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1901-08-09

HouseofRepresentatives.

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

PETITIONS

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Mr. CLARKE presented a petition from 13,000 electors of New South Wales, praying that the House would be pleased to eliminate clauses 54 and 55 of the Post and Telegraph Bill.

Mr. FULLER presented a petition from the Jamberoo Christian Endeavour Society, praying that the provisions of the Post and Telegraph Bill relating to illegal lotteries might be retained.

Mr. E. SOLOMON presented a petition from ship-owners and ship agents carrying on business in Western Australia, praying -that the House would reject certain clauses of the Inter-State Commission Bill

Petitions received.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- sented a petition from 90,000 residents of Victoria, among them a large number of clergy of all denominations, praying that clauses 55 and 56 of the Post and Telegraph Bill be eliminated, and moved - That the petition be received and read.

Mr McDONALD

- I object to the petition being received and read, on the ground that a great many of the signatures have been obtained by fraud. Desks were posted about the city bearing placards on which were printed " State Rights - Are you in favour of the Postmaster-General opening your letters " ? and under these placards were sheets for obtaining signatures to this petition. The real object of the petition is to allow some person named Adams, who, I understand, is paying for the whole thing-

Mr Watson

- Ten shillings a day.

Sir Malcolm McEACHARN

- There is nothing in the petition to show that.

Mr McDONALD

- He would not be stupid enough to put it there. On one occasion, when two men were going past one of these desks and were requested to sign the petition, I heard one of them say - What is it about"? He was told that it was a petition asking Parliament to prevent the Postmaster-General from opening his letters. " Oh, I will sign that," he said. " Bill, you do not believe in the Postmaser-General opening your letters." "No," his companion replied; "I will sign the petition, too." I could quote a number of instances of that kind. I am not opposed to petitions being presented to this House, but I think that petitions, the signatures to which have not been fairly obtained, should not be presented.

worth

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

. - It . seems to me that almost every petition might be blocked upon the ground that the honorable member for Kennedy has advanced, but we must take it for granted that those who signed the petition knew what it was about, and the mere chance sayings of a person in charge of the petition should not be a bar to its acceptance.

Mr Mauger

- What about the placards over the desks ?

Mr Watson

- Those were not chance sayings.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I am speaking upon this matter apart from any feeling in regard to the subject of the petition. If we considered objections such as that raised by the honorable member for Kennedy, we should have to go into the most minute . examination of evidence to obtain proof. We have no evidence before us, although no one doubts what the honorable member has said. If a number of the signatures are false or a number of persons signed several times over it simply means that fewer persons signed the petition than would appear to be the case, but the right 'of petitioning Parliament is a great public right which should not be surrounded with difficulties, and a petition should not be rejected because improper things had been done

in obtaining signatures to it. It seems to me that unless there is very much stronger proof that the signatures have been obtained by fraud, we must accept the petition as coming from a large number of our fellow citizens. If we were to reject this petition we should create a precedent which might cause great difficulty in the future.

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Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - I think we must receive the petition. No doubt there is a great deal of force in what has been urged against its reception, but, as the . honorable member for Wentworth has said, the light of petition is so sacred that we should not, by rejecting any particular petition, convey the implication that we are prepared to restrict in the least degree the rights of the public in this matter. The proper thing to do is to receive the petition, and to attach to it just so much importance as the knowledge we have, that in some cases the signatures to it were improperly obtained, requires. There are but few of us who do not know what means have been used in some cases. I know from what my son has told me, what they have been. An attempt has been made in the broadest fashion to obtain signatures from citizens, under the belief that their right to have their letters sent through the post in the ordinary way was to be tampered with by the Commonwealth, which of course is not the case. I think that the signatories to the petition who have been misled will soon become aware of the way in which they have been treated by those who got the petition up. That is enough for us, and the purposes of honest legislation. [suggest that we should receive the petition for what it is worth.

