country; but there are only these two clerks in the town office. One receives a salary of about £250 per annum, and another about £150 per annum, or else he is a cadet at a still lower salary. A young man entering that department would have to stop there until he was grey if transfer to another department was not possible. He would have to stop there at a salary of £150 per year until he sank into the grave, unless some one above him died. Therefore, in my opinion we must treat the civil service as a whole. Of course it must be divided into different departments, and we should not take a man who is fairly high in one department, after fifteen or twenty years service, and transfer him to a position high up in another department of which he has no knowledge. But we should certainly help the youngsters - the cadets - who enter small departments, and give them the right of transfer, otherwise they would have no chance of promotion. It should not be said that because a clerk enters the Post-office or the Customs or some other department he must never go outside that department. If we do make such a provision we shall inflict a great injustice on the young men who join branches of the State services in which there are but few employees. I shall vote with Senator Dobson to strike out the words he has referred to. If that be done I think it will become incumbent upon the Government to take time to consider what course they will adopt. My own idea is that we should go for Ministerial responsibility to its fullest extent, would strike out all reference to a commissioner and inspectors, and pass this as a machinery Bill, with regulations on lines just to the whole of the service. If a Minister broke the law - no matter who he was - he would very quickly hear of it. There would always be many eyes on him. If he made improper promotions, or broke the law in any respect, Members of Parliament would soon become acquainted with it, and he would be brought to book. If the Senate does not believe in Ministerial responsibility, then I think Senator Sargood's proposal is the next best. It will be for the Government, having ascertained the will of the committee in

regard to the proposed appointment of a commissioner, to say what course they will adopt j whether they will accept the proposal for Ministerial responsibility, whether they will adopt the suggestion for a limited board put forward by Senator Sargood, or the appointment of a board in a similar way to that in which the Victorian board is selected. I will give the Government every support in passing a Public Service Bill, so that we may have uniform legislation on the subject throughout the Commonwealth. I have said before, and I wish to reiterate it, that, in my opinion, Ministerial responsibility is what we ought to aim at. Next to that, and rather than stop the passage of the Bill this session, I should be willing to adopt Senator Sargood's suggestion.

Senator CLEMONS

- I hope I shall avail myself very little of the latitude which has been extended to honorable senators during the debate by the Vice-President of the Executive Council. I think it is desirable at this stage that the discussion should be limited as closely as possible to clause 5, because I believe it is becoming obvious to all honorable senators that it is the most debatable one. At the same time I regret that I must limit my observations practically to the clause, because, to a large extent, I am inclined to support the Government in the provisions which they submit in this Bill. I agree with Senator Playford that many of the provisions are admirable. I presume that the need for a Public Service Bill is imperative - that the one thing we want is uniformity, and to secure it at as early a date as possible. To that extent, therefore, I should be only too anxious to accord to the Government all the support I can in its attempt to pass a Public Service Bill. But, on the other hand, I confess, when I am confronted with clause 5, I do feel inclined to stop - I do not like it. I cannot help thinking of what the whole of the States expected when federation was entered into. I believe, for instance, in regard to the public service, what they all looked forward to, and looked forward to with a confidence which they were perfectly justified in feeling, was efficiency. They properly expected economy of administration, and they rightly demanded equality of treatment. I confess that I find scarcely any of those requirements complied with in the Bill. My opinion is that the Government have accumulated such an immense mass of machinery here that they will, through an excess of management, fail to get proper control. In other words there are so many masters under the Bill that, if each one of them wants to discharge his duty, he will inevitably find himself getting in the way of some one else. That is my first criticism on practically clause 5. If you want to avoid that sort of provision, which would be disastrous from the point of view of efficiency, you must expect some of these innumerable officers you are appointing to do nothing in order that they may be efficient. When you come to economy of management the Bill obviously fails. Clause 5 precipitates the Commonwealth forthwith into an extravagance, which, in my opinion, is wholly unjustified. For, when we come to analyze the intention and the scope of the Bill, what is it that we find 1 That it is to affect two departments only, and if the Postmaster-General cares to interject that others are provided for under it, then I say that to the other departments are attached other Ministers, and that objection is groundless. The Bill is going to deal objectively " with, I believe, 15,000 civil servants of the Commonwealth.

Senator Glassey

- 11,178.

Senator CLEMONS

- That makes my case much stronger, because I find that the machinery to manage 11,000 public servants is absurdly magnificent and extravagant. We are getting here machinery that would be quite adequate to the control of the public service of the United States of America. I am not, of course, dealing with the Salaries which are attached to individual officers, but I am dealing with the multiplicity, with the complexity, of heads of departments, and other superior officers whom we have under the Bill, to deal with 11,000 civil servants. My third objection is that it will not secure what we all hoped it would - equality of treatment. Senator O'Keefe, in his speech, seemed to be, in my opinion, too sanguine, and I told him so by way of interjection. He expects that the Bill is to provide that admirable equality of treatment for all civil servants of the Commonwealth, no matter where they live, which we all desire.

Senator O'Keefe

- Let us make the Bill provide, it.

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Senator CLEMONS

- I admit that in many of its provisions it does provide fairly and uniformly for promotion ; but the great

objection to the Bill - and the appointment of a commissioner will not remove it - is that civil servants to start with are to be graded not by their length of service, not because they have worked for fifteen years in, say, Tasmania, but simply on the amount of salary they are receiving. Where do you 'find equality of treatment there? What is going to happen under the very Bill which Senator O'Keefe extols on the ground of equality of treatment, of levelling up the various States ? A civil servant in Tasmania who has worked fifteen years honestly and well, without a stain on his character, is to find that he starts off in the new race under the Bill from the same mark as a man in Victoria who has been five years in the service.

Senator O'Keefe

- Have we not the power of amending the Bill?

Senator CLEMONS

- So far as the question of equality of treatment is concerned, the Bill radically fails.

Senator Sir John Downer

- That depends on other clauses than the one we are considering.

Senator CLEMONS

- It does ; but I am now pointing out to Senator O'Keefe that a very great blemish in the Bill is, that you do not get equality of treatment. Who is to grade all the civil servants at the start? The commissioner. Here you have the root of the matter. You are to intrust to one man the whole question of grading every civil servant in the Commonwealth at the present time. I am utterly unwilling to intrust such powers to a man who is to be entirely outside our control. Now I come down to the radical point. I think if honorable senators would stop to consider the question, they would wonder why it is that they object to political control, to political influence?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- They have seen the results.

