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1901-12-12

Senate.

The President took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

#### PETITION

Senator MACFARLANE presented a petition from the secretary, treasurer, and other officers of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Tasmania, praying the Senate to reject the Matrimonial Causes Bill.

#### QUESTIONS

##### PARLIAMENTARY ATTENDANTS

Senator DE LARGIE

- I wish to ask you, sir, if any arrangements have been made to allow the attendants during the Christmas holidays to go away earlier in the evening than at present 1

The PRESIDENT

- Arrangements will be made. It is a matter that is under the control of the President and Speaker.

##### POSTAL DEPARTMENT : INCREMENTS

Senator MCGREGOR

asked the Postmaster-General, upon notice -

Have the officers in the Postal department in South Australia and the other States, to whom increases have been allowed, received the said increases ?

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

- So far as I am aware the officers in the Postal department of South Australia, who have statutory rights, have received their increments. In other States such increments cannot be paid until the Estimates on which they are shown have been passed by Parliament.

##### TASMANIA-AUSTRALIA STEAMSHIP COMMUNICATION

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Resolved (on motion by Senator Keating).

That the Tasmania-Australia Steamship Communication Select Committee have power to adjourn its sittings from place to place during the period of the forthcoming Christmas adjournment of the Senate.

##### PUNISHMENT OF OFFENCES BILL

Resolved (on motion by Senator Drake) -

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as will permit of a Bill for all Act to make provision for the punishment of offences against the laws of the Commonwealth being passed through all its stages without delay.

Bill presented by Senator Drake, and read a first time.

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

. - I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

It has been suggested that there may be a doubt as to whether the State law would apply in the case of persons charged with offences against the Commonwealth's laws. The balance of opinion, I think, is ' that no legislation of this kind is necessary, but in all matters where there is the slightest possibility of a doubt arising, the safer course is to go to the trouble of passing a Bill in order to prevent the occurrence of any difficulty. The Bill simply enacts that the laws of the States shall apply in the case of offences against the Commonwealth, and that the courts of summary jurisdiction, with certain restrictions and limitations, shall have jurisdiction to deal with those who are charged with offences against the laws of the Commonwealth.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- I certainly agree with what the Postmaster-General has said as to the opinion entertained that this Bill is really not necessary. Of course, if any doubt exists on the subject it is well to set it at rest, and I shall be glad to assist in that direction. But it is a mistake to anticipate doubts or difficulties. It would be better to wait, if there is any doubt, until some concrete instance arises in which an obstruction shows itself to the ordinary administration of justice.

Senator Drake

- Parliament might not be in session.

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- There may be complications occasioned by this Bill. I do not wish to suggest any difficulties unnecessarily, but it is well to consider the matter all round. " Of course all offences, whether created by a Commonwealth law or by a State law, are punishable by the ordinary courts of the State within which the offence takes place. There is no difference between an offence created under the Post and Telegraph Act and an offence created under any State Act. If the delinquent is within the jurisdiction of the court that offence may be punished. If it is larceny, or if it is a misdemeanour, or felony, it is punishable by the criminal courts of the State where the delinquent may be. But if you assume that the courts of a State are not competent to deal with offences which are committed within its limits, and create a separate jurisdiction, you may, in attempting to widen the jurisdiction, narrow it. There is the old principle that the expression of one thing excludes another, and, in seeking to remove a doubt as to an existing jurisdiction, you may employ language which a defending counsel may use with a view of impeding the administration of justice. If, however, the Government think that this Bill will have the effect of removing a doubt, and at the same time be free from those possibilities of difficulty which I have indicated, I am quite satisfied. The desire of Parliament is to see that the violators of a Commonwealth law shall be brought under the whip of the criminal law of the State where the offence is committed. To prevent any technical difficulty in South Australia, I would ask Senator Drake to insert after the word "indictment" the words " or information," because under our criminal code the proceedings are on information.

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Senator DOBSON

- I understand that this Bill is wanted to confer jurisdiction to hear and punish misdemeanours and felonies, not so much on a State Supreme Court as on a court of summary jurisdiction. In some cases the magistrates derive their jurisdiction from statutes, and a doubt has arisen in reference to their powers. In several measures, such as the Post and Telegraph Act, the Immigration Restriction Bill, and the Pacific Island Labourers Bill, we conferred rather large powers on courts of summary jurisdiction, and it is thought better to put an end to any doubt by passing this Bill. The only question is whether it ought to be made retrospective. Retrospective legislation is always objectionable ; but if ever there was an occasion when it would not be objectionable, it is when the system of Government is being changed. During the interregnum it may transpire that there is not jurisdiction given to try certain offences. It therefore appears to me that it might be just as well to provide that this measure shall take effect as though it had been passed at the date when certain departments were taken over.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- We cannot make jurisdiction retrospective.

Senator DOBSON

- Suppose any offence is committed with which this Bill would deal. Say that an officer had embezzled £5 in money or stamps, and that the offence was committed before the Bill was passed, though the offender was arrested after its passage, could he be tried under it ?

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Certainly.

Senator DOBSON

- It is arguable that way, but something is to be said on the other side. The courts dislike retrospective legislation, and hardly ever give effect to it unless it is manifest on the face of the statute. I mention the point for what it is worth.

Senator HIGGS

- I only wish to say that the section of the Constitution dealing with this matter appears to me to be very clear. Every State which enters the Commonwealth must carry out the laws of the Commonwealth Parliament, otherwise the federation will be a farce. Section 120 states that-  
Every State shall make provision for the detention in its prisons of persons accused or convicted of offences against the laws of the Commonwealth, and for the punishment of persons convicted of such offences, and the Parliament of the Commonwealth may make laws to give effect to this provision.  
The latter part of the section may indicate that although we may make provision by passing a law, there

may be some doubt in the minds of the authorities in a State as to whether they should carry out a law made by the Federal Parliament. I can well believe that there may be no sympathy on the part of the authorities in at least one State in regard to some of our legislation.

Senator Sir Josiah Symon

- Has that anything to do with this Bill?

The PRESIDENT

- I think so. The argument of the honorable senator is that it is necessary to pass this Bill because in one State, which he does not specify, the authorities may not wish to carry the provisions of the Commonwealth law into effect. He, therefore, argues that if there is a doubt, it is better to make it clear, especially in regard to that State.

Senator HIGGS

- I must apologize to the Senate for having referred to a legal question. I suppose that my natural modesty ought to have prevented me from entering upon a discussion of this sort, which should be reserved for such high legal dignitaries as the honorable and learned senator.

Senator DRAKE(In reply).- I simply wish to assure Senator Symon that this Bill has been carefully prepared and considered, and that in the opinion of the Government it is desirable that it should pass. I do not think that it is likely that any inconvenience will arise from the form of the Bill. The amendment suggested by Senator Dobson, making it retrospective, is unnecessary.

Senator Walker

- Am I right in saying that in one case a question of jurisdiction did arise?

Senator DRAKE

- There was a case in which the jurisdiction was questioned. As the offence was committed in a post-office it was argued by counsel that the post-office was federal territory, and, that therefore, the accused could not be tried for an offence committed in the State. But the court, I think, held that that defence was not a good one.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee. -

Clause 2 (Application of State laws).

Amendment (by Senator Drake) agreed to-

That after the word "indictment" the words " or information " be inserted.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3 consequentially amended and agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

Report adopted.

Bill read a third time, and passed.

POST AND TELEGRAPH RATES BILL

Report adopted.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL

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In Committee (Consideration resumed from October 10, vide p.5892).

Clause 21.

Sub-clause (2).

Subject to the provisions of this section, the salary of such officer shall, at the expiration of not less than six months, be increased to the rate of £50 per annum, and at the expiration of a further period of not less than six months to the rate of £60 per annum.

Senator GLASSEY

- Subclause (2) provides that the salary of a probationary officer shall be increased to .£50 per annum "at the expiration of not less than six months." Very often provisions of this kind lead to an officer being kept in probation for a considerable time, extending sometimes to years. That is manifestly unfair. We should in this legislation say exactly what we mean. If the probationary term is to be six months we should say so, in order that the officer may know exactly what will accrue him at the end of that term. I had occasion to deal with this very matter in my own State, in a case -where a railway servant had been on probation

for nearly four years. I was obliged to ask the Railways Commissioner when the probationary term of such an officer was to come to an end. The commissioner very wisely said that he agreed that the time had arrived when this officer should either leave the service or be appointed permanently. In the interests of the departments and the officers engaged in them, the probationary period ought to be fixed. I therefore move -

That the word "less" (line 3) be omitted with the view to insert in lieu thereof the word "more."

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

. - The meaning of this subclause is perfectly clear. Senator Glassey is not complaining of the language, but of its meaning. A young fellow enters the department at a salary of £40 a year, and if he does well he gets his rise at the end of six months, but must not get it before. This sub-clause says that he is not to get his rise sooner than six months, but the next sub-clause provides that at the end of twelve months, after serving this probation: ., ., term, he shall get his rise automatically subject to the approval of the commissioner. It is not a limited term - it is not a term of "not less" than "so-and-so" - but a fixed term of twelve months, at the end of which the officer will get his rise. But what Senator Glassey wants is to strike out the words "not less than." The amendment will ensure the officer his rise at the end of six months whether he deserve\* it or not, which is not the intention of the Bill. The clause is clear that the rise shall depend on the officer's good conduct. He may get it if he shows himself fit for it, but the Bill does not insure it to him. Senator Glassey desires to alter the clause in such a manner that the officer shall get a rise within six months, whether he is worthy of it or not.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- The Postmaster-General is absolutely correct in his reading of the proposed amendment. So far from encouraging those on probation to do their best and show themselves worthy of a rise, it will have absolutely the opposite effect, because a young fellow coming in will know that so long as he jogs along in a not altogether discreditable manner, he will get a rise at the end of six months. That is not the way to bring out a young fellow's best parts. We want to encourage every officer to do his best in the interest of the public who have to pay him. If the amendment is carried, I think the ultimate result will be to fill the department with mere drones.

Senator DOBSON (Tasmania).- The clause we are now considering is the most important in the Bill. I regret that the ' Postmaster-General has not seen fit to state the probable financial result of the clause, so that the honorable senators and the taxpayers might know in what direction this legislation is "tending. So far as I understand it, it tends in the direction of gross extravagance. The clause fixes the minimum salary of males and females at the same rate. For the first time in our colonial legislation men and women are to be put side by side as of equal value. The minimum laid down is to apply also to the general division, and I desire to arrest the attention of my brother senators in order that I may let them understand, if I can, what they are doing. Let me say that the increased sum which will require to be- added to the Estimates to pay salaries at the minimum rates set forth will, in the Postmaster-General's department alone, amount to £45,770.

Senator Drake

- No. The honorable and learned senator is speaking of clause 25.

Senator DOBSON

- Then before I proceed further, will the Postmaster-General inform the committee what sum will be required in addition to that now provided for on the Estimates t The figure I have given is taken from a return which I understood refers to both the clerical and general division.

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Senator DRAKE

- I have some papers here which I think are those to which Senator Dobson has alluded. The statement that £45,770 will be required refers to clause 25. The particular clause we are now dealing with applies to the clerical division, and I think that its effect will not be substantially different from the rule and practice hitherto adopted in regard to the clerical division in a majority of the States. I have not statistics to present to the honorable and learned senator, which, will help him to come to any conclusion with regard to the effect of this clause, but I have certain figures showing the result of clause 25, which applies the £110 minimum to the whole of the officers in the general division. This clause refers to the comparatively few

officers of the Post and Telegraph department who are in the clerical division. The increases will not be of such a nature as to embarrass the department.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Senator GLASSEY

- I move -

That the words "or more than twelvemonths" be inserted after the word " months,"- line 3.

I wish to say, in reply to Senators Drake and Sargood, that I have no wish, to prevent any officers from doing their very best to serve the State faithfully and well. I wish to encourage youths to give their best services, but if they are kept for a considerable length of time without the reward to which they are entitled, they will not be encouraged or stimulated to do so. I respectfully suggest to the Postmaster-General that he should make the term of probation not less than six months or more than twelve months.

Senator PLAYFORD

- I think that would be a mistake, because the principle on which the clause is framed is that the probationary period shall be twelve months, and that a rise in salary shall take place at the end, and not sooner than at the end of the first six months, and again at the end of the second six months. But the rise is to be contingent upon the officer performing his duty to the satisfaction of the commissioner. If we say that an officer is to get his increase of salary whether he satisfies the commissioner or not, we shall make a great mistake and nullify the rest of the clause. I contend, with Senator Sargood, that it will be a spur to a youth to put forward his best effort to know that a rise of salary is contingent upon the proper performance of his duty. I ask Senator Glassey not to press the amendment.

Senator PEARCE

- There is a good deal of force in what Senator Playford has said, but in dealing with Senator Glassey's present amendment, which is much better than the first he moved, it must not be forgotten that if the probationer proves himself to be unfit or incapable, the commissioner has the power to declare his office vacant.

Senator Playford

- The case may not be so bad as that, but it may deserve punishment.

Senator PEARCE

- The commissioner has also power under sub-clause 5, to determine whether the officer is entitled to the whole or any part of the prescribed increase as a reward for earnest application to duty. If Senator Glassey's amendment is carried, the commissioner need not give the increase for twelve months. And then, if there is any reason why it should not be given he can withhold it, or if it be shown that the officer is incapable or unsuitable, he may be transferred to some other department, or his services may be dispensed with. There will, therefore, be no danger in accepting the amendment.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- The provisions to which the honorable senator refers apply to the subsequent increases, and have nothing to do with this first increase.

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Senator PEARCE

- The increases referred to in sub-clause 5 are the increases of £20 per annum, and the first increase is an increase of £10, so that it is really only an increase of £10, which can be affected by Senator Glassey's amendment, and it will give no power to waste the money of the Commonwealth to any great extent. We have debarred probationers from the exercise of political influence, and have prevented their representatives getting up in Parliament and asking why increases are not given. But we have not debarred the exercise of social influence, and those who may be able to bring it to bear may get their increases at the end of six months, whether they are competent or not. We should either make it a hard and fast rule that men who are shown to be incompetent shall be discharged from the service, or transferred to some other department ; or we should provide that they shall get the increase of £10 at the end of twelve months at least. I shall support the amendment.

Senator WALKER

- I hope Senator Glassey will withdraw the amendment. As a matter of fact, it is true kindness to a probationer, if he has not shown himself equal to his position in six months, to extend his probation. By

this clause the commissioner 'will be at liberty to extend it ; but by the amendment we practically tell the commissioner that if a young man has not shown himself to be competent at the end of the first six months of - his service he should be dispensed with. I have had experience in dealing with a large staff, and I know there are cases in which a probation of six. months is not sufficient to bring out all the best qualities of a lad. Some young men are much more diffident than others ; and until they become accustomed to their surroundings, it is not possible to get the best work out of them. It is true kindness to provide that competence shall be the one qualification for advancement, and I hope Senator Glassey will, in the interests of the probationers, withdraw his amendment.

Senator STYLES

- I hope that Senator Glassey will not withdraw his amendment. If a young officer is not entitled to an increase at the end of six months, he will be allowed under this proposal to continue in the service for another six months. If he is not worthy of receiving an increase at the end of that period, then, in my opinion, he should not hold the office any longer. I think it is wise that we should state definitely whether or not the services of an officer are to be retained at the end of twelve months. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that what Senator Pearce has said in regard to political and club influence in the public service is absolutely true. It cannot be stopped . by legislation.

Senator Charleston

- This Bill is to stop all political influence.

Senator STYLES

- The Victorian Parliament passed a Railway Bill which was designed to stop political influence in the Railway department, but it did not do so. If an officer is worth keeping at the end of twelve months' probation no doubt the commissioner will retain him. A definite decision should be arrived at in regard to an officer at the end of that period, and he should not be kept hanging on at a low rate of pay. ' .

Senator Playford

- Forty pounds a year is a high rate of pay to start with. In the South Australia service lads start at £25 a year.

Senator STYLES

- This applies to persons who enter the service at between 16 and 21 years of age. There are many youths of 16 and 20 years of age who are better than men of 40. The question of salary depends not so much upon the age of the officer as upon his ability.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - I must make another attempt to show honorable senators the gravity of what they are proposing to do. We should have some information from the Postmaster-General as to the financial aspect of this clause. I have seen a return in the Postmaster-General's office giving the total cost of this change as. £45,770, and although the return sets forth that it relates only to increases in the general division, I gather from the figures that I have before me that it applies to both classes. Thus, if we pass this clause as it stands and then pass clause 25, the Commonwealth will be involved in the expenditure of an additional £45,000 from the time the increased salaries begin to take effect. Unless we have some reliable information - and I am sure the Postmaster-General will give it to us if he can - I shall move that the clause be postponed.

Senator GLASSEY(Queensland). - I wish the committee would give this matter a little more consideration. It is all very well to talk about the position of the States. I do not ignore that element, nor do I disregard the necessity for the department to keep a watchful eye over all persons employed in the service. I have known probationers to be kept for many years in the service of different States without receiving any increase. Surely that is wrong 1 I wish to fix some limit, and, as Senator Styles has said, twelve months is a reasonable one. If the officer is not capable of earning his salary at the end of that period, he is not likely to&gt; be able to earn it by being kept in the service any longer. His: services should be dispensed with, and some more useful person employed. I know of a. case of a young man in the Queensland! public service, who started at £1 a week,, and at the end of eleven years' service at his trade was receiving only 25s. per week. Do we wish to encourage that sort of thing 1

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Senator Charleston

- What sort of work was he doing 1

Senator GLASSEY

- He was employed in the Government Printing-office, and had a certificate from his superior officer that he was thoroughly capable, and above the average hand.