Mr CROUCH

- The remarks of the Prime Minister should lead, the House to accept the position urged by the honorable member for Kennedy. I agree with the right honorable gentleman, that it is necessary to preserve to the community the right of petitioning Parliament, but any one who has gone about the city during the last three weeks must know that that right has been abused, and the honorable member for Kennedy has performed a duty to the House in bringing this matter forward. The honorable member for Wentworth says that we have no proof that the signatures were improperly obtained, but he must have gone about the city with his eyes closed, It is a sign of the patience and moderation of the House that we have allowed petition after petition of this kind to be brought forward without objection. This is the only instance in which any objection has been taken, but in this case the signatures were obtained in Melbourne, and honorable members have seen themselves what has been going on.

Sir William Lyne

- The same thing happened in Sydney, too.

Mr CROUCH

- I am assured that a similar practice obtained in Sydney. If the honorable member for Kennedy had not moved in this matter, I should have done so. I am not asking honorable members to accept the evidence of their observation .-done ; I refer them to the statements which have appeared in the press, and which the honorable member for Wentworth must accept as evidence.-

Sir William McMillan

- It is quite right to bring this matter up in the House, but what has been said is not sufficient to prevent the- reception of the petition.

Mr CROUCH

- The Age, of the 27th July last, contains this paragraph -

During the past few days a conspicuous figure at nearly every street corner has been a man with a small wooden stand, a roll of paper, and an ink bottle. One stand bears a placard requesting: passers by to " sign a petition for preventing the Postmaster-General opening your letters. " Judging from the large number of signatures appended, the petition is a most popular one. Bat five minutes' observation is sufficient to convince any one that more than one-half of those who sign, their names are unaware that, the placard on the stand is totally misleading. The petition, of course, is supposed to refer to the 54th section of the Post and Telegraph Act, which purposes to give the Postmaster-General power to stop delivery of letters to any one engaged in a lottery, fortune-telling, or any unlawful business. The clause is designed primarily to enable the Federal. Government, if it think fit, to stop letters containing money for Tattersalls sweeps. In order that the Postal authorities might return the money in the letter to

the senders, the clause gives the Postmaster - General or his deputy power to open the letters. Mr. Scott, secretary to the Postal department, yesterday pointed out that the Postmaster -General already has power to open letters which cannot be delivered to the addressee. There has never been any complaint about the power of the Postal authorities to open "dead letters." The notice on the street stands: is deluding the public, most persons signing the petition in the same spirit as the young man who & declared he would allow " no bloomin' Postmaster-General to open the letters from his girl."

The labour paper, the Tocsin, in an article on the petition, and supporting the purposes which the petition is designed to & further-

Sir William McMillan

- Does the honorable member desire this House to take action on newspaper paragraphs?

Mr CROUCH

- I think it is desirable that honorable members should know what the circumstances are. The Tocsin says -

It is very much to be regretted that instead of this being clearly set before the public by the promoters of the petition, they have thought fit to & obtain signatures by a means savouring somewhat of a confidence trick, which could have no other effect than to utterly deprive the petition of weight, and has already caused it to be mentioned with ridicule in the halls of the Federal Legislature.

I would submit that under these circumstances, in order to preserve the right of petition, and in order that petitions presented to this House in future may be honestly obtained, and, further, with a view to prevent petitions obtained by subterfuges, from being received, the House has a perfect right to refuse to entertain any petitions that may be open to objection.

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Mr A McLEAN

- What I had wished to say has already been so -well stated by the honorable member for Wentworth and the leader of the Government that I think it is almost superfluous for me to speak. I admit that the honorable member who has brought this matter forward has done good service, because the information which he has placed before the House will, no doubt, influence us as to the amount of importance that we are likely to attach to these petitions. I hope, however, the honorable member is not serious in asking the House not to receive the petition, because that would be an open declaration on our part that the people outside this House are less intelligent than we are, and I am not prepared to admit that. No doubt a great majority of the signatures may have been obtained by misrepresentation, but there may be signatures on the petition from . persons who had full information on the subject, and who signed the petition because it accorded with their own views, and not because of the representations that were made. I think it would be a most dangerous thing for Parliament to refuse to receive a petition that purports to represent the views of 90,000 persons. We can exercise our own judgment as to the means that have been adopted in obtaining signatures, and we need not attach more importance to the petition than we think it deserves, but I hope there will be no serious attempt made to cause it to be rejected.