Senator CLEMONS

- What is it they are afraid of? Themselves. Does every member of this Parliament fear himself, or does he fear his neighbour ?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- He fears the Minister.

Senator CLEMONS

- Why does he fear political control and political influence? It is political control and political influence which come within the whole scope of his work. It is because of political influence he is here. He shuns the very thing which he himself is most intimately concerned with. In shunning that Scylla, in what sort of a Charybdis is he willing to plunge himself ? Into the Charybdis of social influence or some outside influence, or any influence you like, except that particular influence which he ought to be fully master of. What astonishes me is that politicians, to use the general term, are shunning their own influences; that they should distrust either themselves or one another. I go further, and ask why are we sent here ? Do we discharge our duties to the people who have elected us? When dealing with a large and important measure, we promptly say - " We distrust ourselves. We want to do something which will not only put responsibility on the Minister, but put the right of criticism away from Parliament."

Senator Staniforth Smith

- Why do we put the Judges beyond political control ?

Senator CLEMONS

- And why do we put our Auditor-General beyond political control ? Are we to put the commissioner under the Public Service Act on the same footing as an Auditor-General or a Judge?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- Exactly.

Senator O'Connor

- Does the honorable and learned senator believe in putting railway management under commissioners ?

Senator CLEMONS

-I am not discussing railway management, because it has nothing to do with the Commonwealth.

Senator O'Connor

- It has a great deal.

Senator Ewing

- It is a very questionable proposition.

Senator CLEMONS

- It is a very debatable proposition. I would remind Senator O'Connor that in addition to the Railway department there is another very large department - the Education department which does not come under the purview of this Bill. There are other matters which do not come under the Bill, and yet machinery is provided for them. The Bill will not affect the status of any person employed in the Education department.

Senator SirFrederick Sargood

- Because we did not take it over.

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Senator CLEMONS

- Precisely ; and we did not take over the railways. I am obliged to Senator O'Connor for pointing out the fact. It is obvious that this immense Bill is truly to deal with only two departments. I come back to the question of responsibility. It staggers me that we should shirk this responsibility. I can conceive that Ministers are desirous of shirking it. I can quite understand that Ministers prefer to use their powers of delegation rather than rely on their own efficiency, because if they exercise their powers of delegation they need never be troubled as to whether they will or will not efficiently discharge their duties. The chief duty of a Minister in the Commonwealth should not be merely an attendance on Parliament, with, I admit, all its onerous tasks attached to it ; but it should be administration, and administration running in the direction of responsibility. I believe that the whole of the Commonwealth looks to the Ministers in its early history not to promptly fall back on their powers of delegation, so that they may put -on the shoulders of some one else all responsibility, but undertake what they are here to undertake, and what the people expect them to undertake. I do not doubt that most honorable senators here are convinced of the fact that we are not desirous of allowing Ministers to shirk all this responsibility in the very early history of our career. Many other reasons can be given why they should not if we have any self respect ourselves. If we allow them to shirk their responsibility we distinctly and deliberately divest ourselves of the power of doing that which we are expected to do here. For reasons like that I am going to support any amendment - I was not here last night when the debate was begun - which is aimed at the elimination of the appointment of the commissioner instead of the retention of that responsibility by a Minister. For the rest, I cordially approve - of many things in the Bill, and I hope that an opportunity will be given to me, as to the rest of the committee, to frame a measure as early as possible, in order to secure that uniformity which we all want.

Senator GLASSEY

- I cannot agree with the last speaker with regard to Ministerial control. Nor do I agree with him that the appointment of a single commissioner will bring about the evils which he and others forecast. The experience of the different States has convinced those who have taken part in Governmental matters that some other system than that of Ministerial control is absolutely necessary in the public interest. Boards have been tried and have to some extent failed to accomplish the objects for which they were established. Some years ago in Queensland, we established a board of three commissioners to manage our railways. The results were certainly not satisfactory. There were quarrels innumerable, divided counsels, and divided authority, to such an extent that Parliament was obliged to intervene before the time for which the commissioners, were appointed had expired. We were obliged to return to the system of management by one commissioner, which has been continued with highly satisfactory results to the railways and the State as a whole. As to the board suggested by Senators Dobson and Sargood - what does it mean 1 The very evils that many of our civil servants complain of are brought about by some of the heads of the departments whom these honorable senators propose to constitute as a board. Having had some experience, going back thirteen or fourteen years, in regard to commissioners in the management of not only railways but the civil service, I think the scheme of the Government is eminently satisfactory and calculated to bring about the best possible results for the persons engaged in the service and for the Commonwealth. I have not gone into this matter light-heartedly. I have endeavoured to examine it carefully, taking into consideration what has taken place in my own State. I believe the same set of circumstances must to some extent have existed in the other States also. With this experience, I say that the appointment of a commissioner for seven years, placing him beyond Ministerial control, is a

system we can safely adopt. Some honorable senators have said that the Bill makes the commissioner a despot. I can find nothing in the Bill which places the commissioner, whoever he may be - and I presume he will be a man of ability, tact, and judgment - in such a position. He will be hedged round by all the safeguards that the ingenuity of a number of able men can devise to prevent the despotism that some honorable senators fear. Senator Clemons has asked the question whether members of Parliament are afraid of themselves. They are not. But they have other duties to perform than attending to the appointment of persons in the civil service.

Senator McGregor

- It is complained that they are always doing that.

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Senator GLASSEY

- It sometimes happens that Members of Parliament are called upon to say a word in the interests of some person who may be a civil servant, but speaking broadly, they have something else to do than to interfere with the appointment and transfer of officers. Senator

Symon has characterized the scheme of the Bill as exceedingly cumbersome and expensive. But I venture to say that the alternative scheme suggested would be far more cumbersome and expensive. We must expect that the cost will be considerable; but if the commissioner is worth his salt he will be able to save infinitely more in the management of the departments in a single year than he and his colleagues will draw as salary. As to Ministerial control, I think that most of the States which have tried that system have found it to work in such a manner that they do not wish to go back to it. Victoria certainly is not anxious to go back to Ministerial control, nor is New South Wales desirous of doing so, whilst as to Queensland, knowing what has taken place in the past, and what is likely to occur in the future, we are certainly not favorable to that system. I could, if it were desirable, give the committee some information that would astonish them with regard to Ministerial control as to transfers, appointments, and matters of a far more drastic character.