Senator Styles

- There are many such cases in Victoria ?

Senator GLASSEY

- I appeal to honorable senators' sense of fair play and ask should such a system be encouraged. At the end of the twelve months the commissioner will dispense with the services of an officer if he is unsuitable for the work. On the other hand, if his services are retained he should be given his rights.

Senator Major Gould

- Could not the officer retire?

Senator GLASSEY

- That is an old argument. For instance, I think that £400 per annum is too little for the work performed by honorable senators. I am not bound to stop here, but I stop.

Senator Charleston

- Surely an officer could earn more than 25s. a week outside the service.

Senator GLASSEY

- I remember when I used to work for 4d. a day and should have been glad to have received 1s. a day, but I could not get it. If a person can do better outside the service, he will not remain in it. Is it fair that the State should take advantage of circumstances relating to an officer which cannot be fully explained? The State ought to be liberal, generous, and fair, taking care, at the same time, to protect itself. It can do so in this instance, for the commissioner will have power to say to an unsuitable officer at the end of twelve months - "I find you have not come up to expectations; your work is not satisfactory, and I must dispense with your services." I must press my amendment.

Senator Sir FREDERICKSARGOOD (Victoria). - Sub-clause (2) does not touch the case quoted by Senator Glassey. It deals simply with the first twelve months spent by a lad in the public service, and a subsequent provision deals with what is to be done at the end of that period. This sub-clause applies only to the question of whether an officer shall receive his increment at the end of six, seven, or eight months, as a mark of appreciation of his services. I would call attention to clause 30, which shows what is to be done at the end of six months, and proves that my reading of this sub-clause is correct. As one who has experienced the troubles of a lad making his way to a position of some responsibility, I know the difficulties to which Senator Glassey refers. I have experienced the desire for an increase of salary, and have thought that I was unfairly treated when I did not receive it. This subclause is in the interests of deserving lads who enter the service, but it is not in the interests of dull ards. It deals with the most difficult six months in a lad's life. A boy leaves school, where he has had considerable play, and after enjoying, perhaps, a holiday for a few months he enters the service, comes under discipline for the first time, and kicks. The very best thing for the lad himself is that the sub-clause should pass as it stands, because he should feel when he enters the service that it depends entirely upon himself whether he shall receive an increase at the end of six months. There is nothing unfair in it. Senator Glassey has said that if a youth does not show his worth at the end of twelve months his services should be dispensed with. I have had, perhaps, as much experience with lads during the last 50 years as any honorable senator, and I can recollect more than one instance in which, if I had acted upon first impressions, I should have dismissed lads who subsequently turned out well. As an old employer of labour, and as one taking a deep interest in the welfare of lads, I would strongly advise the committee to pass the sub-clause as it stands. I agree with Senator Playford that a salary of £40 a year to start with is too high for a lad of sixteen. It is very much in excess of the salary paid in commercial and other classes. It means that a lad entering the service at sixteen years of age may be receiving £60 a year by the time that he reaches seventeen. No clerk outside the public service receives anything like that salary at that age. Are we right in spending the money of the State in that manner? I know it is argued that unless we adopt a minimum of £40 the sons of working men cannot enter the public service. I admit that is a very powerful argument, but on the other hand, are we warranted in giving to these lads a far higher wage than they would receive in any other employment? I think not.

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Senator DE LARGIE

- I support the amendment of Senator Glassey, because a higher salary is given to junior clerks in the various States than is mentioned in this clause. South Australia, however, is a long way behind other States in that respect. A cadet starts with a salary of £50 a year in Western Australia, £40 in Victoria, and £26 in South Australia. A salary of £26 a year is altogether too small, seeing that in other States cadets are started at £50. I think we are entitled to say that before the end of his first year's service the salary of a cadet shall be raised from £40 to £50. I shall vote in that direction.

The CHAIRMAN

- Do I understand that Senator Dobson desires to move a prior amendment?

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - I am placed at a disadvantage in not knowing what salaries are given to junior clerks in the States. In Tasmania a cadet is started at £40 or £50, but we do not raise his salary at the rate of £20 a year, or give him two increases in the first year. Unless we have some definite information we cannot intelligently pass this clause. If it is passed in a blind-fold way it will necessitate the expenditure of a very large sum. If in South Australia junior clerks are started at a salary of £26, what are they likely to think of the Commonwealth starting its junior clerks at a salary of £40, with a rise of £10 at the end of six months, a rise of £10 at the end of twelve months, and then a rise of £20 a year ? Can any honorable senator mention any branch of life where lads of the age get such high pay?

Senator De Largie

- In Western Australia a young boy can get 35s. a week.

Senator DOBSON

- If a young man can get that pay in Western Australia he does not need to enter the federal service.

Senator De Largie

- We do not wish to have the State servants underpaid.

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Senator DOBSON

- I agree with that sentiment, But here it is proposed to go far above what outside employers pay. I do not think there is any branch of life in Australia where the clerks are paid so well as it is proposed to pay the cadets under this Bill. Let us keep up the dignity of the service and pay the clerks well, but do not let us give so much above what is paid outside or else it will attract clerks from other employments. Honorable senators ought to know perfectly well that unless a boy has the knack of writing well, even six months after he has left school he is hardly fit to direct a letter. Over and over again I have had boys whose writing, after being twelve months in the office, was a disgraceful scrawl. It takes six months to find out whether a boy is worth anything. It is said that the reason for fixing this high minimum is that otherwise the sons of working men could not enter the federal service. Supposing that a working man is getting £2 or £2 10s. a week ; he apprentices his sixteen-year-old son to a trade for five years at 2s. 6d. a week or possibly nothing. Yet honorable senators ask us to believe that a working man's son cannot afford to enter the public service unless he is paid £40 or £50. It is wrong for honorable senators to vote away the taxpayer's money on the strength of such statements. We wish to give every man in his class a step up the ladder. I should like to see the sons of carpenters and mechanics rise to be engineers, clerks, and accountants ; but in order to enable that result to be obtained do not make arrangements which are absolutely ridiculous Supposing that the son of a working man were started in the public service at only £30 a year, what a god-send to the family revenue it would be. If Senator Glassey will withdraw his amendment I will move the omission of the word " six " with the view to insert the word " twelve," so that a boy, starting at £40, will not get an increase until he has served twelve months. What duty have we to discharge ? Is it to look to the State finances and to try and keep down public expenditure, or is it to forget all our experience in the States, to create a brand new service, with plenty of billets at higher salaries than we have ever heard of ? Surely, in the first years of the Commonwealth, it is our duty to go slow and economize? We ought not to pick out the highest or the lowest salary paid in a State, but to strike a fair average between the salaries, and to do the right thing towards these young men.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (by Senator Dobson) proposed -

That the word "six," line 3, be omitted, with the view to insert in lieu thereof the word "twelve."

Senator DELARGIE (Western Australia). - According to the figures which the Minister for Home Affairs used in the other House, and which he was not likely to use unless he was satisfied that they were



correct, in Western Australia, where the cost of living is much dearer than it is in the Eastern States, a cadet is started at £50, in Queensland at £50, and in Tasmania, where salaries are supposed to be very low at £50, in New South Wales at £50, in Victoria at £40, with one increment ranging from £15 to £25, and in the model State at £26. Surely the Commonwealth can afford to pay as good a wage as is paid by the States. In other branches of our public service we are increasing salaries, but in this branch we are asked to reduce them, and that I think is unfair. Senator Glassey only desires to bring the salaries of the cadets up to the average rate obtaining in the States, and his amendment is fair and reasonable.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD (Victoria). - In Victoria, under the Act of 1890, a boy enters the public service when he is sixteen at a salary of £40, but the increment is £10 per annum up to £100, and £20 per annum from that up to £200. This clause, however, gives an increment of £10 after the first six months, and of £10 after the second six months, and from that time an increase of £20 per annum. I agree with Senator De Largie that it is not fair to put public officers in Western Australia on the same footing as those in the Eastern States, because the cost of living is very much more expensive there. My firm has to pay considerably larger salaries in Western Australia than in Victoria or New South Wales, and rightly so ; but where it can be managed an allowance should be made to meet exceptional cases, and I should like to see a clause put in to enable the commissioner, under certain regulations, to recognise the fact that outside places require the grant of a tropical allowance to public Officers.

Senator DRAKE

- It appears to me that there is a danger, between those who object to this provision as being too liberal and those who object to it as not being liberal enough, of getting no Bill at all. First of all an amendment is moved that extends the liberality of the clause, and provides that an increase must be given in six months. Then that amendment is withdrawn in favour of another, which proposes to extend the time from six months to twelve. If amendments are to be debated as we have been debating them, I do not see what prospect there is of getting the Bill through.

Senator Playford

- Drop it.

Senator DRAKE

- I know very well that there are one or two honorable senators who desire that the Bill shall be dropped.

Senator Playford

- We want the Bill, with the exception of the proposal as to 'the commissioner.

Senator DRAKE

- It is not the commissioner that we are talking about now. We are discussing the scale of increases. It appears to me that the desire of some honorable senators that the Bill shall not go through will be gratified, unless those who move amendments curtail their speeches to some extent.

Senator DOBSON (Tasmania). - I do not think that anything I have said justifies the remarks of the Postmaster-General, and I pass them over in silence. I thank Senator De Largie for the figures which he has supplied, and which are of use to us. In Victoria, with its trades unions and wages boards, we may expect salaries to be fairly high, whilst in Tasmania, being a small State, they are fairly low. In Tasmania we commence at £40, and give rises of £10 a year. In Victoria they also give rises of £10 a year. I wish to bring our federal measure into conformity with the Acts of those States. As Senator Sargood has pointed out, the first twelve months of a young man's life in an office are the most important, as one is able to tell at the end of that term whether he is going to be careful, attentive, and steady\* or otherwise - whether he is going to have his heart in his business or in horse-racing. Very often a young man's hand is not formed within the first few months, and one cannot tell whether he will do well or not.

Senator FRASER

- Under this measure there will be thousands of applications for employment in the public service. There will be a perfect rush of applicants.

Senator Styles

- So much the better for the service.

Senator FRASER

- And so much the worse for other branches of employment. I do not wish to see so many applications.

Senator De Largie

- State socialism is too attractive for the honorable senator.

Senator FRASER

- At any rate, we should go slow at first. There is no reason why we should not amend this Bill in a year or two if it is found to require amendment. At present I think the proposal of the Government is reasonable enough. I grant, that in a hot climate special consideration, must be given, but that can be given by the Minister in administering the department. If I were a young man I would not go to work in Cairns for double the money that would satisfy me in Melbourne. I hope the committee will pass the clause as it stands. If the Bill is made too liberal, we shall increase the difficulties of the general public, especially of the farmers and others who have to slave morning and night for a mere pittance.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - I find that the clause is framed exactly on. the lines of the amended Victorian Act, and, therefore, I shall not press my amendment. The pay of an officer should depend upon what his superior thinks he is worth. There are idle boys in every service. It will make the idle boys worse to say that in twelve months, no matter what they do or do not do, they will receive a rise.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (by Senator Glassey) proposed -

That after the word " months," line 3, the words " or more than twelvemonths" be inserted.

Senator Sir WILLIAMZEAL (Victoria). As I understand the proposal of Senator Glassey, it is that an officer shall be entitled within twelve months to receive an increase. I would point out to the committee that in all employments, whether under companies or in private offices, a lad enters as what is called a probationer and during the time of his probation he shows whether he is likely to be a good or a bad officer. It would be a mistake to make a hard-and-fast rule and pay a certain sum, even though a boy might show that he was unworthy of his employment. It is no incentive to a boy to do well if he receives an advance whether he proves satisfactory or otherwise. If he shows himself to be a capable officer, his superior will naturally encourage him and secure him an increase if possible. But if he received that increase in any event it would have a most deplorable effect. I am sure that Senator McGregor and the labour party would not advocate such a proposal. It is a desirable thing to hold out an inducement to officers to do their duty, rather than to give them a certain salary without their doing their best to earn it.

Question - That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted - put. The committee divided.

10

AYES

12

NOES

Majority ... .. 2

AYES

NOES

Question so resolved in the negative.

Sub-clause 3 -

Every such officer shall thereafter be entitled, upon the certificate of the commissioner, to receive an increase of £20 per annum at the end of every succeeding twelve months, until such salary has reached £160 per annum.

Senator BARRETT

- I desire some information upon sub-clauses (3) and (6). I wish to know the position of an officer transferred from the general division to the clerical division. For example, supposing a letter-carrier receiving £120 a year, having qualified by examination, be transferred to the clerical division, according to my reading of the clause he would have to commence in the clerical division at £110 a year. A similar question had to be settled in connexion with the Public Service Act in Victoria, and a special provision was inserted to meet the difficulty. It was as follows : -

Every person so transferred shall, so far as seniority is concerned, be placed at the bottom of the class to which he is transferred, but he shall be entitled to the same salary as that which he received immediately before such transfer, and after a period of twelve months' service in the clerical division, he shall be entitled, if such salary be less than the maximum of the class to which he is transferred, to receive the ordinary annual increments of such class until the maximum is reached.

A transferred officer under these circumstances should receive the salary paid to him at the time of his

transfer. If he is to receive a less salary there will be no incentive to officers to pass examinations qualifying them for transfer to the clerical division. If my reading of the clause is correct, a provision similar to that which I have quoted from the Victorian Act should be inserted, to meet the difficulty.

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Senator DRAKE

-It seems to me that Senator Barrett is reading the clause as though it said that no officer should receive more than £110, unless he had been three years in the service, and one year in a particular division. That is not what is provided. The clause simply provides that where a man has been three years in the service and one year in a particular division, he shall get at least £110. If a man is transferred from the general division to the clerical division he carries his salary with him, and he is not affected by this minimum salary provision. The clause does not say that a man transferred from the general' to the clerical division shall not receive more than £110.

Senator Barrett

- If I am assured that that is the case I am satisfied.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - Subclause 3 provides for the certificate of the commissioner. I do not desire to raise any more objections to this, to my mind, obnoxious appointment, but how an earth is the commissioner to give such certificates, -except upon hearsay and report. In a matter of this kind the young man or woman should come armed with a certificate from the officer who is in a position to know their worth. I move -

That the words "chief officer, and with the approval of the " be inserted after the words "of the," line 2.

Senator CHARLESTON

- Nothing will be gained by the insertion of these words. The commissioner is supposed to have a perfect knowledge of all that is going on in the various departments. We know that he cannot have such knowledge, and that he must get reports from superior officers of the department as to the qualifications, industry, and so forth of public servants.

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Senator DRAKE

- I cannot see exactly what is the object of the honorable and learned senator in proposing this amendment. Why does he pass over the permanent head? He proposes that the certificate shall be that of the chief officer, who is a subordinate, and the permanent head is to be ignored entirely. The commissioner is at the head of the system ; he will have all sorts of means for furnishing himself with information, and the certificate must be his certificate. Senator Dobson knows that at the head of every Government and of every business firm there is one individual who represents the Government of the country or of the firm, and it is his signature which is always placed upon documents intended to convey the finding of officers who have the means of ascertaining particulars. Before an officer gets the certificate under this clause, the commissioner will have received assurances that the officer is deserving of promotion.

Senator FRASER(Victoria).- It would never do to tie the hands of the commissioner in the way Senator Dobson proposes- The amendment would give to a subordinate the power to block the whole thing. If the commissioner is not satisfied with the advice of the chief officer he may go to some other' officer for good reasons, and to tie his hands in this way might be to prevent him from doing justice. The commissioner under the law will be bound to make inquiries, not merely from the chief officer, but from others, and civil servants may be heard independently even of chief officers who do not always do the right thing.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - I point out that the Postmaster-General blows hot and cold. When I referred in my previous speeches to the fact that the commissioner had to do everything, and that we were proposing to ignore the permanent heads and chief officers, Senator Drake stated that there were numbers of matters in connexion with which the permanent heads and chief officers had to be consulted. I told the honorable and learned senator that we were giving the commissioner an enormous amount of power and shutting out the permanent heads and chief officers, ' and now he says that they ought to be shut out. I think they ought not. I prefer to apply to the chief officer in this case because the permanent head, for instance, of the Post and Telegraph department, is the Secretary, and he will know little or nothing of the work of the different clerks. The chief officer, on the contrary, will be brought into daily contact with them, and he ought to know their qualifications. All I desire is that some one shall take the

responsibility of saying to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth - "This young man has, according to my knowledge and observation, entitled himself, by merit and industrious conduct, to the rise in salary provided for." That, under my amendment, will come before the commissioner, who. may make inquiries and give his approval. Surely, before arranging that £10 a year shall be taken out of the pockets pf the taxpayers in the case of 100 or 200 young men every year, it can do no harm to have the safeguard of a certificate from the chief officer.