Mr MAUGER

- I was going to join with the honorable member who introduced this matter in asking the House not to receive the petition, but I have been dissuaded from that course by the arguments that have since been brought forward. At the same time, I indorse every remark that has fallen from the honorable member for Kennedy. Any one who has used "his powers of observation must have noticed that misrepresentation has been used in obtaining these signatures.

An Honorable Member. - Not the whole of them.

Mr MAUGER

- A very large percentage of them. The honorable member who introduced the petition stated that it was signed by clergymen, but I am quite sure that if there are any signatures of clergymen on the petition they are only isolated cases. The Council of the Churches, the Evangelical Association, and the Christian Endeavour Society have waited on me to urge me to oppose the petition, and for the honorable member for Melbourne to infer that, because there are one or two signatures of clergymen on the petition, clergymen generally are in favour of its objects is to mislead the House. I hope the petition will be received, but I am sure that the honorable member for Kennedy has done good service in bringing the matter forward in the way he has done.

Sir MALCOLM MCEACHARN

- I am sure that honorable members know I would not do anything that would intentionally mislead the House. In stating that the petition was signed by clergymen, I made a statement "based on the names that were before me, and I am quite sure that my statement could not lead members to suppose that I desired them to infer that a large number of clergymen, or that the clergy as a body, desired to support the petition. I was asked to sign the petition, and I refused to do so, but I consider that if the House were to decline to receive the ' petition because a number of signatures had been attached by persons signing without a full knowledge of the contents or meaning of the petition, a great injustice would be done to a large number of people who doubtless hold very strong views. I hope, therefore, that the House will not put any body of men in the position of having their petition rejected.

Question-" That the petition be received," resolved in the affirmative.

Question - "That the petition be read," resolved in the negative.

QUESTIONS

ALLEGED CUSTOMS FRAUDS

Mr FISHER

- I would ask the Minister for Trade and Customs whether his attention has been drawn to a statement by a prominent business man in Brisbane that systematic attempts are being made by the falsifying of invoices to deprive the Commonwealth of the Customs revenue which should properly be derived by it 1 Minister for Trade and Customs

Mr KINGSTON

- My attention has been drawn to the matter, which is being fully inquired into, with a view to taking whatever action may be necessary. I am happy to say that the gentleman who made the charges has, in response to my request, consented to supply full particulars.

IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION ACTS

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Mr WATSON

- T. desire to ask the Prime Minister whether he can obtain and supply the House with information as to the working of the Immigration Restriction

Act in New South Wales during the last five years, and of similar Acts in Western Australia and Tasmania since their passing in those States ? I would like information as to the number of immigrants admitted for corresponding periods before and since the passing of the respective Acts.

Mr BARTON

- It is true that there are two or three Acts already in force dealing with this subject in New South Wales, Tasmania, and Western Australia. It will give- me pleasure to endeavour to supply the information asked for by the honorable member, and I hope it will be available before the Bill reaches the committee stage.

AGREEMENT WITH THE EASTERN EXTENSION CABLE COMPANY

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I desire to ask the Prime Minister a question with reference to the agreement entered into between the New South Wales Government and the Eastern Extension Cable Company. I asked this question almost as soon as Parliament assembled. I think the matter has been referred to almost half-a-dozen times, and still the agreement is not forthcoming.

Mr BARTON

- I will speak to my honorable colleague, the Postmaster-General, with reference to the matter this morning, and will if possible obtain the agreement during the course of to-day's sitting.

SALARIES OF LIBRARY OFFICIALS

Mr A C GROOM

asked the Treasurer,- upon notice -

Whether it is true, as stated in the public press, that the officials of the Library received their salaries for July from the State Government instead of from the Commonwealth Government: and, if a fact, what bearing it may have on the relation of the Federal Parliament to the Library ?

Treasurer

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I understand that the salaries have been so paid, but the whole question with regard to the control and

the management of the Library is . a matter which is now under the consideration of my right honorable leader and the Victorian Government, and I trust that within a very short time a satisfactory settlement will be arrived at with regard to this very much disputed question.

Mr BARTON

- I have addressed a communication to the Premier of Victoria on this very subject.