Senator Ewing

- What awful people the Queenslanders must be !

Senator GLASSEY

- I do not fancy that operations of this kind are confined to Queensland. The same set of circumstances has prevailed largely in other States. Senator Symon has asked whether a business man would hand over the management of his affairs to some other person rather than keep it under his own control. At the first blush the illustration may seem to be forcible. But it is really not so, for the reason that I know of no business man who has his establishment scattered over an area of 3,000,000 square miles of country, with 6,218 branches, and including such vastly important services as Customs and posts and telegraphs. I am satisfied, at all events, that there is justification for establishing machinery by means of which our great departments may be conducted in a more efficient and effective manner than they are at present. I know of some gigantic businesses in different parts of the world, but I know of none whose branches are so numerous and scattered over such an immense area of country as are the branches of the businesses controlled in the Commonwealth by the Postmaster-General and other Ministers. There is the business of Krupp, the gun and ammunition manufacturer of Germany, which is one of the largest in the world ; and the gun and ammunition factory on the banks of the Tyne which was controlled, largely through directors, by the late Lord Armstrong. I recollect that business some 30 years ago, and I know something of the dimensions to which it has grown to-day. Take the business of Carnegie, or any of the great businesses of the world, and it will be found that the whole of them are concentrated. There are very few that have branches at any long distance from the main centre of operations. That is not the case with which we are dealing. We are not now dealing even with a State, but with six States, and with a territory containing 3,000,000 square miles. We are dealing with the many branches of the various departments of the Commonwealth which extend over that vast area, in the most extreme settled portion of Western Australia, the northern portion of South Australia, and away to Cameroo, in the north-western portion of Queensland. We have no fewer than 6,000 branches of the Post-office scattered over this vast territory, some of them large and some of them small. We have also 218 Custom-houses. I have here a return which was quoted in the Other Chamber by Sir William Lyne, in a speech which is well worthy of perusal by honorable senators, and I find that in the different departments taken over by the Commonwealth the

following are the number of persons employed : New South Wales they have 3,959 ; Victoria, 2,767 ; Queensland, 1,288; Western Australia, 1,422 - a wonderfully large number for so small a population, showing the scattered nature of the settlement there- South Australia, 1,232; and Tasmania, 510 - a total of 11,178. I ask are the cases of private businesses at all parallel with this 1 The great establishment of Krupp is conducted largely by directors, and the Armstrong establishment, on the banks of the Tyne, is also largely conducted by directors. Any one reading Carnegie's latest production will see that he gathered round him for the discharge of the duties of conducting his immense establishment no fewer than 31 persons, the best trained men he could secure. They were engaged in assisting him in his work of management, and I need scarcely say with tremendous success.

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Senator Pearce

- He would not go in for too many of them.

Senator GLASSEY

- Nor have we too many of them here. We have over 6,000 post and telegraph offices, and we have 218 Custom-houses. In addition to these there are the offices connected with the Marine department, which will shortly come under the control of the Commonwealth, and there are a considerable number of officers connected with the civil branch of the Defence department. I care not what great abilities a Minister may possess, or however desirous he may be to discharge his duties to the full, and give satisfaction to all the officers in the various branches of the service, and to Parliament, it is absolutely impossible that he can do all that is required of him. There is no business in the world, and never will be, scattered over such a vast territory, and employing such a number of persons as are connected with the departments of the Commonwealth to which I have referred. Fancy asking a Minister to appoint a telegraph operator at Cammoweeal in the far northern part of Queensland, or a message boy in the Northern Territory of South Australia ! It would be absolutely impracticable to cast upon him the responsibility of such appointments. An Honorable Senator.-- It would be on the permanent head.

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Senator GLASSEY

- Much of the mischief that has occurred in connexion with some of our departments has been due to a want of capacity on the part -of some of the permanent heads, some of whom were appointed for political reasons, and not in consequence of any ability to perform the duties of their offices. Some of the permanent heads have been all that could be desired, but some, I am afraid, have not. I shall now refer briefly to some of the criticisms of honorable senators. Senator Pearce, a gentleman for whom I have a great regard, and who, as a rule, is level-headed, and arrives at conclusions upon fairly accurate and reasonable lines, says that the commissioner to be appointed for seven years may be all right until he approaches the end of his term, when, in order to get a second engagement, he will endeavour to keep on the best possible terms with the Minister, and will be largely amen able to that gentleman, whoever he may be. That is not the experience" of some of us who come from Queensland. The present Railway Commissioner there was appointed in the first instance with two colleagues, for a period of seven years ; but, as I have said in the earlier part of my remarks, in consequence of divided counsel, quarrels, and friction existing between the three commissioners, Parliament had to interfere and get rid of two of them ; and one of them a considerable time before his term of office had expired. What are the facts so far as the present commissioner is concerned 1 On two occasions since the expiration of his first term of seven years, the Government, with the absolutely unanimous concurrence of Parliament, have re-engaged him for a second term of three years, and have actually increased his salary by £500 a year. That gentleman is engaged for a reasonable term, and is given security of tenure to make him independent of Ministerial control, so that he may discharge his duties properly, and may organize his department in such a way as to bring about the best results. The Auditor-General of Queensland, too, is the servant of Parliament and not of the Government, and it would be a great pity if he were the servant of the Government. He is engaged, not for a term, but during good behaviour, and I can cite his case as an instance of the value of appointing a person entirely free from Ministerial control. At the time of the bank crisis in 1896, when Parliament urged the appointment of a committee to investigate the working of the Queensland National Bank, the Government asked the Auditor-General if he would accept an appointment upon the committee ; and though he did not put it in so many words, the Auditor-General declined. He was the servant of