Senator Sir WILLIAM ZEAL

- If Senator Dobson will look at subclause (4), he will find that provision is made for reports from the permanent head of each department through the commissioner upon the conduct, diligence, and . general efficiency of the officer. This information is necessarily brought under the notice of the commissioner, and meets the objection which the honorable and learned senator, has raised.

Amendment negatived.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - I move -

That the following words be added to sub-clause (3) : - " provided that all salaries paid to females shall be one-third less than the amounts provided in this section."

I do not know that I can assure the Postmaster-General that this is good drafting, or that the provision should be inserted where I propose to place it ; but it raises a very important question. It is well worth considering whether by a fluke - for that is what happened in another place - females in the service should be placed on the same level as males in regard to salaries.

Senator Glassey

- Surely there was no fluke about it.

Senator DOBSON

-- I know that my honorable and gallant friend has been interviewed by a number of pretty young ladies in regard to this matter. I have been seen by one or two of them myself, and have been compelled to steel my heart against them ; because I believe that it would be unjust and against the interests of the females themselves to pay them salaries equal to those received by male employes. I have taken some trouble to inquire into this matter, and I have been informed by the head of one of our departments that one male employe is worth two women. Those of us who favour this proposal have agreed, however, that to provide that the salaries paid to females shall be one-third and not one-half less than that paid to men would be a fair thing. A female remains in the one position in the service, but a boy advances from stage to stage and gains experience which the female employe does not. A male can be put to any kind of work, but a woman cannot. Special arrangements have to be made for her, and there is an objection to her working after hours and on Sundays. She enters the service, and, if she is lucky enough to receive an offer of marriage, away she goes and some one else takes her place. A man, however, makes his duties in the service his life's work. When he marries there is an additional incentive for him to seek to advance in the service. I am not going to enter into the question of whether women can do the work as well as men. In many instances a woman, can, and in many cases she pan do better work than a man. That, however, is not the question. The proposal in this Bill is to reverse the policy in force\* in all the States with the exception of New South Wales, where they attempt to place, women in the service on the same level as. men. I have before me a return relating to some of the salaries paid in the Victorian civil service. It shows that male typewriters received a minimum salary of £96 per annum, and a maximum of £144: per annum, and female typewriters a minimum salary of £54 per annum, and a maximum of £78 per annum. Female typewriters who are also shorthand writers receive a minimum of £90 per annum, and a maximum of £108 per annum. Honorable senators will see the great difference between the salaries paid to males and females. So far as female typewriters and shorthand, writers are concerned, I think a great injustice is done to them. That a female who can use her typewriting machine and write shorthand - an art to which she has devoted, great study - should receive a maximum of.' only £108 per annum, while the ordinary male typewriter is paid £144 per annum,, is unjust. But where men and women are doing the same class of work, it is not right that females should receive the same salary as the men. I have other figures, showing that in every State a marked difference is made in regard to the salaries of males and females in the public service. Does it not stand to reason that a female simply enters the service as a matter of convenience. She may remain there 25 years, or she may not stop there 25 weeks, because she may marry and become a mother. It is far better that she should do so than spend all her life in the service. A

man, however, spends his life in the service and gains a better training.

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Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- I was rather surprised to hear the extraordinary contentions put forward by Senator Dobson. If he will consider the purport of this Bill, he will see that his contentions are illogical. One of the cardinal principles of the Bill is- payment by merit. In order to obtain that desirable end, we have provided for the appointment of a commissioner and inspectors at a cost perhaps of £10,000 a year, and we are going to have appeal boards, in order to ensure that every civil servant shall be paid according to the value of the services which he or she renders. Senator Dobson seems to be agreeable that males in the civil service should be paid according to the value of the services' they render. But side by side with these male civil servants we find women working and performing exactly the same duties. I have the authority of the Postmaster-General for saying that females in his department do their work as well, if not better, than the men. Yet these women are paid in some instances less than one-half the salary received by male employees. What is the deduction to be drawn from that fact ? If the men are being paid only the value of the services they render, we are deliberately proposing to pay the women one-third less than they actually earn. That is Senator Dobson's proposal. It simply means that we are to take an unfair advantage of the female employees in the service, and that the Commonwealth by Act of Parliament is to deliberately attempt to sweat certain of its employees. Honorable senators condemn private employers who are guilty of sweating their employees. When we condemn that practice on the part of private employers, are we going to provide by statute that the State shall be allowed' to indulge in it ? Have not the State Governments passed legislation to abolish sweating in private employment ? Surely the committee is not going to provide that the State is to pay women in the service less than they actually earn ? I am well aware that it is usual, not only in Australia, but in other parts of the world, to pay women less than the salaries received by men in respect of the same services. But because other people do wrong, surely we are not justified in following their example ? In employing labour, there has always been a tendency in certain classes to take advantage of the necessities of those who require work. For that reason, very often, women are paid remarkably small salaries. They do not organize unions like men ; there are not so many of them in employment, and there are isolated cases in which they have to seek employment or starve. In such circumstances they are willing to take less than- a living rate of wage. We have to remember also that' legislation<sup>1</sup> affecting women has not been passed similar to that relating to men. We should look at this matter from the standpoint of fair play. If we admit that women can work in certain' avocations as well as men - and- heads of departments support that view - surely we shall be taking up a very extraordinary attitude if we say that in spite of that fact we will take advantage of their necessity and pay them less than ' the salaries received by male employees<sup>1</sup> I believe that the trend of public opinion is turning in the direction of paying women salaries equal to those received by men, and equal to the value of their work. I was reading the other day that in the State of Massachusetts, in the United States of America, more than one-third of 1 50 firms are paying women a salary equal to that received by their male employees, and that in some instances women are even better paid. I have it on very good authority that female typewriters in the United States usually receive what is equivalent to £2 a week. I consider that, as the largest employers of labour, perhaps, in the Commonwealth, we should set an example of fair play, and say that- in accordance with the very object of this Bill, we will pay women no more- and no less than their labour is worth. Senator Dobson has said that in all the States of the Commonwealth women in the public service are paid less than the' men. I think he is wrong so far as New South Wales is concerned. I understand that in the civil service of that State the female employees receive the same rate as the males. A difference is made in the case of male and female employees in the Victorian service, and there are cases of very great hardship. There are cases in which women who have passed a difficult competitive examination similar to that passed by men in the service, and who have been in the employ of the State for twenty years, are receiving the pitiable' salary of £84 a year. In many instances, these women are widows who have children to support ; and there are other cases in which unmarried women in the service have to support their brothers and sisters. ' Perhaps the young woman, is the eldest member of the family, her brothers are going to school\* and she is endeavouring to give them an education. In such cases a great hardship is inflicted.

Senator Dobson proposes to give unequal payment for equal services. That will tend to injure male as well

as female employees. It will be a very great temptation to the commissioner, when he is urged to keep down the expenditure on the transferred departments, to employ women very largely, if he can get the work done for a third less by them than by men. In the State of South Australia, the Government employed for a long time a number of provisional and temporary hands in order to keep down the expenses of the public service and to enable the Treasurer to deliver a better Budget speech. We should not afford the commissioner an opportunity to give the preference in all cases to women at a less salary, but women and men should be placed on exactly the same footing and should be picked and paid according to merit. Senator Dobson pointed out that, if women and men were paid at the same rate, women would not receive the same amount of employment. That could only be the result of prejudice and bias. Senator Drake has assured us. that the women in some departments are better than the men. If there are vacancies in those departments, will he refuse women appointments simply because there is a prejudice against them, although he admits that they are better than men ? In New South Wales I believe the Government pay the same salary to a woman as a man, and if we look at the return which has been furnished of female employees in the federal departments, we see that more women are employed in New South Wales than in any other State except Victoria. If that is the case, it clearly proves that, if women and men are paid at the same rate, the cry that women will not be employed, and that we are doing them an injustice, is only a bogey. I trust that the committee will not consent to such an illogical proposition as has been submitted by Senator Dobson.

Senator PEARCE(Western Australia). - I am rather surprised at this amendment being moved by Senator Dobson. I looked upon this Bill as one which would remedy serious abuses in all the States. In the clerical division women have to pass the same test as men, but for doing exactly the same work £200 is paid to a man and £84 to a woman. I should like the Postmaster-General to take some notice of a circular which has been issued by the Post and Telegraph Association. It gives some glaring cases in the federal service which ought to be rectified. For instance, it states that there are ladies who have been in the service for 26 years, and that the majority of them are not receiving more than £84 a year. We are told that women will only stay for a few years, but in Victoria some women have been in the service for 26 years, and are receiving only £84 a year. In the head office we have instances of female operators working with male operators at the same end of the telegraph line, and necessarily doing the same work, but while the latter receive £200, the former get only £84. In suburban and country offices male and female officers perform the same duties week about. Female officers who receive £84 a year relieve postmasters who receive £264 a year. How are the duties performed by women described in this circular?

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Money order, savings bank, postal and telegraph, treasury work, voting by post, collectors of impost, reports to observatories, payment of old-age pensions, registrar of births, deaths, and vaccinations, monthly lists of new-comers to electoral registrar.

I defy any one to prove that a woman cannot do any portion of that work just as well as a man. It is said sometimes that women are not as physically fit as men for these duties. On the 19th September last the Senate, on my motion, ordered a return to be prepared, showing the average attendance of male and female officers for the last six months in the metropolitan district of the Post and Telegraph department of Victoria. I presume that it may be taken as a fair criterion of the experience of women in the other States. It is as follows : -

The average attendance for the six months, March to August (exclusive of Sundays), was as follows : -

Males ... 1 55.06 days out of a possible 158 days,

Females... 154.56 days out of a possible 158 days, showing a difference in favour of males of one day per man per year.

It shows a difference not of one day, but of one half -day.

Senator Drake

-Is there any footnote to the return ?

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Senator PEARCE

- It cannot be urged that the women do not give satisfaction in the matter of attendance. The footnote, which is a matter of opinion and which is not supported by any figures, reads as follows : -

Females are employed solely on day work and have regular hours, whereas the men, especially those in

the Mail branch, have irregular hours with considerable night work, and are consequently much more liable to epidemic diseases, such as influenza, &c.

I do not think that the footnote carries on its face any proof that female labour is less efficient or reliable than male labour. It is an expression of opinion that night work is more detrimental to health than day work. Seeing that women are not tried at night work, it does not prove that they could not stand it as well as men do. The experience of telephone exchanges all over the world is that women have displaced men for both night and day work. Are we going to pay men and women equal salaries for equal service, and to take length of service into consideration? Some men are allowed to remain in the service for years after they have ceased to be efficient. During office hours men and women are doing equal work, and if a man deserves a salary of £200 or £250 a woman deserves the same return for her work. There is no reason why a woman should receive a third less than a man for doing exactly the same work. I trust that the committee will not inflict an injustice on the weaker sex.

Amendment negatived.

Sub-clause (5) -

Upon the receipt of such report, and upon obtaining any further information which may be necessary, the commissioner shall determine whether such officer is entitled to the full amount or any part of the prescribed increase as a reward for earnest application to duty and meritorious public service, and in the case of a female as being as capable of satisfactorily performing the work as a male.

Senator BARRETT(Victoria). - I move -

That the words " and in the case of a female as being as capable of satisfactorily performing the work as a male " be omitted.

I wish to draw attention to the power that is given to the commissioner to differentiate between a man's services and a woman's. It is possible that he may not have a very kindly feeling for female employees, and, therefore, it is dangerous to put this power into his hands.

Senator STYLES(Victoria). - I am in sympathy with the amendment. It seems to me that a female will only be set to do such work as she is capable of doing ; and surely the officers of the department are competent to judge.

Senator DRAKE

- Of course, the amendment now moved is consistent with the contention that has been made by some honorable senators that a woman and a man should be put upon an exact equality in regard to salary received. It may incidentally happen that a woman may obtain a salary equal to, or greater than, that which a man gets, but on the average it is an undoubted fact that the salaries paid to women have been less than those paid to men for the same class of work. Whether that practice is based upon the supposed inferiority of the female sex is another question. This clause only refers to the full amount of the prescribed increase being paid to a woman as well as to a man. That is to say, if a woman who is doing certain work is found not to be performing it as satisfactorily as a man, she will not get the same increase as she would otherwise receive. It is left open for the commissioner to say whether a woman is doing the work as well as a man, and if she is, she will get the same increase of salary as a man. If a woman is not capable of doing the same work as a man, she should not receive the same amount of salary. That is all the clause means. The commissioner's power as to certifying in regard to due and meritorious service applies both to males and females.

Senator Pearce

- In the telephone service, a man might not be able to do the work as well as a woman.

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Senator DRAKE

- That is so. But still the remuneration of women, in almost every vocation, is somewhat lower than that of men.

Senator GLASSEY(Queensland). - I am pleased that Senator Barrett has raised this question. It will be observed that I have circulated an amendment dealing with the same subject. The meaning of the words objected to is that women are regarded as being inferior to men. If they do not mean that they would not be here. If, as Senator Drake says, women have been receiving lower salaries in the past for performing the same duties as men have been performing for larger salaries, there is no reason why that should be the case in the future. Are we to perpetuate that system? That is what the committee has to determine. In

the first place, I deny that women are inferior to men. The records of departments in which women are employed - like the Postal department - do not show that women are inferior, or that they are performing their duties in a more perfunctory manner, or that they are inefficient. We have proof that so far as concerns their attendance, that kind of argument falls to the ground. According to figures which have been supplied to the Senate, the attendance of women at their duties is equal to that of men, with the exception, on the average, of half-a-day per year. That being so, it does not follow because women have been underpaid in the past that the Commonwealth Parliament should perpetuate that evil. The wording of the clause distinctly implies the inferiority of women in regard to fitness for work. That is not an opinion which we should encourage, and the committee would act wisely and justly in removing the words complained of. Is the Commonwealth going to pay for services rendered, or on what basis is remuneration to be given? If a woman discharges her duties as well as a man, why, in the name of all that is reasonable and just, should she be deprived of proper remuneration, simply because she is a woman? It is not sufficient to tell us that because woman has been treated as inferior in the past that system is to be perpetuated. We hope to bring it to an end. So long as I occupy a seat in this Senate I shall be no party to the Government recognising services from any human being of either sex, and treating one sex as inferior to the other. Women should receive the same remuneration as men for the same kind of service. The old doctrine is most pernicious, and should not be encouraged for a moment. It cannot be defended by any reasonable person. I shall heartily support the amendment if it goes to a division, and further on I intend to propose that if the commissioner withholds his certificate to officers he shall furnish a report in writing as to his reasons for doing so.

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Senator MCGREGOR

- I support Senator Barrett's amendment, and agree entirely with Senator Glassey that the words complained of are a clear intimation to the head of the department, or to the inspectors, or to this nabob, the commissioner, that he is always to consider a woman as inferior. Is it not a fact that on account of similar words in the Victorian Act the heads of the Postal department here have always paid the women lower salaries than have been paid to men, even though they were doing the same work? Is it not a fact that in the Victorian department there are women who are doing more work than the men who are receiving higher salaries? I believe in the principle of equal remuneration for equal services.

Consequently, such words as are objected to should not be in the Bill. There should be no suggestion to the inspector, or to the commissioner, that a woman is to be treated as inferior in any respect to a man.

We are aware of course that there are certain positions that women cannot occupy as well as men.

Women may not make as good navvies or blacksmiths ; although instances have come under my notice where women have done work of both those kinds. I once knew a woman who was wheeling clay in a brick yard, and who did the work as well as any man could; though certainly that is not the kind of work that we wish to see women doing, even if they are able to do it. But there is work in connexion with some of our departments that women can do quite as satisfactorily as men, and if they do that work it is our duty to see that they get the same remuneration as men. In going round Melbourne I have been told of several offices where women have been employed as clerks. They have been found more reliable than men. We have heard a good deal about reliability during recent debates. It has been found that the women are more attentive to their work and do it more correctly than men. Yet the firms which employ them do not give them the same salary as is paid to men. The lower salaries they receive tend to keep down the salaries of men. If, in these firms where women are employed, the employers were compelled to pay them as much as they pay their male clerks, I dare say the employers would turn round and say that the women were not so reliable. That is what some people do under such circumstances. I would not, under this Bill, give power to any inspector to place women in a position inferior to men when they were doing exactly the same kind of work, and doing it as well.

Amendment agreed to.

Senator GLASSEY(Queensland).- I move -

That the words "If the commissioner determines that such officer is not entitled to the full amount of the prescribed increase he shall report in writing the reasons for such determination to the Governor-General" be added to the subclause (5).

It is right that the commissioner should have the power of determining whether an officer is deserving of



the prescribed increase and of withholding his certificate if he finds that the industry and the application of a particular officer is not sufficient to warrant an increase; but I think it is due to Parliament that, in such a case, he should furnish his reasons in writing in order that we may see whether they are valid or not.

Senator DRAKE

- I cannot agree with this amendment. We must remember that at the start this commissioner will be dealing with from 10,000 to 12,000 public servants, and a great number of them will be promoted from year to year and will have their salaries increased. It is altogether degrading the commissioner to suppose that he will not honestly determine such a question. It would be a perfect farce to call upon an officer occupying such a position to report in writing to the Governor-General upon so trivial a matter. If we cannot find a man whom we can trust to honestly perform his duty it would be almost better to have no Public Service Commissioner at all.