ADMINISTRATION OF NEW GUINEA

Mr WILKS

asked the Prime Minister, upon notice -

Whether, in view of his explanation as to the vesting of the administration of New Guinea in the Commonwealth, he will consider the advisability of suggesting to the Imperial authorities that they should obtain from the other Powers interested, by purchase or exchange, the full control of New Guinea ?

Mr BARTON

- On the whole, I think this matter should await the decision of the question now pending as to the future of British New Guinea.

EXCISE ON BEER BILL

Report adopted.

DEFENCE BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed (from August 1, vide page 3440) on motion by Sir John Forrest -

That this Bill be now read a second time.

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Mr A C GROOM

- As this is one of the most important matters that is likely to be introduced this session, I would like to make a few remarks. I was disappointed to hear the Minister of Defence speak very disparagingly of the rifle clubs, the utility of which he seemed to think was very much over-estimated; while on the question of naval defence he had hardly anything to say at all. To my mind these are the two most important; questions to be considered in connexion with the defence of Australia. As we are now a nation, 'we must take upon ourselves the responsibilities of a nation, and must be prepared to a certain extent to take care of ourselves. I do not for a moment think that we should be aggressive, but that we should be prepared to place ourselves in a state of defence, so that we may be able to withstand any attack that is likely to be made upon us. Our first line of defence should certainly be a navy. We are a continent surrounded by water, and as we have no frontier to defend it seems to me that a navy is our natural means of defence. The question as to how we are to obtain that navy is, however, a very serious one. We cannot attempt, at least for many years to come, to either build or buy a navy, because the expense involved puts such an idea entirely beyond consideration. It would cost at least £10,000,000 or £12,000,000 to build a navy, and in addition to that the annual cost of maintenance would be very large. Moreover, in the course of a few years, our ships would require to be renewed, or otherwise our fleet would become obsolete, and we should be no longer in a position to defend ourselves. Therefore, our proper course would be, if possible, to continue some such arrangement as we now have with Great Britain. I think we might very easily arrange with the mother country to provide us with better ships, more heavily armed and swifter, without having to pay a yearly sum in excess of what it would cost us to maintain a navy of our own. Under such an arrangement we should save the initial cost of a navy, and we could at the same time arrange to have the navy kept up to date. We might stipulate that we should have the right to partly man some of the ships with sailors drawn from Australian-born subjects, so that after a time we might be able to get together a very substantial naval reserve. It has been said that, owing to the length of our coast line, it would be almost impossible to defend it by means of a navy ; but some honorable members must have forgotten that a large portion of this coast line requires no defence at all, because it is absolutely unapproachable. In regard to a great deal of our coast, it would perhaps be a fortunate thing for us if a hostile force were to land upon it, because they would be completely starved out if they did not soon again betake themselves to their ships. Therefore I think the length of our coast line should not deter us from considering a navy as a means of defence. Our second line of defence should be* our forts, and we should be prepared to spend a considerable sum of money in this department. A large number of places throughout the Commonwealth will require to be fortified in some way or other, and that means that a very large sum of