Parliament, and he held back until such time as the Parliament of the country expressed its desire that he should be one of the committee. In consequence of that desire being expressed by Parliament, the Auditor-General accepted the position. He gave very substantial reasons why he had declined in the first instance by saying that he was the servant, not of the Government, but of the Parliament and the country. When the labours of that committee were over, and the Auditor-General had performed important and valuable services in the interests of the country, the Government asked him to accept a certain sum of money in addition to his salary for the extra labours he had performed on the committee. The Auditor-General declined. I was then, I think, leading the Opposition, and as I was somewhat astonished that he should decline,

Tasked the Auditor-General for his reason. He gave very cogent and conclusive reasons in saying- - " I am not the servant of the Government, I am the servant of the Parliament, and if Parliament expresses a desire that I should receive a certain sum for labours performed, I will accept the money." When the intimation was made to Parliament, Parliament concurred. The Auditor-General in Queensland, in consequence of his independence of Government control, was able to act in a way which was highly creditable to himself, and extremely satisfactory to the people of the northern State. I think that is some reply to the statement made by Senator Pearce that towards the termination of the commissioner's engagement he might allow himself to be under Ministerial rule, and become, so to speak, a pliant tool in the hands of the Minister, in order to make his re-appointment sure. If a gentleman of honour, integrity, and ability occupies that position there need be no fear of his becoming the pliant tool of a Minister, or of any one else. He would consider himself the servant of the country, and I venture to say that if he performs his duty to the country, Parliament, speaking for the country, will not be slow to re-engage him. He will be upon a better, broader, and higher ground by standing well with Parliament find the country than by being the creature of any Minister or Government. Senator Dobson has made the most peculiar, and to me the most innocent, suggestion. First of all, he says the Government should drop the Bill, and, secondly, that if they do not do so, they should so alter it as to destroy its framework and take the soul out of it.

Senator Higgs

- The honorable and learned senator does not want to embarrass the Government.

Senator GLASSEY

- No ; the honorable and learned senator says that the service will strictly adhere to the regulations. But are those regulations framed on solid, equitable, just, and humane grounds ? If they are not, then I contend that the service will have a perfect right to demand an alteration of that which is manifestly cruel, unjust, and oppressive.

Senator Dobson

- But they enter into a contract.

Senator GLASSEY

-- If the contract is entered into upon lines that are cruel and oppressive, the civil service will have a perfect right to endeavour to bring about such an alteration that the regulations will harmonize with the ideas of the age in which we live, and be such that both men and women will be able to adhere to them with loyalty and devotion. Senator Dobson did not say that the service would adhere to just and humane regulations, but to regulations framed by the head of a department,- whether that head of a department is a little despot or not.

Senator Charleston

- But the regulations are approved by Parliament.

Senator GLASSEY

- The regulations of the future may be approved by Parliament, but Senator Dobson alluded to regulations now in existence.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- And those regulations have been approved by Parliament.

Senator Keating

- Not in all the States.

Senator GLASSEY

- Exactly. They may have been framed by some little local despot merely to suit his own purposes. I am

not here to say that I support public servants who wait on Members of Parliament or Ministers of the Crown, but I am here to see that they are allowed to work under just and humane conditions.

Senator Charleston

- What better man could we have than a Minister to control them?

Senator GLASSEY

- My experience is that a Minister is the worst possible man to have control of them. I could tell Senator Charleston of some Ministerial acts in my State in regard to appointments and transfers which were oppressive and unjust, and of cases in which Ministers have appropriated considerable sums of public money and applied them to their own use.

Senator Charleston

- What did Parliament do ?

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Senator GLASSEY

- Perhaps some of the Members of Parliament were closely allied with that sort of thing. Members of Parliament are frequently asking Ministers to make appointments and transfers. Supposing that a member is successful in securing the appointments or transfers he desires, is he going to lash these Ministers as has been alleged ? Not at all. Members in such a position are absolutely silent, knowing full well that they have been largely responsible for the objectionable state of affairs. Those who have been instrumental in bringing about that condition of affairs are not going to rise in their places in Parliament and lash the Minister. The Minister would retaliate upon them with tremendous vigour. In Queensland an investigation of the public service was made some years ago, and, in one case, it was found that an officer had been employed for years in addressing envelopes at a salary of £300 a year. Members of Parliament are largely responsible for such a state of affairs, and to say that they would criticise Ministers in such circumstances is perfect nonsense. They would not dare to do so.

Senator Ewing

- They would if they were not corrupt. They must all be corrupt where the honorable senator comes from.

Senator GLASSEY

- I do not say that all of them are corrupt, but cases of the kind I have referred to have occurred not only in Queensland, but in other States. We have had the testimony of Senator Sargood as to the condition of the Victorian public service some years ago. May I ask Senator Ewing whether they are all perfect in Western Australia ?

Senator Ewing

- Most of them are.

Senator GLASSEY

- Then that is the only State I know of in which such a happy condition of affairs exists. Even in the model State of South Australia I fear bad appointments and transfers have been made. Supposing Ministers of the Crown are exceedingly strong, and can resist the pressure of political influence brought to bear on behalf of the civil service, what, may I ask, becomes of the 700,000 electors scattered throughout the Commonwealth - have they no voice in these matters ? I think they have a very large say ; and do honorable senators think that no pressure would be brought by them in order to secure appointments in the civil service ?

Senator Charleston

- Surely the whole of them could not get billets ?

Senator GLASSEY

- I did not suggest that they would, but this vast number of electors can bring great pressure to bear, particularly, at election time. They say to the candidate - "Will you do this," and "Will you do that?"

Senator Ewing

- And he does not do it when he gets in.

Senator GLASSEY

- These requests are very natural, and it is hardly possible to avoid them. Some honorable senators would have this Bill hung up. They say it should be set aside for a year, while others wish to amend it in a way that would destroy its usefulness. We are all extremely anxious to see that close federation brought about which the people of Australia desire - this is One means of bringing it about. The Bill is framed on

federal lines, and in such a way that every individual in the Commonwealth will have an equal right to enter the service. When a man does enter the service, he will have a free course open to him to advance according to his abilities under the provisions of this Bill. The Bill has been carefully drafted and framed, and it has passed the keenest possible criticism of 72 members of the other Chamber. Are we going to give no heed to that fact? I admit that we have the right, but are we going to calmly set aside the work which has been done by the other House - by the assembly that holds the purse strings of the Commonwealth?

Senator Dobson

- They do not.