Senator PEARCE(Western Australia).I quite indorse what the Postmaster-General has said, and I must express my surprise at such a proposal coming from Senator Glassey, who gave us to understand that this Public Service Commissioner was going to be a perfect paragon. If we cannot trust the commissioner any further than this, it is time the committee reconsidered the advisability of making such an appointment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Sub-clause (6) -

Every such officer shall be entitled, if of the age of 21 years, to a salary of £110 per annum, provided he has been employed for a period of not less than three years in the public service, of which one year has been in such division, and shows by passing the prescribed examination that he is capable of doing the work of an office to which the salary of that amount is attached.

Senator BARRETT(Victoria).- This sub-clause deals with the minimum wage of the clerical division and I think it should be read in conjunction with clause 25, under which an officer in the general division is entitled to the minimum salary of £110 a year when he has served for three years. Under this sub-clause, an officer requires to have been three years in the public service " of which one year has been in such division" before he is entitled to the minimum salary. I desire to put the officers in both divisions on the same footing; and for that reason I move -

That the words "of which one year has been in such division," be omitted.

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Senator DRAKE

- This is not the first reference that has been made in connexion with this clause to clause 25, which was inserted in the Bill after it was introduced. I shall have something to say about it later. I do not think that we ought to alter this clause in order to make it agree with clause 25, though it may be necessary to alter clause 25 to bring it a little more into accord with clause 21. Sub-clause (6) goes in this matter about as far as we ought to go. The provision for three years in the service and one year in the division is not unreasonable. I have opposed those who have desired to interfere in any way with the provision for a minimum salary. With regard to the clerical division, this minimum salary of £110 means a considerable and sudden increase to a number of officers, and will involve an expenditure of about £11,000, but I do not propose to do anything in the direction of reducing the liberal provision of the clause. I think, however, that honorable senators should not make an effort to extend the provision. If they strike out the safeguards and qualifications at present in the clause they may run the risk of losing it altogether. It must be admitted that in comparison with the scale of remuneration and increases which obtains in the States at the present time, this is a very liberal clause, and I trust honorable senators will not move in the direction of removing any of its safeguards.

Senator Sir FREDERICKSARGOOD (Victoria). - This restriction of time is in accord with clause 22 and with the existing Public Service Acts in some of the States. It is a very healthy provision. It is surely reasonable to provide that an officer shall have been doing the work of the clerical division for at least twelve months, and shall have passed the prescribed examination before he receives this salary.

Amendment negatived.

Senator DELARGIE (Western Australia). - I move -

That the words " by passing the prescribed examination" be omitted.

It would be a very great hardship in many cases for young officers in out-of-the-way post-offices to have

to go long distances to attend these examinations, as- they would in Western Australia, particularly. The loss of the services- of- the officers for a considerable time would be a great inconvenience to the- d'epartment, and at this particular stage the examination is not so important as it might be later on. If an examination is insisted upon, I should like to know how these officers are to be examined, and what conveniences will, be afforded to- them.

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Senator DRAKE

- I do not know where Senator De Largie obtains his authority for the statement that these officers will have to travel lo'ng distances in order to be examined. The examinations will be as prescribed, and if the honorable senator will turn to clauses 27, 28, and 29, he will see the provisions relating to this matter. -All that a young officer will be called upon to do will be to pass an examination showing that he is capable of doing the work of any office to which this salary is attached. I do not anticipate that he will have to travel long distances in order to attend the examinations. I imagine that they will be conducted on the spot. It would certainly be a wasteful procedure to take an officer from his work and require him to attend at a town some distance away in order to ascertain whether he was capable of performing the duties of his office. I do not think that anything of that kind is likely to occur. Pull power is- given to prescribe by regulation what the examination shall be, and I take ' it that the regulations will provide for examinations ' to be held in a way that will cause no- unnecessary inconvenience. As to the desirability of the examination, I think we must have some method of ascertaining whether a man is fit for the work which he is appointed to do. Otherwise we might have incapable men entering the service, remaining there year after year, receiving their increments, and becoming eventually an incubus upon the service. To Strike out this provision would be to strike out one of the safeguards of the Bill.

Senator CHARLESTON(South Australia).! am not anxious that these words should be omitted, but I desire to learn how the examinations will be conducted. I wish to see that those who live far away from centres of population will have an opportunity of obtaining promotion by merit equal to that given to officers who live in the large centres. In the Postal department of South Australia the practice has been for the head officer to send to the postmaster in charge<sup>1</sup> of an office- where two or three lads are employed temporarily, certain questions for them to answer. The- boys have to write out the answers, and in order to further test their .ability the postmaster subsequently examines them upon matters relating to ordinary routine work. He then sends back his report to the chief officer, and upon that report the- candidates are selected. I thought that a similar course would be followed under this Bill. J know that some- members of the service are extremely anxious- to. ascertain how the examinations are to be- conducted, and they are fearful lest they should not be given an opportunity of promotion because of their residence in the country. They have expressed a wish to have an explanation given in the Senate of the course proposed to be followed, and as the Postmaster-General has led us to understand that the examinations will be conducted on the spot, without expense to the candidates, I think there is no reason to insist upon the omission of these words; There will be no difficulty in conducting an examination without cost to the service or inconvenience to the candidates.

Senator GLASSEY(Queensland). - I am sorry that Senator Charleston has come to the conclusion that it is undesirable to omit these words. The reason advanced for their retention in the Bill, namely, that it is unlikely that- the cost to be incurred by those who- have to submit themselves for examination will be great, is not a sufficient one. So far as persons in the clerical division are concerned, I can quite understand the desirability of calling upon them to undergo an examination before advancing them higher and higher in the the service. But it is unfair to say that persons engaged as telegraph operators or in other capacities in the Post and Telegraph department, and who have been in the service for years, shall come up for examination in order that it may be determined whether they shall retain their present position and salary. There are many persons who have been in the service for a great number of years, and who will be entitled to receive £110 per annum if this Bill becomes law. I wish to know whether they will be required to pass an examination before they receive this increase.

Senator Drake

- All that the clause provides is that where a man has been three years in the service, and one year in this particular division, he shall be entitled to receive £110 per annum on passing the prescribed examination.

Senator GLASSEY

- It is well that the committee should be clear on the point. I am strongly opposed to this examination. It is manifestly unfair that men and women who have been in the service for a number of years, and some of whom passed an examination in years gone by, should be required to pass this examination in order to obtain a minimum wage, without any advancement so far as their position in the service is concerned.

Senator Sir Frederick Sargood

- This relates only to officers in the fifth class.

Senator GLASSEY

- I presume that the great bulk of officers in the Post and Telegraph department are in the fifth class. They are the men who are receiving less than £110. There are also a large number of women who have been in the service for five, ten, and even twenty years. Is it fair to require these persons to pass a prescribed examination before they shall be entitled to receive the minimum wage prescribed in this Bill? In 1897, when we were amending the Civil Service Act of Queensland, I was fortunate enough to secure the insertion of an amendment providing that all persons who had been in the post and telegraph service prior to the passing of our first Civil Service Act in 1889, should be entitled to advance in the service without passing any examination. That benefited 157 persons in the service.

Senator Sir William Zeal

- Did it benefit the service ?

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Senator GLASSEY

- Most assuredly it did. In many cases it would be grossly unfair to insist upon this examination.

Senator STANFORTHSMITH (Western Australia). - Whilst sympathizing with Senator De Largie in his endeavour to obviate certain injustices which are likely to occur in regard to these examinations, I cannot go with him to the extent of saying that the examinations should be abolished. I think that if officers are to be advanced according to merit, it is necessary and right to see that merit is shown by them when we are paying them according to the value of their services. We should do this just as we should recognise merit by paying female employees salaries similar to those received by males. The whole object of this Bill is that persons shall be paid according to the value of their services. If people cannot pass the examinations they have not sufficient merit for the positions, and therefore they should not receive the increment. But a very great difficulty occurs, as Senator De Largie has pointed out, in regard to people who desire to enter the civil service, but who live, perhaps, 500 or 1,000 miles away from the capital of their State.

Undoubtedly the tendency will be to conduct the examinations in the capitals of the various States. In Western Australia, for example, the examinations might be held in Perth, and young men residing in that city and desirous of entering the service would thus have an undoubted advantage over those living 500 or 1,000 miles away. But if the examinations are held in the principal centres, there will be an equal opportunity for residents of town and country to enter the service, and when they enter they should undoubtedly advance by merit. Their salaries should not be increased unless they show that their merit warrants an increase.

Senator Sir WILLIAMZEAL (Victoria). - I think some weight should be given to the representations of the Postmaster-General, who has pointed out that this examination is requisite. In my experience it has been proved to be not only requisite but a very desirable way of promoting an officer. We do not ask young persons living in Sandhurst, Ballarat, Hamilton, and other places to come down to Melbourne and pass their matriculation examinations. The examinations are held locally, and the same common-sense plan will be adopted by the commissioner. If Senator De Largie does not wish to take away one of the principal incentives to a man to do well and rise in the service, he will allow the clause to pass as it is ; otherwise we will have only dolts in the departments.

Senator DELARGIE (Western Australia). - I am not opposed to the system of examination. I believe it is the only safeguard we can have. I only desired to get a clear understanding of the mode in which the examination is to be carried out, and, having received an assurance from Senator Drake that equal facilities will be given to the candidates wherever located, I am willing to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 23 -

The Governor - General may declare the number of vacancies in the 5th class of the clerical division

which may be filled by officers who have served for the last two years in the general division. Such vacancies shall be filled by the successful candidates at a competitive examination of the same standard as that for admission to the clerical division. senator BARRETT Victoria .-I rise to draw the attention of Senator Drake to the provision in the last portion of sub-clause (4), for the transfer of officers from the general division, and to ask the committee to again consider the position of officers in the general division. Desiring to rise in the service, they at once apply themselves to the work of self-improvement; but, having passed the examination, they would have to enter the clerical division at a salary of £10 less than they had been receiving, or £110 per annum. What is the use of an officer in the general division spending his time and his money in qualifying himself to pass the examination if he is to enter the higher division at a lower salary ? In Victoria this \* anomaly was rectified by the insertion of a special provision in the Public Service Act of 1890, as follows : -

Every person so transferred shall so far as seniority for promotion is concerned, be placed at the bottom of the class to which he is transferred, but he shall be entitled to the same salary as that which he received immediately before such transfer, and after a period of twelve months service in the clerical division he shall be entitled (if such salary be less than the maximum of the class to which he has been so transferred) to receive the ordinary annual increments of such class until the maximum has been reached. The clause in its present form does an injustice to a number of men and certainly offers no inducement to an officer to qualify himself for transfer to a higher division. On his transfer to the clerical division an officer should receive the same salary as he had been getting in the general division, but so far as promotion is concerned he should be put at the bottom of the list.

Senator DRAKE

- I have not sufficient knowledge of the State Acts to speak with any certainty as to the reason for the distinction between the general division and the clerical division. It seems that it is regarded as necessary for those who are going into the clerical division to enter at a certain age, at all events to enter pretty low down, and after they have been a number of years in the service, they are held to have made up their minds whether they are going to remain in the general or clerical divisions. That I take it must be the meaning of this provision. If a man wishes to be transferred to the clerical division he must start at £110, which, of course, would mean that he starts as a comparatively young man, before he has become fixed in any groove. I shall inquire of my honorable colleague whether there is any well grounded reason for this provision, or whether it is the result of an inadvertence, and if the Bill can be amended in such a way, without detriment to the public service, as to allow for freer transfer from the general to the clerical division I shall have it recommitted for that purpose ? In order to provide for officers in the departments of the States coming into the federal service, I move -

That after the word " filled," line 5, the following words be inserted : - " either by officers who, before the commencement of this Act, have qualified under the law of the State in which they are employed for transfer to the clerical division, or "

If officers have already qualified under a law of the State they will become eligible for transfer to the clerical division as though they had qualified when in the general division of the Commonwealth service. I think it is a reasonable amendment to make.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 25 -

Any officer in the general division who shall have served for three years, and shall have attained the age of 21 years, shall be paid a salary of not less than £110 per annum.

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Senator DRAKE

- In my second reading speech I said that this clause was inserted in the Bill in the other House after a comparatively short debate. It corresponds to the latter part of clause 21. We thoroughly discussed clause 21, and I think the feeling is that we are justified in making that provision with regard to the clerical division, but it is open to question whether clause 25, with regard to the general division, does not go too far. because with regard to officers generally it gives too large and too sudden an increase, and also because a fear has been, very freely expressed that if by statute we put men and women on an equality, as far as pay is concerned, the result eventually will be that there will be less employment for women. In

almost every walk of life in which women have found employment, their number has been constantly increasing for many years, 'but the wages they have been able to command have not been equal to those paid to men. And outside, if not inside the service, the lower rate has accounted to a great extent in the direction of continually increasing the number of women employed. There are certain circumstances which place women under a disqualification as compared with men. It is continually growing in all branches of the service in which they are employed. For instance, special accommodation has to be provided for them, and then we cannot call upon women to work at hours when we can call upon men. In various other ways also it is found that women are subject to certain natural disqualifications. However, much it may be regretted, the result is that they command lower salaries than men, and if by statute we raise the amount of salary paid to women to an equality with that paid to men, then, if a choice is allowed as between men and women, that choice will almost invariably fall upon the men. There are certain classes of work in which women are expert, but, generally speaking, in nearly all the work in which they are competing with men at the same salaries, the men will be preferred; and if we make a rigid rule that the same salary shall be paid to women as to men, there will be a constantly decreasing amount of work for women. As to the financial effect of this clause, I would point out what will be the result in the Post and Telegraph department of increasing salaries to £110, so far as concerns those who have been three years in the service, and who have attained the age of 21 years. In the clerical division, it would affect 50.6 employees, and would mean an increased amount to be voted on the Estimates of £10,638. If the same rule is applied in the general division - and that is the operation of clause 25<sup>o</sup> - there will be 1,375 employees affected.

Senator McGregor

- Is that the total number who are being sweated now?

Senator DRAKE

- I will say a word or two about sweating directly, but I am now giving the figures. The amount of money that will be required to bring the salaries of the 1,375 persons up to £110 per annum will be £34,772. Those figures are for the Post and Telegraph department only. Let it be borne in mind that this money has to come out of the postal revenue. Where does that revenue come from? It comes out of the pockets of poor people. Our postal revenue is made up from postage on letters - from the pennies and the twopences which people pay upon their correspondence. It is a service which has to be paid for at the same rate by the woman who wears a calico gown as by the woman who wears a silk dress. All persons in the community pay for the postal service at the same rate; and it must be borne in mind that the revenue derivable from postage on letters constitutes the largest part of the postal revenue. With regard to what Senator McGregor has said as to sweating, perhaps some of the salaries are low. But I do not see how they can be described as "sweating" salaries, for the reason that in the Post and Telegraph department there is a constant rush to secure employment. We do not cut down salaries to the lowest point at which we can get persons to do the work. They are fixed at a certain rate, and there is a tremendous amount of competition to get into the service. Some employees who would be affected by clause 25 are at present getting only about £60 a year. But even their positions are very much coveted. By the operation of this clause their salaries will be increased immediately by the amount of £70 or £80. Is it a wholesome thing in the public service or anywhere else - for men in certain grades of employment to be suddenly jumped-up to receiving double the salary they were previously getting?

Senator McGregor

- Are there some who are getting less than £60 a year?

Senator DRAKE

- I do not know any over the age of 21 who are getting less than £60. Is it a good thing for the general community that the salaries of these persons should suddenly be increased to so great an extent?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- If their services are worth it, certainly.

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Senator DRAKE

- The question of the worth of their services does not enter into the matter. What is proposed is a statutory provision that the salaries shall be increased to £110 whether the services rendered are worth it or not. The question of the value of the services does not arise. Will it be approved of by the community

generally, by those who are outside the service, by many who would be glad to have the same position at £60 per year, and by the people who are furnishing the money out of which these salaries are paid, if these salaries are increased from £60 to £110 by the Legislature? I do not believe that at the time this matter was discussed in another place these facts were brought fully before honorable members. At any rate it is for the committee to consider the matter. With regard to the employment of females, I may remark that it has come under my notice once or twice already, that ladies are under certain disabilities in their employment, and if Parliament says that the same rate of salary is to be fixed for women as for men, indifferently, it will be found that in the future there will be a constantly decreasing number of women employed. Of course every female employe now in the service is in favour of this proposal. They do not consider the case of the young girls who are coming along and who want to get into the service. Those who are in are all right and are, of course, willing to accept any increase of salary which may be given to them. But what I am endeavouring to point out is that the effect of raising these salaries of women by statute to an equality with the salaries of men will in the long run be to diminish the amount of employment for women in the service. That is a result which I should deplore. The amendment I intend to move will prevent the clause from making such a sweeping alteration, which I do not think was intended when it was accepted in another place. I move -

That the following words be added to the clause : - " if by passing the prescribed examination or otherwise he satisfies the commissioner that he is capable of doing the work of an office to which a salary of that amount is attached ; and provided that if such officer is a female, and does not so satisfy the commissioner, she may be employed at a less salary."