money will have to be expended. I thoroughly agree with the remarks of the honorable and learned member for Illawarra in reference to the need that exists for strengthening our fortifications. It is one of the first things that we should consider, because in regard to our forts we are in a totally different position from that which we occupy in regard to our ships. We can hire a navy, but we cannot hire forts or guns. We must, therefore,, be prepared to incur a considerable expenditure in connexion with our 'fortifications. Not 50 miles from Melbourne is Western Port, which is capable of sheltering all the navies of the world, and yet it is absolutely undefended. There is nothing to prevent a hostile force from entering that bay to-morrow, and from landing in Melbourne within three hours, because there is a railway running down to the very point, and there are absolutely no fortifications whatever. Hitherto we have occupied a very happy position, owing to the fact that the mother country - during the period which has elapsed since Australia has become important - has never been at war with any maritime power. As a result, we have never had a visit from a hostile force. That very fact is likely to lull us into a false security. But it is ridiculous to expect a continuance of this state of things. At any moment the mother country may be plunged into war with one of two nations, and unless we take the necessary steps to defend ourselves, we shall surely be visited by a hostile force immediately following any such outbreak. That force will know perfectly well which is the best point at which to effect a landing, because it will know our weakest points. In regard to land defence, I wish to say that I am not at all in favour of a large standing army. I do not think that we require anything of the kind. I admit that we need ' a small permanent force for the purpose of fully manning our forts, but I think that we should look to our volunteer forces and to our citizen soldiery - more especially to our rifle clubs - for the future defence of the Commonwealth. More encouragement should be given to our rifle clubs than has been accorded to them in the past. These clubs comprise the pick of our men in the country districts. They are strong, hearty, able men, in the pink of condition from the very nature of their occupations. They are able to go anywhere, can withstand any amount of fatigue, are magnificent horsemen, and can be mobilized at the shortest possible notice. Let us look at the class of men that we sent to South Africa. Those contingents were composed principally of raw recruits from the country districts who had never smelt powder in their lives. ' They were only in camp for a few weeks prior to their despatch to South Africa. On arrival there they were hurried to the front, and into the very thick of the fighting. They were called upon to take their places side by side with the pick of Great Britain's army, and are we not all proud of the way in which they behaved? Have they not received the praise of Great Britain's greatest generals for their pluck, their dash, their wonderful endurance, and for the way in which they were able to move about when required? It is from such material that we should draw our defence forces in the future. More encouragement should be given to men to join the rifle clubs, and when they have joined more inducements should be offered to them to become proficient marksmen. In my opinion, the Government should provide them with uniforms and ammunition absolutely free of cost. Most important of -all, the Government should offer prizes for competition upon their own ranges. The prizes which are now given by the Government for competition in Melbourne are absolutely valueless to the great bulk of rifle clubs throughout Victoria. The Government should give a capitation grant to all members of rifle clubs throughout the Commonwealth for the purpose of providing prizes to be competed for on their own ranges. If that were done, very keen competition would immediately arise amongst the rifle clubs. Men only need slight encouragement to induce them to join those clubs. This fact is evidenced by the large accession which has been -made to their ranks quite recently. The result of such a system as I am now suggesting would be that we should have an enormous reserve spread throughout the length and breadth of Australia, costing the country next to nothing for maintenance, and upon which we could readily draw in time of need. On the assumption that we have 120,000 riflemen, a capitation grant of 5s. would mean only an annual contribution by the Government of £30,000. A capitation grant of 5s. to a local rifle club comprising 50 members, for the purpose of providing prizes for competition upon its own range, would mean only an annual contribution of £12 10s. j still, it would be an immense incentive to the men to practice shooting. At present they complain that there is very little incentive to them to become skilled marksmen after they get up to a certain position, for the reason that no prizes are given unless by the local bodies, and consequently the interest wanes. If the Government would provide a capitation grant of 5s. to the local rifle clubs there would be more competition than ever, and the result would ultimately be that we should have the finest body of sharpshooters in the world. I would point out also the advantage which would accrue from having a force such as the rifle clubs would provide scattered throughout the

Commonwealth. In time of trouble - no matter where an enemy might land - we could rely upon having a considerable number of riflemen, who could be rapidly mobilized for the purpose of resisting attack. But if we have only a small standing army it will be distributed throughout the Commonwealth, and will take a considerable time to get together. With an immense reserve to draw upon such as the rifle clubs would provide, we should be able to get 10,000, 20,000, or 30,000 men together within a few days. They would be the best class of men that could possibly be desired, because they - would be in their own country, and would know every inch of ground. Judging by the results of the South African campaign, they would be the very stamp of men required for such an emergency. I wish to say another word or two with regard to the question of the transcontinental railway. For defence purposes alone I think that that railway should be constructed. Western Australia was induced to enter the Federation by the knowledge that that line would probably be constructed. Not only so, but having admitted her to the Union, we are bound to stand by her and construct that line.

An HONORABLE Member. - Where will the money come from ?

Mr A C GROOM

- We can find the money for that as for other things. It will have to be part of our defence system. Having induced Western Australia to enter the Federation, it is not fair to allow her to remain isolated longer than we can possibly help. In conclusion, may I say that this Bill, in the form in, which it is framed, must have a very far-reaching influence upon the future of Australia. I think that we should all unite to make it the very best Bill that we possibly can, remembering that the nation expects us to do so in her interests.