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Senator GLASSEY

- The other Chamber has passed the Bill in the shape in which it comes before us, and- has voted the money required for the payment of the commissioner and his inspectors. I think the number of inspectors proposed is not too great considering the enormous amount of work to be performed. We should not be mealy-mouthed about the matter. Considering that so many branches have been taken over, six inspectors are not too many. They have to travel over a vast territory, and examine a great number of officers. Is there any banking institution in the world, having branches scattered all over the country, that would not employ a sufficient number of inspectors to see that those branches were being worked in a proper manner? Yet some honorable senators talk of the enormous expenditure that will be involved in the appointment of six inspectors at a salary of £800 per annum, and a commissioner at a salary of £1,500 per annum. Some honorable senators desire to leave the civil service to Ministerial control. We have 108 members of the Commonwealth, each of whom, no doubt, receives applications for civil service appointments from all parts of the States. Assuming that each member was successful in securing the appointment of ten persons in the service at a paltry salary of £100 a year, far more than what is asked for as the remuneration of these officers under this Bill would be swallowed up. Sixty-three officers at £100 a year each would swallow up what is proposed to be paid to the commissioner and his six inspectors. I believe that we shall prevent appointments and transfers resulting from political pressure by appointing a commissioner, and in that way we shall save five or six times as much as would be expended in paying the salaries of these seven officials. Supposing that we take these seven persons, the total expenditure comes to £6,300 a year. But supposing that we have an additional expenditure of £7,000 or £8,000 a year all told to pay for all the new appointments under this Bill, does any honorable senator imagine for a moment that the commissioner and the inspectors will not save more in the performance of their duties in a year than will cover that sum? If the commissioner is worth his salary, and if the inspectors are worth their salaries, they will save 20 times the amount they draw a year.

Senator Charleston

- That is a condemnation of all the permanent heads.

Senator GLASSEY

- My honorable friend can see nothing but these permanent heads. Much of the mischief, much of the confusion, much of the extra expenditure is largely due in some of the departments to the very permanent heads to whom he attaches so much importance.

Senator Dobson

- No, to the Members of Parliament influencing the permanent heads.

Senator GLASSEY

- Supposing that it be Members of Parliament, it all proves that the control should be taken away from Members of Parliament and Ministers of the Crown, as well as from heads of the department.

Senator Dobson

- No.

Senator Pearce

- Will it make them any different if they are called inspectors or commissioners?

Senator GLASSEY

- A banking institution conducting its business over such a large territory as Queensland has its inspectors. All I desire is that the inspectors under this Bill shall be perfectly removed from Ministerial and political control, and that the heads of departments shall be under their supervision. The Bill does a little

more than prevent many of the evils to which I have alluded. It provides for uniformity in the working of the departments. That, I think, is highly essential. Senator O'Keefe pointed out forcibly the conditions under which some of the civil servants labour in Tasmania. I long to see the machinery of this Bill put in full operation, not that there shall be a levelling down of position and pay, but that there shall be a levelling up. Even where heads of departments are considered to be incompetent and over-paid, so long as the provision in the Constitution remains we cannot interfere with them. But when their positions come to be filled in due course, I long to see as far as possible the introduction of a uniform system on reasonable lines. I long to see the introduction of reasonable hours, reasonable conditions, and reasonable pay. I desire that the regulations shall not be tyrannical or oppressive, but shall be framed on such just and reasonable lines that at any rate civil servants shall feel that they are not being wronged or oppressed, and are placed in a position to perform their duties in a satisfactory manner. I sincerely hope that honorable senators will not consider the proposed expenditure to be extremely excessive. I hope they will realize that with the aid of this machinery the commissioner and the inspectors will be in a position to save far more than the salaries they will draw. At any rate that will be able to give satisfaction to the whole of the Commonwealth, and to do away with divided authority. Under their administration we shall not have discontent in one State, when there should be peace and contentment in all. In the absence of such a measure we shall have a dual system going on in the States. I am satisfied that the operation of the measure with some few amendments will not only bring satisfaction to the different States, but will bring satisfaction to the Ministry of the day, to Parliament, and to the people of Australia.

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Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- Whether or not we need quite all the appointments provided for in the Bill is a matter on which I reserve my judgment until I have heard Senator O'Connor speak, because really, so far, excepting the speeches of Senators Sargood and Glassey, we have heard all attack and no justification on the part of the Government. Subject to that I agree with every word which fell from Senator Sargood, except his conclusion. I think he proved what must be within the knowledge of every experienced politician in Australia, - that persons engaged in active politics are exceedingly bad persons to manage the civil service. The States in turn have adopted some method to shift the responsibility from the Ministry to another body. In South Australia they have adopted the method of passing a Civil Service Act the administration of which is left to the Ministry. Under the administration of the Government from time to time the object of that Act is most constantly evaded.' There are the permanent officials, who get their annual increment under the Act, and are promoted. But, unfortunately, there is another class which they call "pro. and tem." Provisional and temporary officers, of course, get no increments, and are entitled to no advancement. They are practically in the hands of the Minister

Senator Playford

- If they have been employed five years they get a retiring allowance.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- To some extent they get a retiring allowance, because Parliament forced it upon the Government. When, the Government got hard up they appointed men, not permanently, but provisionally and temporarily. In that way they avoided their responsibility and defeated the Act. The coach-and-four has been driven through even the model Act of the model State. It has been found adaptable to the necessities of the Government in office at the expense of its vital principles. We are all agreed, I suppose, that there must be a Civil Service Act of some kind or another, and that there must be a Minister to administer it. If we want a Civil Service Act when we are dealing in the narrow circle of our own State concerns, which Senator Playford and myself know full well in South Australia, which Senator Sargood and his friends know not so well, but fairly well in Victoria, and which again, Senator O'Connor and his friends know fairly well in New South Wales, although, perhaps still less perfectly, because the area is larger; if we find that we need this provision to put the employment of civil servants on some well-settled basis, so that he who sows well may know that he will reap well, surely the necessity of the situation is infinitely increased when we come to sweep all the States into one and to require the Government to know all about everything and everybody. To throw upon them 'the administrative details of the department, infinite in their ramifications, difficult in detail, and impossible for them to intelligently carry out, and at the same time subject them to be harried by their supporters on this side from time to time, to

induce them to make appointments which, if they were left alone, they would not like to make--

Senator McGregor

- Do they not generally do it for their opponents ?