Senator McGREGOR

- I hope that honorable senators will resist this amendment, and adhere to the decision arrived at by another place. It is all very well for Senator Drake to say that it is not sweating to have an underpaid public service. When I interjected, I had no idea that there were young men and women of the age of 21 working in any part of the public service for salaries so low as £60 a year. When the word " sweating " is used, what does it really mean? It means underpaying officers who are carrying out public duties as they ought to be discharged. The Government are paying them less than they are worth. As far as I and a great many of those associated with me are concerned, we do not believe in any young man over the age of 21 being employed anywhere for less than £110 a year.

Senator Drake

- The honorable member knows as a fact that they are so employed.

Senator McGREGOR

- That is what we are sorry for - that the greed of some people is such that it compels them for the sake of earning larger profits to make their fellow men and women work for less than they ought to be paid, It is all very well for the Postmaster-General to talk about the poor woman in a calico dress having to contribute what is necessary to pay these increases.

Senator Drake

- I said that she pays the same as the lady in a silk dress.

Senator McGREGOR

- It is like dragging in the poor widow and the orphan in connexion with a great many other things. The people of Australia are to a great extent composed of poor women in calico dresses, having poor husbands in moleskin trousers, and as far as concerns letters from England and other parts of the world, these people are not very anxious as to whether they get their correspondence at the end of 30, 40, or 50 days. But for the sake of business people - the mercantile community - the State is prepared at the expense of the poor woman in her calico dress, and her poor husband in his moleskin trousers, to pay immense subsidies to ocean steam-ship companies in order that the mails may be delivered a few days sooner. So far as the difference of a few days is concerned, the poor men and women are very little interested, but they do not complain because merchants and business men have got their letters a few days sooner at a cost of £72,000, which is nearly twice as much as would be necessary to give the increases here asked for. The Postmaster-General, in appealing on behalf of the poor young women, was careful to refer, not to those who are in the service, but to those who expect to get into it. The honorable and learned senator said it would make a great difference to them, because if the department was compelled to pay them £110 after they had been three years in the service, and were 21 years of age, the

result would be that they would not be employed. Is not that something like a threat ?

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Senator Playford

- Of course they will not be employed.

Senator McGREGOR

- I say they will ! They would not be employed now if those who employ them were not getting value for their money. If these women were not assisting to keep down the wages paid to men they would not be employed at all. It is not out of sympathy that the women are employed, and the women of Australia have common sense enough to know it. But let us get this provision passed, and then, when an application for a position is put in by either a boy or a girl, it will be our duty to see that both get fair play, in spite of any arbitrary officer who may have threatened that if ..... is carried he will take care that no woman gets employment.. I jocularly remarked that if the wages of these young men who are over 21 years of age were increased from £60 or £70 to £110 a year and upwards, they would be in a better position than they are in to-day, and there would be far more opportunities for the young women of Australia to get married. We often see in the press pathetic articles and letters complaining of the low marriage rate and birth rate. We have to think of these things when we are increasing the salaries of men. If they are given salaries sufficient to enable them to get married it will be better for them and for the women of the Commonwealth also. For all these reasons, and many more I could advance, this clause should be passed without any amendment.

Senator PULSFORD

- I suppose there is no one in this Chamber who has any special monopoly of esteem and affection for his fellows, or is without a desire to do the best that circumstances and the times in which we live permit him to do for them. It is necessary above all things, at the present juncture, that we should make sure of our financial position, and see that we have the money with which to pay all the sums which we desire to pay. We are told that this clause will involve increased payments in connexion with the Post and Telegraph department alone amounting £34,770, and the number amongst whom this increased payment is to be divided is 1,375. If hono'able members take the trouble to make the calculation, they will find that that represents an increase of £25 per head. It is clear, therefore, that these 1,375 people are receiving to-day an average salary of £85, ' so that Senator McGregor is a little out in imagining that the State is employing a large number of persons at £60 per year. The £34,770 is the amount which will be required to bring the salaries of these 1,375 persons in the Post and Telegraph department who have arrived at the age of 21 years up to £110 each. We must remember also that there are at the present time a certain number of people in the service who are 20 years of age, who during the coming year will arrive at the age of 21, and . will also be entitled under this provision to receive a salary of £110 each. Then there are a considerable number who are nineteen years of age, and who in two years' time will be entitled to have their salaries advanced to the same amount. If we wish to get a fair estimate of what the clause means, we must not confine ourselves to the immediate advances that will be required for the Postal department alone. We have to add the amount which will be required in the Customs department.

Senator Drake

- I understand it will be only a small amount, about £1,100 ; and I do not know whether there are any persons under 21 years of age -employed in the Defence department.

Senator PULSFORD

- At all events, we must take that into consideration ; and while the estimate of the extra amount of expenditure in the Post and Telegraph department is £34,770, within twelve months from now the extra expenditure required to carry out this provision will much more closely approximate to £50,000 per annum. That is a very substantial sum to have to provide for, and in the case of Tasmania, - Western Australia, and South Australia it means an extra expenditure, which will certainly be an important item in the finances of those States. It would be a pleasure to every honorable senator to be able to vote for these advances if we had the necessary funds ; but. the predominating consideration in connexion with Australian finance at the present moment, and for some time to come, must be caution.

Senator Playford

- Then why did the honorable senator vote to reduce the telegraphic rates ?

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Senator PULSFORD

- That must also be remembered. We must not cut off revenue on the one hand, and on the other hand increase the expenditure. That is a course of procedure which leads to unfortunate results. I must vote against this clause as it stands.

Senator CLEMONS

- If this clause is passed as it stands the Commonwealth will be committed to an increased expenditure of £50,000 per year. It is, I think, very undesirable that this small committee should calmly vote for additional expenditure to that extent. Whatever may be the decision upon this question I think it ought to be arrived at in as full a committee as possible. I am entirely in sympathy with the demand of men for fair wages for fair work.

Senator McGregor

- The honorable senator will not vote for it.

Senator CLEMONS

- I do not wish at the present time to talk to political prostitutes ; I wish rather to address myself to the Chair. This clause does not appeal to me as proposing to give every young man of 21 years of age a salary of £110. If the proposal were to give such a salary to officers who have been some time in the service and are more than 21 years of age I should be inclined to agree with it. I do not consider it necessary that a man of 21, when engaged in the general division of the public service, should receive £110 a year. There must be thousands and thousands of such men - if we can speak of persons of that age as men - who would be very glad to receive a lower wage.

Senator Barrett

- Would the honorable senator care to work for less ?

Senator CLEMONS

- When I was 21 years of age I was receiving less, and I daresay there are many honorable senators who were in the same position. Ninety per cent. of the men employed in ordinary avocations receive less. Although I am not in favour of cutting down fair wages, and never have been, I think this is an unnecessary piece of extravagance. One of the reasons for my objection to this clause is that, from my point of view, the Bill is unsatisfactory, because, so far as I can see, it contains no proper provision for remedying injustices as between State and State. Every honorable senator knows that there are considerable discrepancies in the wages being received by civil servants in the various States. Civil servants in one State receive lower salaries than men who are doing exactly the same work in the service of another State. That is an inequality that should be remedied. By remedying it I believe we shall do a much greater service to the working man than by proposing that a youth, on reaching the age of 21, shall receive £110 per annum. My sympathy for working men is not limited to those who have attained the age of 21. Without wishing to fix an arbitrary point at the present time, I think that if this clause provided that when men in the general division of the public service attain the age of 25 they shall receive £110 per annum it might have my sympathy. I have no sympathy with those who say that a boy who has just come out of his apprenticeship and attained the age of 21, should receive this salary. I know men 30 years of age in the Commonwealth who are working much harder than those in this division will have to do, but who are not receiving this salary. This is false, hypocritical sympathy. I am not here to obtain votes. I am here to do what I believe is fair. To penalize the Commonwealth to the extent of £50,000 a year in order that boys who have just completed their apprenticeship shall receive £110 a year, is a monstrous proposal, and I intend to vote against it. Assuming that we have so much money to spare, this £50,000 will be badly needed to remedy the present injustices under the Public Service Bill. If Tasmania, for instance, is to be treated with that fairness which she was promised when the Constitution was framed at least £50,000 will be required to remedy the injustices under which she now suffers. Similar injustices exist in Western Australia and Queensland I am sure, but possibly not in South Australia. In these three smaller States there are many injustices which ought to be rectified. I have risen at this stage to ask the Postmaster-General whether he does not consider it desirable that we should postpone this clause. Is it right that we should deal with a clause involving an expenditure of £50,000 a year in a small committee like this? I know that the Postmaster-General is opposed to this clause, because he has proposed an amendment which largely nullifies it. If he takes up that attitude in regard to a Bill which is in his care, should he not agree to postpone this clause ? There are many other clauses that we may consider if we



have to fill up time, but this from a financial point of view is undoubtedly the most important clause in the Bill. Therefore I urge the Postmaster-General to consider the desirability of postponing its consideration.

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Senator STYLES

- I was rather surprised at the bad character which was given to the boys of Tasmania by two of its representatives. I was under the impression that boys were pretty much the same everywhere, but according to Senator Dobson the Tasmanian boys are wretched writers. I should like to compare his handwriting with that of a boy of sixteen. If he can write legibly he is about the only lawyer I know who can. But I am sure that he could not pass an examination in handwriting. Senator Clemons was rather severe on the youth of Tasmania, and Senator Dobson, I understand, cheered his remarks. Senator Clemons said he would not mind if the young fellows to get a salary of £110 were 25 years of age, overlooking the fact that thousands of young fellows of 21 voted for his election to the Senate. A young fellow at that age is eligible for a seat in either House of the Commonwealth Parliament, and a Peer of the Realm can take his seat in the House of Lords when he attains his majority. So far as my experience goes young men of 21 are well able to do a day's work. At that age apprentices are out of their time, and receive full pay. I hope that the clause will be carried as it is, because £2 2s. 6d. a week is little enough to pay any man, or indeed any woman if she does a man's work.

Senator PEARCE

- I am very much surprised at the attitude which the Government take up on this clause. It was allowed to go through the other House, and it is very strange that we should be asked to reverse its decision. Senator Drake might have indicated some occupations in the general division in which women cannot do the work as efficiently as men. If women are appointed to positions which they are not able to fill, it only proves that there has been bad administration. Senator Drake will not say that women do not do the work of telegraph operators as efficiently as men.

Senator Drake

- I think the male operators are reckoned to be more efficient than women, but that is no disparagement to the latter.

Senator PEARCE

- So far no proof has been given that women are not entitled to the same rate of salary as men, on the ground that they cannot do their work as efficiently in the several departments to which they are likely to be appointed. As telephone operators women are looked upon as being superior to men. In all the telephone exchanges the women have completely routed the men. Senator Drake does not propose that in this department men shall not get as much as women because they are not so efficient.

Senator Drake

- I do not admit that.

Senator PEARCE

- The Deputy Postmasters-General have admitted it by putting women almost entirely in the exchanges. It has been urged that it is done because the women accept a lower salary. I think the will of the Commonwealth is that we should not follow a bad precedent which has been created in other lines of employment. I cannot congratulate Senator Clemons on his outburst. It was rather too bad for him to suggest that the clause should be postponed because the attendance is so small. He has been absent from the Chamber for very nearly a week, and yet he lectures the committee on the point of small attendance.

Senator Clemons

- I have been away for two days in nine months. I did not lecture anybody. It is a small committee.

Senator PEARCE

- It is superior to any committee which has dealt with the Bill so far, and it is no reason why we should delay the settlement of the question. No ground has been advanced to justify the committee in reversing the decision of the other House. If this rule is to be applied to the general division, why not also to the clerical division? Senator Drake will admit that there are some branches of the general division to which he would not appoint women. Yet he allowed the minimum wage clause for that division to pass. It seems to me that fixing a minimum wage, or laying down good conditions for manual labour, is quite a different thing from making the conditions easier for those in another kind of employment. We are told that the

opposition to the clause is raised on grounds of economy. It is strange that we did not hear this economy preached when we were dealing with men at the top of the tree. Senator Dobson spoke very vehemently on this subject, but he has not been prominent with his support when we have been trying to prune the high salaries.

Senator Dobson

- The honorable senator is altogether wrong.

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Senator PEARCE

- If we wish to economise, let us begin with some of those who get big salaries, and do very little work. It is mean economy to say that those who have attained the age of 21, and have been in the general division for three years, are not entitled to a Salary of £110. It is a degrading position for the Commonwealth to be in, if it cannot afford to pay a little over £2 a week to its employes. I am sure that it is not the will of the taxpayers that economy should begin with these men.

Senator DRAKE

- I do not know where Senator Pearce gets his information from with regard to the relative ability of male and female employes in the Post and Telegraph department, but I think he has made a mistake with regard to telegraph operators. I believe that for the work of attending to the telephone switch-board women are particularly fitted, and it need surprise no one that in that sphere they are probably quite equal to men. The honorable senator says that the women are superior, and thinks that is shown by the larger number employed. In Queensland - and, I think, in most of the States - women are employed at the switch-board during the day, and men are employed during the night, and on Sundays. There is an instance of the peculiar disqualifications under which women suffer. For reasons it is considered desirable that they should only be employed during the day, so that if they are even as equally expert in manipulating the keys, the honorable senator must see that where one sex suffers from a certain disqualification, that must be taken into consideration in connexion with the salary, and always is. The women do not desire to work at night or on Sundays, and the department recognises that their wishes should be given effect to. But on the average I do not think that female operators are equal to male operators. Telegraph operating requires a pretty strong physique in the operator. It is what is called a nerve-shattering occupation, and very often strong men who work year after year at telegraph operating suffer very much physically. Not only in Victoria, but in the other States, men find that continual work without a respite tells on them to such an extent that their health is very often seriously endangered. It has been found almost invariably that operating men can do hard work which women Cannot do. Of course women may be able to send a message of a few minutes' duration perhaps as quickly as men could, but the work of an operator involves continuous close application, which can only be sustained by a person of fairly strong physique. Their better physique enables men to stand up against that class of work better than women. That is the reason of it, I believe, and if the honorable senator has been informed that females are able to do operating work as well as men, he has been misinformed.

Senator Walker

- Has the Postmaster-General any objection to divide the amendment?

Senator DRAKE

- I am willing to divide the amendment, and move the first part of it first. That deals with officer generally, while the second part deals only with female officers. I ask leave to withdraw the second part of the amendment.

Amendment amended accordingly.

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Senator WALKER

- Now that the Postmaster-General has seen his way to divide the amendment, I see my way to support the first part of it. I could not consistently support the second part, because I have always contended that if women are equally capable of doing work with men, they should be equally paid for it. Having some experience with regard to salaries, I say it is not usual for young men in offices to be receiving £110 a year at 21 years of age. Personally I should have preferred if the length of service required was five years and the age 23. But as the term and the age are fixed at three years and 21 years for the clerical division, there is a good deal of force in leaving this clause as it is. Senator Pulsford has drawn our attention to the

fact that the proposal involves an increase of £25 a year to 1,375 officers, amounting in all to £34,770, and to provide for that increased Commonwealth expenditure we must add to the revenue from customs duties about £140,000. It is a question whether we are justified in putting that additional charge upon the people. I desire to remind honorable senators that many of the persons affected by the clause will not be only 21 years of age. A great number may be older, and I understand that many of them are much older. If we have to pay so much more than we are paying at present it is to be assumed that those at the head of affairs will see that we get more work for the larger pay, or that those whose salaries are advanced will be sent to more important positions. I am in thorough accord with honorable senators who wish to see persons well paid, but after all is said and done, we should first see whether we can afford to pay them as proposed. At the present time, I am not quite clear that we can afford an extra expenditure of £35,000, when it means extra customs duties to the extent of £140,000 a year.

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- There seems to be a tendency on the part of some honorable senators to be very parsimonious with regard to the salaries paid to those in the lower branches of the service. But when we were considering the salaries of the highest-paid officers, some of those senators were in favour of increasing those salaries. I believe that many in the higher branches of the service are receiving higher salaries than they are entitled to. It seems clear that the cost of thoroughly organizing the Commonwealth service, and of putting the officers on a proper basis in regard to salaries, will come to something like £50,000 a year. That is what we shall have to pay in order to give decent salaries to many people who, even honorable senators from Tasmania and South Australia have admitted, are not being paid a salary according to the value of their services. Senator McGregor reminded the committee that we are paying some £72,000 a year in order to have mails delivered a few days earlier than they otherwise would be. I may add that it is problematical whether the mails are delivered a day earlier than they would be without any subsidy. Another point to be considered in connexion with this matter is that the ordinary annual increments, which would be paid in the various States to civil servants, would amount to a considerable sum, and that should be deducted from the estimate of £50,000. On the question of the age, the State recognises that when a man is 21 years of age he is entitled to every privilege, including the right to vote, the right to sit in Parliament, and the right to sit on a jury. Yet, it is to be supposed that if he is employed in the civil service he is not a man, and is not entitled to this consideration on account of his age. The position taken up by some honorable senators is not a logical one. Some of them took no objection to a minimum salary of £110 being provided for the clerical division, while they do object in the case of those employed in the general division. In respect of what I consider is only a living wage, I think both ought to be treated alike. It must not be forgotten that officers in the clerical division may get increases up to £600 a year, while many of those in the general division receiving £110 a year may never get an increase of salary. The Postmaster-General has said that women are not as good as men in the Post and Telegraph office.