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Mr SPENCE

- I think honorable members need make no apology for the length of the debate on this very important question. I do not propose to occupy more than two or three minutes, because, like most other honorable members, I think that the Government have done the best they could in preparing to start from where we are. I am one of those who believe that war in every sense is bad, that all its associations are bad, although possibly it may sometimes be forced upon us and out of it good may come. But we want Australia to develop as" a peaceful nation, without having any warlike desires. I have noticed that a man who can fight well frequently desires to pick a quarrel. In the same way, where large standing armies are established they become restive and anxious to have a "go" at somebody. In organizing our scheme of defence we should aim primarily at securing an ample supply of weapons of the very best and most up to date pattern - especially of rifles, because it is admitted by military experts that the rifle is the most effective weapon. We must have other guns, of course, such as those which have rendered such good service in the Transvaal. We should also have the necessary machinery within the Commonwealth to enable us to turn out our own supplies of ammunition. More attention, I think, should be paid to this branch of the question than has hitherto been devoted to it. Special attention should be paid to perfecting our transport and commissariat departments rather than to the drilling of men. The men are always here. Self-governing peoples have always shown a . capacity for self defence. It has been proved that men do not require much training to enable them to take part in the mobile movements of actual warfare. The most important point is that they should become proficient in the use of the rifle. They require only a reasonable amount of drill. My observations in the past lead me to the conclusion that when a case of emergency . arises England generally finds herself unprepared. There are frequent breakdowns in regard to the transport service. Hence I think that whatever system we adopt - whether by the institution of a military training college or otherwise - special attention should be paid to the training of the officers who are to lead the men. The men will do their share, as they have done everywhere, but it is almost laughable, at some of our peaceful reviews, to see the failures there are in regard to transport and commissariat. I have had some experience in connexion with industrial warfare. We have had as many as 16,000 men, and frequently 2,000 and 4,000 men in the field at one time in connexion with our industrial organizations, and they never had to go without a meal, although we did not have resources of the State behind us with transport waggons and so on, as there is in actual warfare. It has always seemed to me a disgrace to the officers who govern the military organization of the States, that 'there should be so many cases of failure in these . directions, though some of the failures may be comparatively unimportant. . Every . observer of warfare knows, and one observer has said, that 'the "army travels on its belly," and that a man does not fight well if he has been a day or two without food. It is in these directions that careful