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- I think my honorable friend will agree with me in what I am saying, although he interrupts me thus.

Senator McGregor

- Hear, hear.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- Eleven thousand one hundred and seventy-eight civil servants have been taken over by the Commonwealth. They are persons unknown to any Government which can come into power. Their work must of necessity be unknown in the greater number of instances to every Minister.

Senator Stewart

- And to every head of a department.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- And very often to the head of the department. How is the thing to be done 1 Is it to be left to the ordinary Ministerial business? Is the Ministry to be subject, in addition to the necessary work it has to do, to the pressure which is brought by their constituents to bear on members, and thrown again on to the Government ?

Senator Dobson

- They will have none of that pressure under the alternative system which the Opposition is proposing to introduce.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- What is the alternative system ?

Senator Dobson

- We shall tell the honorable member more about it by-and-by.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- The only alternative I have heard of is the suggestion of Senator Sargood, that we should have a board of permanent heads.

Senator Dobson

- With a board of appeal also.

Sir JOHN DOWNER

- That means that matters in South Australia would be left to the permanent heads there.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- No ; those are the chief officers, not the permanent heads.

Senator Playford

- The system prevails in South Australia. Why did not the honorable and learned senator bring in a Bill to alter it ?

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Sir JOHN DOWNER

- I should have brought in Bills to alter many things if I thought I could cany them ; but for many years there has been a power in South Australia with which I did not agree, but winch I was unable to alter. So far as this system is concerned, we are face to face with two problems - are we going to leave the management of the civil service to the heads of the various departments, or are we going to have a general department for the management of the service ?

Senator Playford

- It will be in the hands of the heads of the departments whatever we do.

Sir JOHN DOWNER

- They will have influence in the matter, and very properly so.

Senator Playford

- Why not put the whole responsibility upon them '(

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- There is the point. It is well that a great deal of responsibility should fall upon the Ministry in respect of certain matters, and we have great confidence in them individually. But I should not have as much

confidence in them if I did not know that we could turn them out if they did not do what we approved of. That is where comes in the danger of leaving the responsibility to a permanent head and letting him do what he wishes. I am afraid the result would be what generally happens from putting matters in the hands of irresponsible men ; whereas if we leave them to responsible men they always have a sense of their responsibility hanging over them. I followed Senator Sargood in his very clear and lucid speech in which, out of the fund of his own personal experience and knowledge, he showed much better than honorable senators can from, their theories that a system of responsible management is absolutely necessary. I only parted from him when he said at last that he thought a board of three heads would be sufficient. I do not like that proposal. I should like to have some independent authority. Senator Sargood's argument generally was a powerful one, which must have carried conviction to those who heard it. The only question is, what is the remedy 1 I want to hear the views of the Vice-President of the Executive Council, who, I hope, will tell us why the principle of this Bill has been proposed. I assume that what is intended is to have an inspector in every State. There are six inspectors and six States.

Senator Glassey

- It is not necessary to have one inspector for each State. They can be sent where the work is required.

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- I do not see how the business can be done by fewer inspectors than the Government propose. I followed Senator Sargood in his general argument, but I disagree with him as to the remedy.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- I agree with the Government about the inspectors

Senator Sir JOHN DOWNER

- I agree entirely with the policy of the Government, and I only await the explanation of the Vice-President of the Executive Council in order to see whether I can agree with it in detail as well.

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Senator DE LARGIE

- This is a question upon which there is a great deal of room for difference of view. As far as I have been able to gauge opinion, all parties in the Senate differ with regard to it. No group of members seems to be unanimous as to what should be the future controlling power of the civil service of the Commonwealth. I attribute that fact as much to the circumstance that our civil service is very much in a state of transition as to anything else, because I believe that every honorable senator is imbued with the honesty of his own opinions, and believes that his mode of settling "the matter is the best one. I always enjoy hearing my honorable friend, Senator Glassey - an old political war-horse - " on the job." There can be no question that he was " fairly on the job " to-day, if I may be excused for using a vulgarism. Although I altogether differ from him in his views, still I am sure he honestly believed in every illustration and argument he advanced in his speech. I am satisfied, also, that every other member of the committee is in a similar position. Therefore, no matter what conclusion we arrive at, there will be a great deal of confusion of mind after the Bill is passed as to whether we have done the right thing or not. I believe the Bill before the committee to be an honest attempt to achieve a solution of what has always been a very delicate and difficult problem. Whether we think that the official influence that has been so much mentioned during the debate is or is not worse than the social or political influence we have also heard of really does not matter. Political influence undoubtedly is bad, but

I am inclined to think that social influence is a great deal worse. I believe that the creating of a commissioner and his staff of six inspectors - each inspector, I suppose, having his own staff - will bring into existence an official caste that will introduce into the civil service of the Commonwealth a good deal more confusion than has ever been introduced by political influence. The Postmaster-General last night referred to the political influence exerted in America, and the evil effects which generally follow a Presidential election. The honorable and learned senator must have been very hard pressed for an argument when he compared the political conditions prevailing in the United States with those of the federated States of Australia. There is no analogy whatever. I hold that our political life is free from the corruption of which we hear so much from America. There is no comparison between the two countries at all. The small amount of political influence that has been exerted here in order to secure appointments for friends, and so forth, is altogether out of the question when compared with what occurs in America. The fact that our Parliaments in Australia are representative of the community to the extent that they are, is