Senator Drake

- As operators.

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- When I was speaking on this Bill on the 16th August, I said I did not think the honorable and learned senator would say that they were not as good as men if employed in the sale of postage stamps, and Senator Drake said they were very much better. There is no doubt that a great many women could be employed in that work, and if they are better than men for the work I do not see why they should be debarred from such employment. I noticed the other day, in connexion with some competitions in shorthand, which were open to men and women, that about 100 persons competed, and the three top positions were secured by women. That shows that they have ability to concentrate their attention upon such things. In working the telephone, the Postmaster-General has admitted that girls are as good or better than men, and that is confirmed by the report of the conference of electrical experts from the different States, who said that women were more docile and tractable, and did the work better than men. Though the Postmaster-General says that as telegraph operators they are not as good as men, I know that many male telegraph operators have had to give up the work because their nerves became unstrung.

Senator Drake

- Does the honorable senator know any women who are doing the work all day ?

Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- Hundreds of them are employed at the work in telegraph offices in America.

Senator Keating

- And in these States also.

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Senator STANFORTH SMITH

- They would not be employed if they could not do the work. There is no great physical exertion required. Care, attention, and ability are needed, and I believe the women are fitted for the work. If they are not, I should like to ask the Postmaster-General why they are employed. If they are not equal to men at the work, are they employed because they work for lower wages, and may keep men out of employment? Senator Walker has mentioned the fact that many of the people who will be affected by this clause are over 21 years of age, and that disposes of much of the objection raised by Senator Demons. It is apparently only those who have joined the service at 17, and are now 21 years of age, that Senator Demons objects to. I do not believe that in the general division those will represent any large proportion of the persons who will be entitled to the £110 a year. I further say that if a young man in the civil service at the age of 21 years is not worth £110, the fault lies with the persons who are responsible for the employment of such a man. Any man or woman capable of doing the work required is worth a minimum salary of £110 a year. We have found that the wages boards in Victoria have fixed the salaries of men who are employed in what is not particularly skilled labour at £2 per week, and are we going to pay lower salaries than private people? It may be true that some firms employ people for less than £110 per year, but we should not follow their example. The Commonwealth Government, as the largest employers of labour, should set the example of paying a fair rate of wages.

Senator DOBSON

- Senator Clemons has appealed to the Postmaster-General to say whether he will not, under the circumstances, and seeing that there are fourteen or fifteen senators absent, postpone this clause.

Senator Barrett

- Whose fault is that? We ought to finish this Bill before the Senate rises.

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Senator DOBSON

- I do not say it is the fault of anybody, but I say that financially this is the most important Bill we have seen this session. It may involve extra expenditure amounting to £100,000 a year. We really do not know what it may involve. We have not seen where we are going. We have not compared the figures before us with the figures before the State Parliaments, and we have not looked beyond our noses. One honorable senator has told us that the Bill was allowed to pass in the other House. Are honorable senators going to take up the position in connexion with a matter involving £50,000 a year, that because this clause was allowed to pass in another House we should swallow it without discussion? I put it to the Postmaster-General that there are very good reasons indeed why this clause should be postponed. I do not believe that the Minister has an adequate notion of the financial responsibility which the Bill entails. It is clear that these clauses applying to the general and clerical division a minimum wage of £110 will involve an extra expenditure of about £50,000 per year in the transferred departments. I think that if the Minister has any idea whatever of financial responsibility he will see the necessity for postponing this clause, because, unless the figures are looked at and unless all the civil servants in the employment of the Commonwealth, and also of the State, are considered in connexion with their length of service and the salaries they receive, we can have no idea of the direct and indirect results of this Bill. Does the Postmaster-General imagine for a moment that old men in the service, who are to a certain extent on the lowest rung of the ladder, and who, although they may not have been failures, have made no rapid steps towards promotion, and are getting low wages, will stand quietly by and see youngsters of 21 years of age getting £2 2s. 6d. per week? Does my honorable and learned friend suppose that the State Governments will be allowed to retain the salaries of their employees as they are at present? If we pass this provision, will not our friends of the labour party agitate from one end of the Commonwealth to the other, and will they not say in the various States, "Look at the example which has been set us by the Commonwealth Parliament. They are paying men and women generous salaries and surely the State will follow in their footsteps." So we shall have an agitation in every State to raise the minimum wage, and the extra expenditure may amount to £200,000 a year. When a question of wages is discussed in the Senate,

some honorable senators lose their heads, and all they appear to be able to do is to vote for the highest sum they can possibly get. I do not consider that to be my duty. I deny that the labour party, or any section of honorable senators, has a special right to discuss the question of wages. We have a right to look to all classes, and seeing the terrible position in which my own State will be financially, I feel that I am not justified in voting for these generous and liberal advances in salaries. The State- of Tasmania will have to come to this Parliament for aid to the extent of £100,000 per annum. Then we shall have to pay extra taxation to make up £50,000 or £60,000 more, and am I, in addition to that, to go back to my State and tell the people there that I voted for a Bill which involves an extra expenditure of another £50,000 or £60,000 a year? The Postmaster-General admits, and Senator Smith proclaims, that it will cost us that amount in salaries alone.

Senator Staniforth Smith

- Tasmania has the worst paid civil service in the Commonwealth, and therefore she will receive more per capita than will any other State.

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Senator DOBSON

- When statements are made with the object of securing, an. increase of salaries it may be safely reckoned that they are wrong. The statement just made by Senator Smith is absolutely wrong. A legislative body of this kind is a very bad. tribunal to deal with intricate matters of this sort. We cannot do what is fair between the civil service on the one hand and the taxpayer on the other, without having all the facts before us. Discussion is not the only thing necessary. We have to look at documents and compare the estimates of the different States, and- this is not a fit and proper body to do that. It has been, done in a slipshod,, careless manner; and I urge the committee to pause before committing itself to this proposal. I have some figures which show that the female public servants of Tasmania are3 not badly paid. I find that in New South Wales the females paid by regulation are employed only on the telephone switch,, and they receive from £26 to £60 per annum. There is no distinction between males and females in the New South Wales service, except in relation to the ladies employed on. the telephone switch board. The salaries of postmistresses, female assistants, and. 'postmasters run. there from £39 per annum, to £260- per. annum. In Victoria, the minimum wage paid to females in the service is about £40 per annum, while the maximum is £150 per annum. In Queensland, the salary paid to women in the service runs from £13 to £65 per annum for permanent officials. These figures are supplied in response to a return which I moved for, and which the Senate ordered. Non-official postmistresses in Queensland receive from £50 per annum to £150 per annum. Mr. Scott,, of the Postal department, explains that when a postmaster dies,, leaving a wife or daughter who is competent to fulfil the duties formerly discharged by him, she obtains the position, and that such ladies are known as non-official postmistresses. In South Australia, the minimum wage paid to females in the service is £26. per annum, while the maximum is £210 per annum. In the Western Australian service, they receive from £20 per annum to- £1'50 per annum. In Tasmania),,, so far as I know, clerks, both male- and female, enter the service at salaries ranging from £40- to £50 per annum, and in our telephone exchange the ladies receive £80, £90, £.100, and £110 a year. Therefore,, the females in the Tasmanian civil service are not the worst paid in the States. There is one woman in the service there who receives £110 a year on account of .her long service. I sympathize with the women who have been in the Victorian service twelve, thirteen, and as long as- 25 years,, and who are receiving. only £84 a year; Tasmania treats her female servants with far more generosity. I contend that if we place females on a par with men, without any limit to their employment, and allow their salaries- to go on-increasing, great financial trouble- will ensue. No one has answered my argument that a man has increased responsibilities. He enters the ser-vice intending to make it his life's- work, but if a woman who enters the service receives an offer of marriage she probably accepts it and leaves. Do honorable senators mean to say that no distinction ought to be made between persons- who make the service a mere stepping-stone- - and' rightly so - and leave it when opportunity offers, and a man who begins at the lowest rung of the service and devotes his life to it? Suppose a young man and a young woman enter the service and receive £110 per annum on reaching 21 years- of age. By the -time- that he reaches 25 a young, man will be beginning to think of- matrimony, and if he has saved £3.0 a year he will have £150 in the bank. If the. young "man could save £3.0- a year the young woman could save £60. But let us assume that she saves £30 a. year, and has also £150 to her credit in the bank on reaching 25. The

young man gets married, and has £150 with which to furnish his house and begin life. The young woman has £150 to put in her pocket, because her husband furnishes the house, and has all the financial responsibility. Is that fair? It is not just to pay as much to a woman as to a man, because a woman has not a man's responsibility. A man's pleasures are more expensive. His clothing is more expensive.

Senator Higgs

- No.

Senator DOBSON

- I know plenty of young ladies who make all their own garments, and I should like to see Senator Higgs making a pair of trousers for himself. To my mind this is no joking matter. I desire to do justice to both men and women in the civil service and to the taxpayers. We do not do a woman justice by persuading ourselves that she stands on the same level with a man in employment of this character. I do not know whether Senator Clemons intends to move that the clause be postponed, in the event of the Postmaster-General declining to grant a postponement, but if he does, I shall have pleasure in voting with him.

Senator KEATING

- I quite agree with Senator Dobson that when any question involving the payment of wages comes before the Senate there are certain honorable senators who seem to lose their heads at once. In the very forefront of these is the honorable senator himself. Ordinarily, in addressing himself to any subject of this character, he succeeds, if he speaks long enough, in answering himself. On this occasion, however, he does not seem to have come up to expectations in that regard. I would ask the Postmaster-General not to be misguided by Senator Dobson, and not to postpone the decision upon the matter that is now before the committee. If we are going to listen to entreaties of the kind - entreaties such as we have had in other committees during the last three or four weeks - the Senate is going to be accursed with absenteeism. I stand here to-night as one who is prepared to support this clause as it comes from another place, but I am not going to vote for it, for the simple reason that I have paired with one of those absentees in whose interests Senator Dobson has spoken so eloquently.

Senator Clemons

- That is inaccurate.

Senator KEATING

- What I have said is perfectly accurate. I have paired with an honorable senator who has left the committee for his own convenience and not for mine. I am ready to vote. If there are honorable senators who choose to absent themselves when these matters have to be determined, they should be bound by the decision arrived at by those who remain. If they take the precaution to pair before leaving well and good.

The CHAIRMAN

- I will ask the honorable and learned senator to confine his remarks to the amendment.

Senator KEATING

- I am addressing myself to the arguments used by Senator Dobson when he requested the Postmaster-General to defer the consideration of this clause until we had a larger committee. If that is to be acquiesced in, then we are going to have the principle of absenteeism dominating our proceedings altogether. All legislation could be blocked in that way. If I absent myself, and do not take the precaution to pair before leaving the Chamber, I take the consequences. I should like to point out that the remarks which Senator Dobson has addressed to the committee in relation to female employees in the public service of Tasmania do not meet the contention that has been put forward by Senator Smith. Senator Smith has made reference to the comparative salaries received by employees generally in the transferred departments. He has not made particular reference to salaries received by female employees. In Tasmania there are comparatively few females employed in any of the transferred departments. Therefore, the comparison instituted by Senator Dobson is to a great extent misleading when we come to consider a clause of this general character. This clause provides that any one who has been in the general division for three years, whether male or female, shall be entitled to receive a salary of £110 per annum provided he or she shall have attained the age of 21 years. After officers have been that time in the service, I think, with another honorable senator who has spoken already, that it will be the duty of the commissioner to see that they are capable of doing the work requisite to earn such a salary, and if not to dispense with

their services. The argument as to the position of the two sexes in the service, which has been addressed to the committee by Senator Dobson, is one that we should not consider. He has told us that a female who enters the service may not remain in it ; that if she receives an advantageous offer of marriage, she will be ready to take it, and that if any male enters the service, he enters for life.

Senator Fraser. - That is correct.

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Senator KEATING

- Let us look at the service in New South Wales and see how many men there are who entered it, not to remain, but to use it as a stepping-stone to one of the professions, or to one of the callings incidental to public life.

Senator Fraser

- A very small percentage.

Senator KEATING

- There are many instances of it. The general principle that a man enters the service, and becomes wedded to it, is one that we cannot acquiesce in when we come to look at what has been the experience of the service in the different States.

Senator Playford

- In the vast majority of cases it is true.

Senator KEATING

- Will the honorable senator say that in the vast majority of cases ladies who have entered the service have seized the first opportunity of marriage presented to them. He cannot say so.

Senator Pearce

- Some females have been in the "Victorian service for 20 years.

Senator KEATING

- Some of them have been there for more years even than that. If honorable senators will only take an opportunity of personally observing the work these females are doing they will come to the conclusion that the real test as to the salaries which are to be paid is not what are the prospects or the intentions of those doing the work, but the value of the work they perform. If the work is of the value of £2 per week, then whether it is done by a male or a female, £2 per week should be paid for it. That is the principle upon which I am prepared to support the clause as it comes to us from the other House.

Senator FRASER

- When the Commonwealth Bill was put before the people, it was said that we were going to make enormous savings. So far as I can see we are going to make enormous losses. By our action yesterday we shall lose £45,000 ; now we are going to increase our expenditure by £50,000 a year. What will the people say 1

Senator Stewart

- We shall be ruined.

Senator FRASER

- The labour party will not be ruined, but they will ruin those who work harder than they do.

Senator Stewart

- Who are they 1

Senator FRASER

- The primary producers. In- a thin committee we are now asked, without any justification whatever, to increase the Commonwealth expenditure enormously. Women are largely employed in the United States of America, but does any one contend that they receive salaries equal to those paid to male employees '?

Senator Staniforth Smith

- In many cases they do.

Senator FRASER

- I assert that they do not. Women are not paid as much as the men receive either there or in any other part of the world. There may be some exceptional cases in which women are receiving very high salaries, but I am speaking generally. Women are largely employed in the Education department of the United States, and also in Germany, but they do not receive the salaries paid to males. The nations could not afford to pay them, and that will be the case here. Instead of making large savings as the result of the

federal union, we are making a huge loss. Who will have to bear the cost? There will have to be a black Wednesday some day to reduce the cost by some rule of thumb which may be very unfair. It is not right to the Commonwealth that we should make a huge departure from what has been the universal practice in the States. If the salary fixed under the old arrangement should be found to be too low, the law can be amended two years hence. I hope that the amendment of Senator Drake, or, failing that, some other such amendment will be accepted. Otherwise I am willing to support the postponement of the clause until there is a full committee.

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Senator BARRETT

- I think the committee is getting a little weary of the argument which has been advanced for the postponement of the clause. I hope that Senator Drake will now make up his mind that not only shall we arrive at finality in regard to this clause, but that we shall pass the Bill before we rise. I am prepared to sit all to-night and all tomorrow, and, if necessary, next week, in order to get on with the business of the country which we are paid to do. Senator Dobson has told us that we are swallowing the Bill wholesale. He has been considering it pretty fairly all the afternoon, and when he is out of the chair he will take very good care that we do not swallow any clauses without due discussion. It has been clearly demonstrated that women who do work equal to men's should receive men's pay. In Victoria we had these anomalies and we appointed an Anomalies Board. It declared that as clerks women did the work equally as well as men, and recommended that they should be paid £110 per year. It was urged by Senator Dobson that female officers in our service should not receive the same treatment as men, because they get married ; but he answered his own argument when he said that there were some female officers with a tenure extending from ten to 23 years. Surely the work of a female officer of ten, fifteen, or 23 years' standing cannot be estimated at the same value as that of one of three, four, or five years' standing? On the ground of justice some consideration should be given to the former. Again, we are told that women have not the same responsibilities as men. Many women in the service of the Commonwealth and of the States have responsibilities equal to those of any men. In some instances they have to take the place of a father or mother in relation to young brothers and sisters. I trust that the clause will be agreed to.

Senator DRAKE

- I was asked if I would consent to split my amendment with the view of having the first portion tested before we considered the second. I notice that nearly all the speeches have been directed to the latter, which I propose to temporarily withdraw. I am only asking the committee to make the clause correspond with the clause it passed this afternoon. In regard to the clerical division, sub-clause (6) of clause 21 prescribes that this minimum salary shall be paid to an officer who has been three years in the service and one year in the division, and who has passed the prescribed examination. This clause, which was passed in the House of Representatives I think somewhat hastily, appears to be intended to introduce a corresponding provision with regard to officers of the general division, but it has no provision for an examination - I think through accident ; because clause 28 provides for a prescribed examination with regard to the general division, and says what it shall be. Why should the committee object to a provision that, before the minimum salary is paid in the general division, the officer shall pass a prescribed examination ? Surely it is very reasonable to require that the officer, by a prescribed examination, shall show that he is capable of performing the duties of his office. On clause 21 an amendment was moved by, I think, Senator DeLargie, and there was a general agreement that it was right that there should be an examination in order to insure that the person was fit for the post. When I ask that a similar provision shall be placed in this clause I cannot say that it has been objected to, but senator after senator gets up and talks about something else. I hope that the committee will address itself to my amendment as it stands, and that it will not by being too exacting run the risk of the Bill being lost. Honorable senators must see, if they compare the two clauses, that it must have been through an inadvertence that this clause passed through another place without a similar safeguard being inserted.