observation and training are required. I do not object to an occasional review, and I suppose that people in the country like to pay a visit to the towns. In these annual reviews there is too much show and too little utility, if we are to have an effective force for the defence of Australia. I do not know whether the Minister in charge of this department is to be called the Minister of Defence or the Minister of War ; but I hope he will stick to the former title, and recognise that he is the head of a department formed for defence and not for aggression. The idea I wish to indicate is that instead of our spending so much on annual reviews - which, however, might be held occasionally - there should be a mobilization of the Commonwealth forces at some spot to be indicated suddenly by the Minister for Defence, the commanding officers receiving no more than say a fortnight's notice. Supposing England became involved in some European war, as she might. there would probably be some reasonable notice of the likelihood of the Outbreak of hostilities. In such event an attack on Australia might be contemplated, such a thing being quite possible. Honorable members may not have forgotten the scare there was in the '80's, when an alleged plan of attacking New Zealand was discovered in connexion with Russia. The suggestion I have made as to the sudden mobilization of the forces would provide a test of their utility in organization, and of their readiness to meet the enemy. An example of similar mobilization can be seen in our fire brigades. These brigades are sometimes called without warning, and it is seen in how many seconds the men can be in their places in the street, with all their appliances. The same principle could be applied to the military organization of the Commonwealth ; and this leads me to another point. It is the working men who will fight these defensive battles. I recognise that men who do not have to work for daily wages will form competent men and officers, but the main body of the defenders will be composed of men following industrial occupations every day, and if they are called away from their work the Commonwealth must be prepared to pay them for the time they are away from it. To that extent I favour the militia idea. These men give their time and services for the defence of the homes and hearths of the people of the Commonwealth, and it would not be right to ask them to suffer loss on that account. There will be no difficulty in finding fighting men ready enough to volunteer, and give a good deal of spare time to drill and practice with the rifle. A man who takes to the rifle enjoys the experience, and there will be no difficulty in getting volunteers if the ammunition be made cheap. These are the points we should aim at. And now just a word in connexion with the Empire. It is rather unfortunate that recently we have had an experience which has somewhat drawn us into the Empire's troubles. I am one who believes that British rule makes more for human advance and freedom than possibly any other rule. I recognise that in the British nation there are some matters which should be dealt with by social reform, but I want Great Britain, as a nation, to occupy the foremost position in the world. I do not grudge assistance that might be given to England in extremity; but, above all, we should cultivate a reputation for being a peaceful people, prepared only to defend ourselves. We need do no more than that. If England needs help, it has been proved that she can get it, but I hope that England will never have to call on Australia again. We have, I think, been a good deal led away by sentiment ; that is to say, only one side of the battle-field has been shown. The heroism of our men has been very properly lauded, but we have not been told much of the misery which is always associated with war. The little experience we have had of warfare has been in another country, which is vastly different to coming in close contact with the fighting itself. I know a great many of the men who have gone to fight the battles in South Africa. These are men with whom I have been associated; and the training which astonished the British officers - the training which made them ready in camp life to do work which it was never expected men who did not belong to military organization would be able to do - was obtained in industrial warfare in the shape, of strikes in Australia. In these strikes these men undergo a sort of military discipline with pickets and so on. Those thus engaged do not, however, go into an enemy's country for their commissariat, but must pay for it all themselves. In our trades union organizations we have plenty of discipline, and we have self sacrifice and loyalty, which make up for want of drill. The point I want to make is that we already have the machinery for discipline, and that we want only the means of training and using the rifle, when we shall have all the material for one of the most valiant and useful armies that could possibly be established for Australia. Attention ought to be given to the training of officers in a knowledge of Australia, without spending so much on show, military allowances, and all that kind of thing. The officers ought to make themselves familiar with the topography of the Commonwealth, so that if they are called on to defend any portion of it they may be able to find their way there. I am afraid some of the officers at present would not be able to find their way about properly, and we cannot afford to

have them learning geography when the enemy is at the door. I do not think it is necessary to discuss the question of the establishment of a navy, which is altogether beyond our strength. If submarine boats are going to be the success which their inventors and others who experiment with them seem to claim, such vessels will change the whole method of naval warfare ; and to build huge ironclads to be blown up by submarine craft would be a waste of money. We had better leave that branch of defence alone, doing as much as we can in helping to pay for the naval protection we receive from the mother country. I do not object to the present expenditure, because we ought' not to be unreasonable in such a matter; but we cannot afford yet to go into the question of providing for naval defence, further than giving to men a sound training such as can be provided on shore. I am opposed to any other than just sufficient of a standing army to deal with the technique of warfare, and the expert side of the question, so as to provide a nucleus for the training of officers who ought to come from the ranks, and ought to have some experience of bush work, such as they would have to perform in the field. Having given these men the best training we can, I do not think it would be a wise thing to throw them on the world, as this Bill in some measure proposes to do: There are other provisions in the Bill, but on these I do not intend to speak, as further opportunity will be afforded when the measure gets into committee. I do not go so far as some honorable members have done in condemning the Bill. It seems to me that the Federal Government, in starting the Commonwealth, could hardly do other than start just where we are. When we find out how the measure works, we hope to pay close attention to the working of the department, because if there is a department which more than another requires close attention, it is that of defence, where there is a tendency, not found elsewhere, to spend money. AVe should keep civil control over the department until war takes place - that is to say, until we are attacked - but when the men go into the field, we must hand over the control to the military heads. When fighting is taking place we cannot have a double system of civil and military control. In time of actual war the control must be left to the military authorities, but before that point is reached, there should be retained a very large measure of civil control, and with a vigorous Minister in charge, Australia should be put in such a position that she will be able to take care of herself, in the face of the biggest nation that might come to attack her.