the best possible guarantee against the kind of political influence that has brought about so much corruption in America. I need not refer to an incident that happened a few days ago as a case in point in connexion with the politics of the United States, but I may say generally that in every aspect of our public life Australia can fairly claim to be in a very much healthier condition, both in regard to its politics and its ordinary public affairs, than America. Therefore, to refer to the evil effects of political influence in the United States is a very far-stretched and laboured argument indeed. I remember also that the Postmaster-General in introducing the Bill referred to a matter that struck me as being needless. He said that we have to be careful to make the civil service of the Commonwealth less attractive. Now, as far as my acquaintance goes - I admit it is very limited compared with that of the Postmaster-General - there is very little fear of our making the public service less attractive. There is a greater danger in other directions. My experience is, that we always get a much greater number of applicants for posts in the civil service than there are positions for them. I agree, however, to some extent with the view the Postmaster-General had in mind. I wish that we could make the service so attractive that, as Senator Charleston interjected, there will be billets for all people who apply. Indeed, I believe that the time will come when that will be brought about. It is not to be expected in our day, perhaps, but I think we are approaching that state of affairs. In every country, and more particularly in this Commonwealth, as well as in the various States that make up the Commonwealth, the State is increasing its functions and extending its sphere as an employer of labour. I hope this will go on. I should like, if it were possible, to keep out of the service those people who are always declaring that the functions of the State as an employer of labour should be diminished. Unfortunately, however, it is generally those people who believe that the State does too much in this direction who are always so anxious to get into Government positions. If we could rectify that, and introduce into the service those who believe that the State should extend its sphere, it would be far more laudable than to talk about any fear of making the service less attractive than it is at the present time. As to the appointment of six inspectors to serve under the commissioner, the Postmaster-General said that though the six might be appointed under the Bill, the probability was that not more than half of them would be required. I do not agree with that view. If we have one inspector for Victoria and another for New South Wales, which are the most populous States, but are in respect of geographical area less than the other States of the continent, it will be found to be a necessity also to have an inspector for States as large in area as South Australia, Queensland, and Western Australia. Consequently honorable senators had better make their calculations upon that basis. Notwithstanding the severe criticisms that have been passed upon the Bill, at any rate in regard to the commissioner, I trust that we shall endeavour to pass it into law. If the provision with regard to the commissioner is omitted, I hope we shall be able to substitute for it a power that will be thoroughly representative, and which I believe will in the long run be proved to be more satisfactory than the commissioner. No matter how good a head the commissioner might have, we know that two heads are always better than one. "We shall find this true in the collective wisdom of a board just as in connexion with anything else. Though the intelligence of members of a board may be somewhat, inferior, we shall find that it will give more general satisfaction than to place the power of dealing with the whole of these questions in the hands of any one commissioner. We know that the whole tendency of society to-day is to establish representative boards ; and the whole spirit of democracy, and the spirit, in fact, of the age, is antagonistic to the placing of power in the hands of any one man, no matter how able he may be. I believe it would be better in the meantime for us to go on as we have gone on, and if, in a few years, our experience teaches us there is nothing else for it, we might appoint a commissioner. I think we shall be proceeding along the wrong path if we start straight away by appointing a commissioner to take over the duties of this Parliament, to a certain extent, and the duties of Ministers who are at the heads of the different departments, and who ought to be responsible. If we are to relieve Ministers of these responsibilities, we may abolish their offices at once. If Ministers are to do nothing but draw their salaries, and introduce measures into this Chamber, there is no necessity whatever for continuing their offices. I believe this Commonwealth was started on the understanding that the offices of members of the Cabinet would be responsible positions, and yet, under this Bill, it is proposed to take all the responsibility away from those positions, and put it into the hands of an official despot who may know nothing at all about it, and whose character we cannot even guess at. I am afraid that the satisfaction we are likely to get out of such a proposal will be mighty small. In the face of the failure that the commissioners have been elsewhere, the fact that in one instance there has been a

commissioner who was a success does not justify us at this juncture in adopting this proposal.

Progress reported.

QUESTIONS

DESKS FOR SENATORS

Senator HIGGS

- I move -

That a return be prepared, and laid upon the table, showing the estimated cost of providing the Senate with desks similar to those in use in both Houses of the South Australian Parliament.

I am very much obliged to the Government for postponing their business this afternoon, in order to give us an opportunity for discussing this somewhat important motion. I was in hopes that the motion might have been allowed to go as formal, because it only asks for a return showing the estimated cost of providing desks for the members of the Senate. I should, I hope, be one of the last to propose to run the Commonwealth into any very great expense, and if I thought the motion was likely to lead to extravagance I should not think of proposing it. As, however, I believe the total cost of providing desks for the members of the Senate would not come to more than £100, I ask honorable senators to permit the return to be called for, that we may discover the estimated cost of providing the Senate with desks similar to those in use in the South Australian Parliament.

Senator Glassey

- In New Zealand and in America they have them also.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- And also" in Canada.

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Senator HIGGS

- In other Houses of Parliament in the States, and in America, these desks are in use. Any one who has been in the South Australian Assembly must have been struck with the accommodation there provided. A member can have at his desk his parliamentary papers and other documents to which it is necessary for him to refer during the course of a debate. I have seen members of this Chamber endeavouring to write legibly on the cushions and on their knees, and it appears to me that if it is found that this proposal would not entail a very large expenditure, the Senate might very well agree to it. I do not think it is necessary to discuss the matter at any length at this stage. When we have the estimated return before us, it may be necessary to collect a few facts to induce members opposed to the proposal to fall in with our views.

Senator O'CONNOR(New South Wales - Vice-President of the Executive Council. j - Of course I do not intend to oppose this motion. I think it will serve a very useful purpose in giving us some idea of the cost of what would certainly be a very great improvement in the chamber and a great convenience to honorable senators. But before the matter comes up to be considered, and any action is to be taken, I should like to intimate that we cannot regard it as if we were dealing with a chamber which was absolutely and entirely our own. We have to consider that we are in temporary occupation here, and though our occupation is absolute and complete for all purposes, it may be that we ought to be slow to disturb the existing arrangements of the chamber more than is necessary.

Senator Higgs

- Victoria would be slow to disturb us.

Senator O'CONNOR

- If we were dealing with the question of the accommodation in our new Houses of Parliament, I quite agree with Senator Higgs that the desk system would be preferable to the system in vogue here; but the matter cannot be considered entirely upon that basis, and after the return is produced and we have the information before us, some other action will be taken. I only mention to honorable senators now that I do not think the matter is entirely free from difficulty ; at the same time, I think we all agree that something of the sort should be done if, under all the circumstances, it is found to be practicable.