Senator Glassey

- Surely the Minister does not want persons who have been in the general division a number of years, and who are acting as labourers, to undergo an examination?

Senator DRAKE

- That is not the question. The committee decided that it was a good provision to have in clause 21, and



clause 28 expressly provides for an examination for officers in the general division. It says : - Separate entrance examinations shall be held in connexion with the professional and clerical and general divisions respectively, and shall be designed to test the efficiency and aptitude of candidates for employment in such several divisions ; but the educational examination for the general division shall be of an elementary or rudimentary character.

Senator Glassey

- That is as to persons going into the service, and not as to persons who are in the service.

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Senator DRAKE

- The regulations also provide for an examination. In the regulations which provide for an examination for officers in the clerical division, we can provide for an examination of officers in the general division. No reason can be shown why a corresponding provision should not be put in this clause. What I ask the committee to do is really to cure the result of what was perhaps rather hasty action on the part of another place.

Senator MCGREGOR(South Australia). - I am rather surprised at the way in which the Postmaster-General is beating about the bush to-night. He seems to get behind every shelter he possibly can find, and then when he is walloped from his place, he immediately gets behind something else. At first he was quite satisfied that the original amendment would be carried, and now, when he feels that there is a disposition not to accept it, he moves an amendment which will have the effect of delaying or making the clause obnoxious. What is this done for ? Did he not know when he was reading clause 28 that it applied to persons entering the service, and that in the case of a line repairer, the examination was only to be of an elementary character. Does he not also know that when we were discussing clause 21, every honorable senator who was then supporting him knew that an examination was necessary in the clerical division, because in that division, and the professional division there is a possibility for each officer to attain to the highest position. There is scarcely a possibility of such promotion happening to men who join the service to work as line repairers, or to do general labouring work. Senator Drake knows all this.

Senator Drake

- But there is an examination of quite a different character.

Senator MCGREGOR

- Certainly, and that is when they are going into the service, just to prove that they are not idiots. I believe that if the Minister finds that he is not to have his own way he will accept the suggestion to postpone the clause. I hope that it will not be done. When he finds us in a mood to assist him to carry his Bill, why does he not push on as he usually does, and take the risk?

Senator Stewart

- He does not want it passed.

Senator MCGREGOR

- No, and we are to be kept here doing nothing but listening to people " stone-walling. " We are here for the purpose of supporting the Government and doing what we possibly can to pass legislation which will be in the interests of the whole community.

Senator PLAYFORD(South Australia). There is a very important side to this question which honorable senators are very fond of forgetting, and that is the economical side. It is all very well to have a general discussion as to whether women are able to do men's work and whether they should be paid at the same rate as men. The question for the committee to consider is that this amendment will entail an expenditure of £50,000 at once. Last night we agreed to a reduction in telegraph rates which involves a loss of £45,000 a year. It is not the Commonwealth but the States that will suffer the loss of this £100,000 a year.

Senator McGregor

- Did not every advocate of federation say that the civil service was going to be a paradise?

Senator PLAYFORD

- I do not know why we should make the civil service a paradise and neglect people outside, who certainly are not living in a paradise, and the great majority of whom never get £110 a year. If the honorable senator will only go amongst the primary producers who keep all the manufacturers going, and average their wages, he will find that they do not get anything like £110 a year. Why should we single out civil servants, who, as a rule, are performing very simple work - work that is so run after that thousands would

be only too glad to take the positions at the lower salaries now paid ? We should pause, and wait for a year or two, before we increase the burdens, not on the Commonwealth, which will be provided with plenty of money to pay for any extravagance it likes to incur, but on the individual States. Before the Postal and Customs departments were taken over by the Commonwealth the different States made great increases in the salaries of the officers. It was done in Victoria and South Australia, because it was urged that the Commonwealth would have to pay the money. In South Australia there was a readjustment of the wages, and a great increase in salaries was made right throughout the service,, especially amongst the poorest paid officers. Now we are asked suddenly to increase the cost of these two services by £50,000 a year. I ask honorable senators to pause and consider whether, under the circumstances, we are justified in sanctioning that increase without much consideration. In every part of the Commonwealth the labour party are exceedingly anxious to vote for increased expenditure, practically in all directions.

Senator McGregor

- Certainly not.

Senator PLAYFORD

- If the records are examined it will be found that the labour members always go for expenditure on public works.

Senator Pearce

- Who supported the honorable senator in his motion for economy when a Supply Bill was before the Senate ? He had only the labour members with him.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- I do not recollect that I proposed any special economy. If I did I am very thankful for the support of the labour members. In South Australia there is a general tendency in that direction, and from my knowledge of what takes place in the other States, labour members are very fond of voting money for expenditure.

Senator DAWSON

- We want to lop off the top and put it on to&gt; the bottom.

Senator PLAYFORD

- I am not speaking of salaries, but of expenditure for public works. Whether the expenditure is WISE IE another matter. As a rule the labour party go for increased salaries in the lower grades, which is quite right, but so far as ordinary expenditure on public works is concerned, to my mind, they do- not show that due regard for consequences which they ought to- do.

Senator McGregor

- Have we not done everything we could to curtail borrowing 1

Senator PLAYFORD

- I know that we have the Barossa waterworks, which will never pay, and the construction of which was supported by the labour party.

Senator McGregor

- They were for the farmers.

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Senator PLAYFORD

- That does not matter. Another question has been brought into the discussion as to whether females are able to do the same work as males. God Almighty has constituted the female differently from the male, and she cannot in any walk of life do the work which the male can do. Females have not the physical strength, and, as a rule, have not the strength of mind to enable them to do work as well as males. Throughout the world female labour has always been paid at a lower rate than male labour, simply because male labour is worth more. Senator Smith told us that female are as good as male telegraph operators. I have it upon the authority of a gentleman who has had, I expect, the largest experience of any man in the States with regard to telegraphic matters, that female operators are decidedly not as good as males ; that while some of them are first-class operators, they cannot compare with first-class operators amongst the males. He has stated that they are not -so quick nor so reliable, and I believe that what Senator Drake has said upon this point is absolutely correct. We know that men are given to flattering women, and honorable senators will recollect what Tacitus said about the Germans, when they first became known to the Romans. He said they had three qualities - they were frightful drunkards and

terrible gamblers, but they paid the greatest possible respect to their women. We, as descendants of those old Teutons, have the vices mentioned, and I think we also pay the greatest respect to our women. It is, however, a great mistake for any one to argue that female labour is equal to male labour. It is not equal to male labour, even in avocations in which we might expect female labour to be better than male labour. The persons who design the different fashions in dress throughout the length and breadth of the civilized world are not females, but males. Although the majority of young girls and comparatively few lads are taught music, the greatest performers upon the piano are males. Then if we want a good cook, and surely a woman might be expected to bear off the palm there, we go to men, and undoubtedly the chefs are males. So in every walk of life the male outdistances the female. Personally, I believe that where women perform the same duties as men they should be equally paid, but I believe they cannot perform the duties as well as men. It is a very great mistake at the present time to so seriously increase the cost of the Post and Telegraph department, and throw such a large burden upon the various States. We are not justified in doing it. Within the last year or so civil servants have been given increases of salaries all round in the different States, and we should wait for another year or two before we commence to give general increases. If we wait, and this commissioner does what the Government fondly hope he will do, and makes a proper classification of the service, he will be able to give the Government and Parliament valuable information, and we shall then be in a position to organize the salaries on the basis of his report. It is now proposed to deal with the matter in a haphazard way - to say that an officer, who has been three years in the service and is 21 years of age, whether male or female, shall receive a salary of not less than £110 per year. That salary in numbers of cases may be too much or too little, and we require to have the service properly classified and reported upon before we shall be enabled intelligently to recommend what the salaries shall be.

Senator CLEMONS (Tasmania). - The more I look at this clause, the more certain I feel that we should have time to consider it. I question if there are half-a-dozen members of the committee who know what the amendment is. I am convinced that the Government themselves recognise the very great difficulty connected with the clause, and it is obvious that they do not like it. I know of no reason whatever why we should conclude that because a lad has been three years in the service, and is then 21 years of age, he is worth £110 a year. I am inclined to think that a person is worth £110 a year if he is able to do a certain amount of work.

Senator McGregor

- He is worth that or nothing.

Senator CLEMONS

- As to his being worth that or nothing, I point out that if this proposal is accepted, the commissioner or heads of the service will be induced to say to many young men just reaching the age of 21 years, that they are not worth £110, and had better go. That may be a distinct hardship and injustice to many a young lad, who may be willing to work in the service for £90 a year. If he is willing to work, why should he be dismissed? There is no classification of work provided for here. It is merely a rigid rule of three years in the service, and 21 years of age. It does not matter what work the officer is doing, he is to get £110 a year. I do not object to the salary of £110. I think it is quite small enough, but with regard to that point I remind honorable senators that there is no provision in the Bill for fixing the "wages of the general division. There is no schedule in their case, as in the clerical division.

Senator McGregor

- Only the minimum is £110.

Senator CLEMONS

- I do not object to that. What I object to is that the sole qualification for the salary should be that the officer is 21 years of age and has been three years in the service. I may say that in the State of Tasmania there are men who have been in the service for fifteen years, and are 35 years of age, while they are now getting no more than £150 a year. I am concerned in this Bill to remedy those evils, and not to make an arbitrary law giving a lad 21 years of age £110 a year, whether he is worth it or not. There is only one alternative. He must get £110 a year, or be dismissed. The amendment moved by the Postmaster General does not satisfy me. We are considering manual labour to a large extent, and I see no reason why we should ask a capable manual labourer to pass an examination, unless it should be a physical examination. There might be some sense in that. The amendment provides that the officer shall be

capable of doing the work "of an office to which a salary of that amount is attached." What does that mean ? An "office" suggests something in the clerical division, and entirely outside the scope of the general division. I do not know what is intended, unless it is something which will prevent a man getting £110 a year. This amendment has been sprung upon us to-night, and seeing that this is a most important clause, we should have a further opportunity of considering it. Therefore, I am going to urge the Postmaster-General to postpone this clause - not because there is only a small committee, for - I feel that that is not a very good reason - but because this is perhaps the most important clause in the Bill, and should receive proper consideration.

Senator O'KEEFE

- In reference to the last proposition made by Senator Clemons, I must repeat that no good reasons have been given for the postponement of this clause. I would ask Senator Clemons whether the attendance to-night is not above the average 1

Senator Dobson

- Five honorable senators from New South Wales are absent.

Senator O'KEEFE

- There are five present from Tasmania, and I am one of them. I have been coming here day after day for seven months or more in order to transact the business of the country, and I am not responsible for the vagaries of those who have absented themselves. I do not know that we have had a better average attendance at any time than we have tonight. I approve of this clause for several reasons. In the first place I believe that a minimum wage of £110 per annum is small enough. I believe also - and this argument has been advanced partly by Senator Clemons - that if the clause passes as it stands, it will be effective. I do not consider that any examination is really necessary. The question of the employment of females is not actually associated with this amendment, but I cannot help expressing the opinion that if females do the same work as men they are entitled to the same salary.

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Senator DRAKE

- I do not lay much stress upon the attendance this evening, because I think it is a fairly average one. But usually when a postponement has been asked for, it has been granted, if desired for the purpose of enabling a matter to be further considered. In matters of this kind, I have always endeavoured to consult the feelings of the Senate. If there is a desire that the clause should be postponed for further discussion, I think it should be assented to. It is not an unreasonable request, because we may go on with the remaining clauses in the Bill. I am satisfied that my amendment in regard to the examination has not been discussed upon its merits. If we are going to fix a minimum of £110 for both divisions, and make the conditions in regard to age and term of service the same in each case, it seems to me that it is only reasonable that we should have something like the same test as to fitness in the one case as in the other ; and we have provided already, by passing clause 21, that there shall be an examination in the clerical division. Senator Pearce seems to think that the examination for the general division will be the same as in the clerical division. The clause that deals with the entrance examination, in each case lays down clearly that the examination for the clerical division is to be distinctly different from that of the general division.

Senator O'Keefe

- Would not the entrance examination suffice?

Senator DRAKE

- The same rule would apply. Why should not a man in the general division who becomes qualified to receive this salary by reason of his age and length of service, pass an examination showing his fitness for the class of work he is engaged in, just as a clerical officer is required to do? The amendment I have proposed is so eminently reasonable that honorable senators who oppose it can hardly have given it serious consideration. They must see that it does not strike at the principle in this clause. If it does, then the principle embodied in clause 21 is equally injured by the provision there.

Senator Pearce

- The Government provided for the test in the first instance, but withdrew it.

Senator DRAKE

- Senator Pearce refers to clause 25. It was a great mistake to do that. I do not know the circumstances

under which the provision was withdrawn, but I know that the clause was passed hastily in another place, and probably that provision was passed with equal haste. After the most careful consideration, and after obtaining statistics on the subject, I think it is perfectly clear that there should be a provision in clause 25 similar to that in clause 21. The committee should consider that point.

Senator CHARLESTON

- The Postmaster-General in saying that he is willing to allow the clause to be postponed must certainly consider that the attendance to-night is not as large as it should be when the committee has to deal with a clause of this kind. He can have no other reason, because we have been dealing with this amendment for the last three or four hours, and if a vote were taken at once, every honorable senator would know what he was voting for. What can we gain by postponing the matter? I fail to see why we should postpone it. Every honorable senator has made up his mind that no purpose can be served by providing for an educational, or some other test, to be passed by officers already in the general division. After a man has entered the clerical division, he is required to pass a test to show that he is qualified to be raised from one position to another. The general division, however, includes labouring men, whose work requires no high intellectual standard. The Postmaster-General asks what difference is there between a man who is twenty years eleven months and 29 days old, and one who is 21 years old. There is very little difference. But there is a fixed rule that a youth enters upon manhood on reaching the age of 21, and when he has served three years' apprenticeship in a department, and is 21 years of age, we think he should be worth 7s. a day. If he is not then we presume that the highly paid inspectors who are to be appointed will discover that fact and see that his services are dispensed with. The question of economy has been raised. What was the position taken up by the Postmaster-General in regard to the appointment of a commissioner at £1,500 a year, and six inspectors at £800 a year? Did he not say that we should be justified in paying those high salaries, because the men would render services worth them? Certainly he did; and in the same way we assert that the manual labourer will give the equivalent of 7s. per day.

Senator Drake

- But there is only one commissioner, while there will be several thousand officers entitled to receive this salary.

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Senator CHARLESTON

- And every man will give value for what he receives.

If he does not, that fact will be discovered and the man will be dismissed.

Senator DRAKE

- I notice that those honorable senators who have addressed themselves to the amendment, have laid great stress upon the words "prescribed examination." They have represented that those words mean that an officer who is engaged in manual labour will be called upon to pass some examination which differs entirely from the work he has been accustomed to do. That is not the intention. The intention is that a man shall give some proof of his fitness for the work in which he is engaged.

Senator Charleston

- The foreman would see to that.

Senator DRAKE

- I am not quite sure of the form which I should use, but I am willing to amend my amendment in such a way as to make it read something like this -

If he obtains a certificate from his superior officer that he is capable of doing the work of the office to which a salary of that amount is attached.

If it is the desire of the committee I shall have no objection to reporting progress now, and endeavour to have the clause re-drafted in a way that will carry out the proposal I have indicated. That would make it perfectly clear that a man in the general division will not be required to pass an examination in the ordinary sense, but will simply have to obtain a certificate from the officer under whom he is working.

Senator STEWART

- It appears to me that the Postmaster-General in this exhibition of hedging to which we have been treated, has practically taken up the position that he is opposed to his own Bill. It seems to me that the Government wish to go back upon the special provision with which we are now dealing, but have not the courage to do so openly and honestly. The Postmaster-General seizes upon every pretext for delay. If an

honorable senator who is opposed to the clause suggests that it should be postponed, he falls in with the idea immediately. I fail to see why we should not come to a decision now in view of the fact that we have discussed the matter fully. If there is not a full attendance it is not our fault. Honorable senators have been returned to do the work of the country. They are paid to be here, and if any of them do not attend they should be prepared to take the consequences.

I would not delay any measure a single moment in order to serve absentees. Those who are absent, ought to be prepared to accept what is done by those who remain to do the business of the country. The Postmaster General has been requested half-a-dozen times to state what he means by the examination referred to in his amendment, but apparently he does not know himself. It seems to me that it is something like a herring drawn across the trail. It is a stumbling block in the way of the clause passing as it stands. To what examination would the Minister submit a man who has been in the service for three years? It should be possible, for instance, for the authorities to decide within one month after the appointment of a letter-carrier, whether he is a suitable man for the work.

Senator Clemons

- But there is an examination in the clerical division.

Senator STEWART

- A man who enters the clerical division may reach the highest position in the postal service, but a man in the general division is a mere manual labourer. He may be a letter-carrier, a sorter, a stamper, or a line-man, and his value to the department does not depend upon his education.

Senator Clemons

- Should he not reach some standard of efficiency?

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Senator STEWART

- Certainly. If the Postmaster-General would give us some faint idea of the kind of examination he wants a man to pass I should not object so strongly. To what examination would he submit a letter-carrier? Would he fix a particular time for a certain round? There are some sorters who are much quicker than others. There are some men who are excellent stampers, while there are others who are not so efficient. It should be an easy matter to determine the question of a line-man's competency. Honorable senators believe that the Postmaster-General's amendment implies that these men will be submitted to an educational test because the Postmaster-General has alluded so often to clause 28, which refers in pointed language to an educational examination. The clause clearly contemplates two examinations - one as to general efficiency and aptitude, and the other as to education. The fact that a man has been in the service for three years ought to be sufficient proof that he performs his duties to the satisfaction of the department. The committee has been debating all the afternoon the minimum wage which is fixed in this Bill. Some honorable senators have twitted us in the labour corner with an undue desire to increase wages, and I am sorry I cannot return the compliment. They seem to think that a salary of £110 a year, or a little over £2 a week, is far too much for the requirements of any ordinary working man! I can quite understand the shock it is likely to give to the feelings of some honorable senators who are large employers of labour. All sorts of evil things are prophesied to the Commonwealth, and it is stated that we are heaping burden after burden on its back. Will honorable senators tell us that this new country, of such magnificent resources, as we are often told, is not able to pay a living wage to its employees? If they make that admission they libel the Commonwealth. I believe it is able to pay a living wage to any man or woman who does work for it, and I shall always do my utmost here to see that it does. Senators Dobson and Fraser have been inveighing against a salary of £110 a year. How would they like to live and bring up a family on £110 a year? It would not provide them with pocket money for occasional drinks and cigars. Yet they expect men who work hard to live upon this miserable pittance, and keep six, eight, or perhaps a dozen children. Senator Dobson appeared to be'grieved at the idea of paying any man such a high salary. He said that boys in his employment were such shocking writers that after six months' experience they could not address an envelope. Will he submit his handwriting to the committee so that we may decide what it is worth? All the heat in this debate has been caused by the objection of the Government to fix a minimum wage in the Bill.

Senator Drake

- No, we are not objecting to that at all:

Senator STEWART

- The honorable and learned senator has given me the impression that he wishes to see the clause knocked out.

Senator Drake

- No, I wish to preserve it.

Senator STEWART

- I am very glad to hear that statement, and if Senator Drake would indicate clearly the kind of examination he desires to submit employees to, I do not know that he would meet with very much resistance on that point, at least not from me. I am anxious that men should be paid fairly well for their work. I have no desire that the Commonwealth should be burdened with a number of inefficient servants. Believing as I do in the Government management of various affairs, I also believe in economy, but I think the best economy is to pay our employees fairly well, so that they may be able to live decent and comfortable lives. We have heard some remarks about young fellows of 21 getting a salary of £110 per annum. When I was 21 my appetite was a good deal better than it is now. It cost more to keep me in food and clothing then than it does now; and I wanted some pleasure too. Some honorable senators have talked of pleasure. Young men need more pleasure than do men who are getting up in years. A young man of 21, if he is worth anything, is of more service in the Postal department as a letter-carrier, a stamper, a sorter, a lineman, or in any manual occupation than he is in almost any other department, and, therefore, he ought to be paid a decent salary. I hope the Postmaster-General will stick to his Bill, and, if he does, I believe he will get it through.

Senator DRAKE

- I only rise to correct the misapprehension on the part of Senator Stewart when he spoke of my wishing the clause to be struck out. I do not desire anything of the kind. I supported clause 21 as it stood because I considered it a very liberal clause, and I have no objection to giving a corresponding minimum wage in the general division. All I am asking for now by my amendment is that there shall be an examination. I have called it a "prescribed examination," but I have explained over and over again that the examination I have in view is not at all similar to that which is required in the case of officers of the clerical division. I have endeavoured continually to cure that impression, but I think some proof of the fitness of officers' should be given before they receive a salary of £110 per annum.

Senator Glassey

- The very fact of an officer having been there three years is some proof that he earns his money.

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Senator DRAKE

- I do not think that mere service of three years is a proof that he is capable of performing his duties. If we raise the salary suddenly from £60 to £110 we have a right, as nearly every honorable senator has admitted, to get good service, but they say you must either get good service for that money or dispense with the man. If we are not to have any test, how are we to know that he is capable of doing good work? I am quite willing, as I said before, to strike out the words "prescribed examination" if they are a stumbling block, and to substitute other words which will have this effect, that before the officer receives a salary of £110 he must have given some proof of his fitness for the work in which he is engaged. I do not know exactly what the words would be, because it depends upon the class of work he is performing. Probably if he were an assistant line repairer he would get a certificate of fitness from the line repairer under whom he is working; or if he were a letter sorter he would get a certificate of fitness from the person who is immediately above him in office. He should give some proof of his fitness for the particular work he is doing.

Senator DAWSON

- That is covered by clause 28.

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Senator DRAKE

- Not at all. Unless we put in clause 25 words such as I propose, a man will receive £110 simply because he is 21 years of age, and has been three years in the service without having given any proof of fitness for his work. As Senator Glassey has said, the sole proof will be that he has been there for three years. That is not sufficient proof. If the committee is willing, I will ask the Chairman to report progress, and

undertake to bring down a clause to-morrow in order to carry out the idea I have expressed.

Motion (by Senator Dawson) proposed -

That the committee do now divide.

Question put. The committee divided.

10

AYES

12

NOES

Majority ... .. 1

Majority ... .. 2

AYES

NOES

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Question - That the words proposed to be added be so added - put. The committee divided -

Question so resolved in the negative.

Senator CLEMONS(Tasmania).- Unless the Postmaster-General thinks this is a desirable time to adjourn, in which view I should concur, I intend to move an amendment. In spite of the divisions I am still of opinion that any officer in the general division should not be paid a salary of £110, although he is 21 years of age, and has been three years in the service, unless he comes up to some standard of efficiency. I have no objection to give any man who is worth it a salary of £110, and, of course, I recognise that many men will be worth at least that sum. My objection is not to the amount, but to the sole criterion of the value of a man's services being two facts - that he is 21 years of age, and that he has been three years in the service. I therefore move -

That the following words be added to the clause - " provided that such officer has been certified to by the commissioner as being worth that salary."

I think the committee can see what the object of my amendment is. It is not moved in order to delay matters, but because it seems to me that it ought to be unanswerable. I can quite understand certain honorable senators objecting to any standard or any examination whatever. I concur with them in objecting to an educational examination for any public servant in the general division, but I do not agree that it is not necessary that a public servant in that division should attain any particular standard of efficiency, and that it is only necessary that he should be 21 years of age, and should have been in the service three years to insure to him the payment of a salary of £110 a year. I intend to be quite frank about the proposal which has been made. It is an attempt of course to enforce the minimum wage principle. I may add that it is an attempt also to oust from the public service every poor wretch who cannot come up to a certain standard of efficiency, even although we do not put that in the clause, because we know it is quite within the scope of the powers of the commissioners to dismiss from the service any man who has reached the age of 21 years, and is not, in his opinion, able to do work which is worth £110 a year.

Senator Styles

- Quite right, too !

Senator CLEMONS

- I hold that it is not quite right. I cannot see why we should impose such a hardship upon a mere youth of 21 years who may not have developed all his powers even to do manual labour. I probably know more of the subject of physical culture than honorable senators in the labour corner, and if a man at 21 years of age has not reached the full development of his physical powers, we are going to allow the commissioner to say to him, " In my opinion I can get a better man, and you will have to go." Honorable senators will not carry this minimum wage proposition so long as I can prevent it. I have moved my amendment in order that there shall be some other reason for fixing a public servant's wage at £110 a year than that he is 21 years of age, and has been three years in the service. If this clause is allowed to remain in the Bill as it is, we shall be doing a distinct injustice by paying some men much more than they ought to be paid in comparison with others. There is not the slightest doubt that if every man in the general division who is 21 years of age, and has been three years in the service, is to get £110 a year, many civil servants will be treated with great partiality in comparison with others in this or some other division. As I have mentioned



before, there is no schedule of wages for this division, and the most that is done is to say that officers of the division shall not get less than £110, and we do not differentiate.

Senator Pearce

- The clause we have passed makes provision for that.

Senator CLEMONS

- It makes no provision with regard to the wages to be paid to officers of the general division. It simply leaves it to the commissioner, acting upon the advice of his inspectors, to give certain men certain salaries. But in respect of this wage of £110 we are taking it out of the hands of the commissioner and his inspectors.

Senator McGregor

- We are only saying what he may not go below.

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Senator CLEMONS

- It is not the minimum wage I object to but the minimum age. I object to the minimum wage in this instance, because it is based upon the two considerations that the officer must be 21 years of age, and have been three years in the service. If honorable senators are honest in the profession of their intention to secure good wages for men, they would see no objection to making the age 25 years and the term of service five years. But if I moved such an amendment they would not support me. I doubt their bona fides, and I would not expect support from them. If this amendment fails, I shall move another amendment in the same direction which will, I hope, secure that there shall be some standard of efficiency. I appeal to the sense of fairness of honorable senators. We have already passed clause 21 dealing with the clerical division, and in that case we have made it a condition that the officer shall pass a prescribed examination. It is obvious, in the case of the clerical division, that by an examination we can be sure that the officer has attained a certain standard of efficiency. In the case of the general division there is no standard of efficiency required, and as between the two classes it seems to me to be a gross injustice. I cannot see why we should make a civil servant in the clerical division pass an examination before he can secure this minimum wage, while in the case of the general division we do not provide that the officers shall comply with any standard of efficiency.

Senator CHARLESTON(South Australia). - What good does the honorable and learned senator hope to gain by moving an amendment of this sort? Men in this general division are under the scrutiny of officers in charge all the time.

If a letter-carrier, for instance, is slow in his work, the man in charge will know of it, and will dispense with his services. So with line repairers - if an assistant proves to be incompetent, the man in charge will report him as such, and he will have no possible chance of reaching even the minimum wage of 7s. per day. We are dealing with a class of men here who cannot be treated in the same way as the officers of the clerical division. An engine-fitter goes into a shop and receives 10s. per day, which is supposed to be the minimum wage for that employment, but many men have ability which justifies the payment of higher wages, and the employer recognising such ability in a workman gives him an extra 1s. or 2s. per day. He is able to do that without putting the man through any test, because he has knowledge from observation of the man's ability to earn the increased salary. In the same way in connection with this general division, no man will be recommended for £110 a year unless those in charge of him are satisfied that he is worth that salary. We say that that is a low enough salary to enable a man working for the Government to maintain himself and his family. On the question of raising the age from 24 to 25 years, as Senator Clemons would have it, we know very well that some are better men at 21 years of age than others are at 25 years of age. We have to judge men by their capability to do certain work. If we had a lad of 18 years of age entering this division, and serving in it for three years, the man in charge of him will be able to report to the commissioner whether he is worth the minimum wage or not. If he is worth it why should he not receive it? If he is not worth it, he must sink to a lower level and get out of the service. We do not here propose to compel private employers to pay men 7s. per day, whether they are worth it or not, but we say that we demand from the men we employ services which are worth 7s. per day. There is nothing in this proposal to be alarmed about, and I wonder that the Postmaster-General should be so frightened of this clause. We have a commissioner and inspectors, and managers, who will be brought into contact with the officers in the general divisions of the service, and if they are satisfied that men are worth 7s. a day they

will get the salary proposed. We are told that the service is overmanned, but that is simply because we are not paying wages which entitle us to get the very best men. If we pay low wages, and work men for long hours, we cannot drive them to the same extent as if we gave them higher wages and shorter hours. I have always found when I have had charge of men that higher wages is an encouragement to a man to work, and I can say to him " I am giving you high wages, and I expect a high result from your labour." We shall get these high results under this clause, or we shall be paying these high salaries to inspectors and managers for nothing. We are not desirous of paying men salaries which they do not earn, but I remind honorable senators that men in the general division have little prospect of being able to secure an increase of salary, and in the case of the majority of them the minimum salary will also be the maximum. As a matter of fact there are few, if any, men who will be able to rise above £110 per annum in the general division. If they do they will cease to be purely manual labourers. In effect a certificate will be granted by the recommendation of the man in charge.

Senator Playford

- Supposing a man is injured and not able to do the particular work of his office.

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Senator CHARLESTON

- In that case some other provision would have to be made for him ; but we are not dealing with cripples. The service is not to be a charitable institution. We are going to run it on commercial lines, and we expect to receive an equivalent for all we pay. If the State undertakes industrial or commercial work it must conduct it upon commercial lines. The men will be under constant supervision, and will not receive the minimum wage unless they are recommended for it by the officer in charge. Therefore, there is no necessity for the amendment proposed by Senator Clemons.

Senator MCGREGOR.(South Australia). - The object of this amendment has been revealed, for Senator Clemons says that it is designed to defeat the minimum wage proposal? I should like to point out to the Government that they have some very strange allies at the present moment. The labour party had such allies at one time, and they were deceived. I mention that fact in order to warn the Government of the position in which they may find themselves in connexion with this and several other matters. When it has been declared that the whole object of this amendment is to break down the minimum wage, is it any wonder that we oppose it, seeing that the labour party have always believed that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and that he should be paid a decent living wage ? Does Senator Playford have to find out whether his fruit-pickers have corns or bunions? No. He judges the men himself, and; there is no stipulation of the kind proposed here in connexion with any arrangement he makes with his employes. He measures their capacity, and pays them accordingly. That is his minimum. Honorable senators who support this amendment should go to countries like Spain or Portugal, or to the West of Ireland and the North of Scotland, where there are people who are in such a condition that they would be glad to work for anything. In a young country like this, I hope the time will never come when a reasonable minimum wage will be rejected by the Commonwealth Parliament. As it is unreasonable to expect such recommendations where mere labouring work is to be carried out, I trust that Senator Clemons' amendment will be rejected.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - Senator Clemons has given admirable reasons why his amendment should be adopted. Unless it is carried the labour party will be hurling £110 per annum at the head of every man without asking any questions as to whether he is blind, lame, or halt.

Senator McGregor

- No.

Senator DOBSON

- My honorable friends of the labour party have indulged in exaggerated language, and I am showing what they mean. They are willing to vote away some one else's money in defiance of every pledge in regard to economy which we made when we came here. If this is their idea of legislation it is legislation which will sooner or later end in financial disaster to all the States. As it is past the usual hour for adjournment, I desire to know whether the Postmaster-General is going to report progress?

Senator Glassey

- This provision is going to be passed first:

Senator Drake

- We have sat later than this.

Senator McGregor

- We can waste time as well as the honorable and learned senator can.

Senator DOBSON

- My honorable friends of the labour party are doing me a great injustice. I do not waste time, and I have no desire to "stone-wall." It is perfectly certain that if my honorable friends of the labour party desire to rush these clauses through the committee, the end will be that they will be recommitted. I am going to move that clause 21 be recommitted, and I shall certainly move a similar motion in regard to clause 25 if it is passed now; I wish to know from the Postmaster-General whether the minimum of £110 per annum is to be paid to men, who as boys entered the Victorian service as telegraph messengers, who have grown grey in that particular branch of the service; and have married and reared families on £60 a year - men who would rather stick to a billet of that kind than commence life again outside the service. Are we to have men acting as telegraph messengers and receiving £2 2s. 6d. per week? I should like to know also whether the Postmaster-General can tell us what will be required in addition to the sum which the Treasurer has placed upon his Estimates in order to give under-paid servants of the Commonwealth the average salary which we expect all our officers to receive? What expenditure will be necessary in order that those Commonwealth servants in Western Australia and Tasmania, who are receiving a salary less than that paid to officers doing the same work in other States, may be placed on an equal footing?

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Senator DRAKE

- The question which Senator Dobson asks does not seem to have any bearing upon this clause. I have shown already what will be the financial result of this clause and of clause 21. That certainly bears upon the question. I do not think Senator Dobson's inquiry does, and at all events I have not the statistics by me which would enable me to answer it.

Senator CLEMONS(Tasmania).- I have not risen for the purpose of delaying the taking of a division, but simply to say that in my opinion this clause is going to do serious injury to many civil servants in Tasmania. I firmly believe that if it remains in the Bill, and if the commissioner does his duty, many young men in the Tasmanian service who are perhaps a little more than 21 will be dismissed, because, in the opinion of the commissioner or of one of the inspectors, they are not worth £110 a year. I believe that injustice will occur also in other States in the Commonwealth, and it is because of that, that I object to this clause. Whatever else happens in regard to this clause it will certainly be recommitted. If the majority present tonight are determined to decide the matter at once, I shall not seek to stop the taking of a division, nor shall I encourage any one else to do so. It appears to me, however, that it would be more seemly on the part of honorable senators to allow the clause to be postponed. Surely it is better to postpone it and to allow the matter to be determined by a full House at some other time. I do not like to see a decision arrived at to-night and altered two or three weeks later on. That will probably happen in this case.

Question - That the words proposed to be added be so added - put. The committee divided.

7

AYES

11

NOES

Majority ..... 4

AYES

NOES

Question so resolved in the negative.

Senator DOBSON(Tasmania). - I propose to move that the age of the officer be not less than 25 years.

The CHAIRMAN

- The honorable and learned senator cannot move an amendment which is contradictory of a provision in a clause to which the committee have agreed.

Clause agreed to.

Progress reported.

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22:48:00

Senate adjourned at 10.48 p.m.