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Senator MCGREGOR

- I would like to have a word to say upon this question. Of course I am glad that the representative of the Government does not resist this motion, because it is merely asking for an estimate of the cost. The honorable and learned senator says that it would be a good thing if we were going into federal premises,

and were going to set up housekeeping on our own account. But it is at a time like this that we should consider these matters, or they may be forgotten by those who may have the control of the arrangements in connexion with the new federal premises. Why is it that even in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, those who have had the regulation of these matters have not had the same forethought as the authorities in what some honorable senators have called the "model State"? It is simply because they have followed out the old conservative practices of the past. I have seen many a Yorkshire farmer, in the days gone by, working with a plough constructed almost entirely of wood, and when I have suggested to him that a much more efficient, lighter, and better implement could be made of iron or steel, he has said, "Oh, it did my father and my grandfather, and it ought to do me." In exactly the same way, it is very probable that many of the gentlemen who in the past opposed suggestions of this kind were actuated by the same idea, and were moved by the same impulses. In the House of Lords or the House of Commons, or anywhere else in connexion with government by Great Britain, nothing of the kind was ever found necessary, and consequently what did for them we ought to be satisfied with. That is probably the argument that was used. But in one of the States, at least, they were not satisfied, and were prepared to go beyond those old ideas, and move a little ahead. I should like to point out why, in my opinion, it was in the days of long ago that representative men in the Parliament of the old country, and in other Parliaments, simply sat on their seats, and listened to what was said by one or two members, and took very little active interest in the legislation being enacted. It was simply because education was not available even to the representatives in Parliament in those days, and if they had had a desk in front of them a good many would not have known what to do with it. That is exactly the position in which I should like to place those who may oppose anything of this kind to-day. It cannot be said that it would be for my convenience that I argue in this direction, because, unfortunately, I could not avail myself of the entire benefit; but I like to see evidences of intelligence, it does not matter even if it is in a Senate or a representative body anywhere. Therefore, even though our sojourn here may be only of short duration, it would be an evidence of our intelligence if we had the conveniences that civilization has provided for those who have had sufficient education and sufficient capacity to make use of them. We find here that very often a member going across to the table blocks the line of vision of the President or Chairman of Committees, who is unable to see an honorable senator rising to speak. Even if our occupation of these premises is only temporary, if it is found that the cost is going to be moderate, we could provide ourselves with temporary accommodation that need not in any way injure the existing arrangements of the chamber. If it is found that the cost would only be small, I hope that the Vice-President of the Executive Council, and the Government through him, may indicate some little change in their views, and that even before the time for our occupation of the Federal Parliament House arrives, "we may have some of the conveniences that they now have in the model State." .

Question resolved in the affirmative.

STEAM-SHIP COMMUNICATION

WITH TASMANIA

Senator KEATING

- I move- -

That the Tasmania and Australia Steam-ship Communication Select Committee have power to adjourn its sittings from place to place.

I understood, when I gave notice of this motion that it would be treated as a formal one. The motion is in the ordinary form. Honorable senators are well aware that some weeks ago a select committee of the Senate was appointed on my motion for the purpose of inquiring into the existing conditions of steam-ship communication between Tasmania and the mainland. Since that committee were appointed they have been taking evidence from time to time within the precincts of this House. They now find that it is absolutely necessary, in the interests of the object of their inquiry, that evidence should be taken outside of Victoria. In fact, the major and better portion of the evidence is to be obtained in Tasmania. As the committee would not have power, unless by special leave of the Senate, to hold their sittings other than at the place at which they have been hitherto held, a motion of this character is necessary. I gave notice of it some weeks ago, but as the Government were not prepared to treat it as a formal one, its discussion has been held over until the present time. I think the leader of the Government in the Senate is prepared to meet the requirements of the committee in some way. Although the motion, in the form in which it stands,

may appear to be somewhat vague, I understand from inquiry in the proper quarter that it is really in the form that a motion of this character should take in order to comply with the standing orders at present governing our procedure. The real object is that the committee may go to Tasmania during the sittings of the Senate, not necessarily for any extended period, but merely for the purpose of taking evidence to be presented there. As chairman of the committee, I can inform honorable senators as the result of communications which we have received from Tasmania, that the evidence which is to be submitted there is practically ready, and can be collected in a very short time.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- Could it not be sent over ?

Senator KEATING

- No; it would be for better and more in consonance with the practice which characterizes proceedings of this kind, that the committee should attend and take evidence in Tasmania. It would be far more expensive to bring witnesses over here. Moreover, it is desirable, I think - and other members of the committee agree with me - that in investigating this matter the members of the committee should have an opportunity of personally testing the existing means of communication between Tasmania and the mainland, and have an opportunity for practical ocular observation of the conditions which prevail at the other end of the service.

Senator Drake

- Take them over on a rough day.

Senator KEATING

- If we did they would be very sensible of the necessity for improved steam communication. Although I do not appreciate the pleasures of a rough trip, yet I think it would be in the interests of Tasmania if the committee did go over on a rough day. They would then see the necessity for improving the existing communication.

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President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

. - In ordinary circumstances I should be prepared to treat this as a formal motion. I only oppose it now, not with a view to asking the Senate to reject it altogether, but to request the honorable and learned senator to postpone it until some more convenient opportunity. The reason for that request is this : We are not a large House. There are 36 members in all, and I find that the average attendance - which is an exceedingly good one - is something like 24 a day. There are seven members of this select committee, and if we give them leave to go over to Tasmania - it may be for a week or more - the Senate will be very short-handed in carrying on its very important business. No doubt the matter is entirely in the hands of the Senate, but it is very undesirable, considering the important business we have in hand, that any considerable number of representatives of - the different States should be absent from our proceedings. If this leave, is given to the committee, then the matter will pass from the Senate into the hands of the committee, and the committee, in order to carry out its business in the most effective way, may consider it necessary to visit Tasmania for a week or more. I think it very likely that later on, when the Tariff is being discussed in the House of Representatives, there may be a week or so during which business will be slack in this Chamber. During that time we might allow the seven members of the committee to go, without missing them from our deliberations. I would suggest to Senator Keating that he should postpone his motion until a later period, when we will be ready-

Senator Sir John Downer

- Postpone it for how long - a month ?

Senator O'CONNOR

- Leave it on the notice-paper, and bring it on again when a convenient time arises. I would suggest to Senator Keating that he should withdraw the motion now, and if we find later on that the Senate is not likely to have any urgent business for a week or a fortnight, I shall have no objection to offer to the proposal.

Debate (on motion by Senator Sir John Downer) adjourned.

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15:24:00

Senate adjourned at 3.24 p.m.