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Mr E SOLOMON

-It was not my intention to have spoken on the subject of defence, of which I know very little from past experience. At the same time, it strikes me that it would have been better had the Minister for Defence been here to hear the various arguments that have been used in the course of this debate. Moreover, I think that it is like beginning "at the wrong end of the stick " to talk about defence purposes, when we really do not know what we have to spend. I would far rather have seen the initiation of this Bill postponed until the Tariff question had been settled. Honorable members have suggested various systems of defence. Some have gone so far as to say we should expend millions on a navy. Others wish to spend large sums on a standing army, notwithstanding that at the present time there is a large outlay on the forces in the various ' States. It has struck me very forcibly that we should encourage as much as possible those who are voluntarily coming forward at the present time. As to rifle clubs, for instance, I noticed a telegram from Western Australia the other day to the effect that the clubs in that State had approached the Minister for Defence and asked for 10,000 rifles, suggesting that the clubs should pay half the cost of the rifles and more than half the cost of the ammunition. If we can get a nucleus of defence in that direction, we ought to encourage the idea to the very utmost. . Without going over the ground already traversed, my idea is that we should have a small militia force in each State, which could be concentrated at any moment at any given point in case of invasion. Not that I have the slightest idea of invasion for many years to come ; but we should be prepared to raise a large body of men for our own defence at any time. Those in our militia forces should be trained in such a way that officers might be appointed from their ranks who could take charge of companies in any place. The volunteer system has not of late been so popular throughout Australia as it was some years ago. In the sixties I was a member of the volunteer forces of South Australia under Colonel Freeling. We were a militia rather than a volunteer force, and had to camp out for training for sometimes a week at a time. In those days there was a fever of excitement because of the recent Crimean war, and Australia was on the qui vive for the approach of foreign cruisers. With regard to the establishment of a Commonwealth navy, I think that any proposal of the kind would be absurd. To spend a million pounds upon the construction of one vessel,

which would be totally inadequate to our needs, would be useless ; and at the present time we really do not know what we shall have to spend. The present arrangements for naval defence are very good. It is true that the ships of ' the Australian squadron lie idle in our waters for long periods ; but a little while ago, when the Spanish man-of-war Saide visited Australia, it was seen that whenever she arrived at a port one of the ships of the squadron came soon afterwards. It struck me at the time that an intimation had been given to the authorities that the foreigner had been sent out here to obtain information. We, in Australia, have always been eager to show even foreigners everything of interest that there is in the States, including our fortifications and means of defence, and it is pretty certain that many foreign people have come here to get information about our resources in that respect. I was pleased to hear the honorable member for Flinders allude to the need for a transcontinental railway. It was owing to almost a distinct promise that that railway would be built that the State of Western Australia joined the Union. For a long time we held back, and had federation been proposed to the people without what was looked upon as the promise of that railway, we should not have joined the union. We are 2,000 miles away from the Eastern States, and if war broke out under present circumstances, and vessels were chartered to send troops to us by sea, every effort would be made by the enemy to prevent them, from getting there. Therefore, it is necessary that the railway should be made for purposes of defence. We need no standing army, because it has been shown that when men are required to defend their country they will always come forward, and I believe that if Australia were threatened, men would come from the most distant parts to enrol in defence of their hearths and homes. In conclusion, I would lay particular stress upon the importance of the construction of the transcontinental railway in the interests, not of Western Australia alone - because we are not bound up to our own State interests to the exclusion of national interests - but of the whole of the people of Australia. It has been said that we have something like 950,000 men to put into the field at a moment's notice ; and although one may well doubt the correctness of those figures, we know that if necessity arose, our people would come forward to do the best they could in the defence of their country. That is shown by the fact that whenever it was mentioned in the press that a contingent was to be sent to South Africa, twice and three times as many men as were required volunteered to go.

Mr.R . EDWARDS (Oxley).- As I understand that honorable members desire that the debate should be brought to a conclusion at an early hour of the day, I shall not occupy very much time. But any measure which has for its object the establishment of the defence of the Commonwealth will be considered of the utmost importance by the people of Australia. The House is very fortunate in having amongst its members so large a number possessed of practical knowledge and experience in military matters, and their contributions to the debate have been most acceptable to those who have had little or no experience in such things. To my mind the Bill is a very good one, although the honorable member for Kennedy failed to see any merit in it, and went so far as to state that not one honorable member had expressed himself in appreciation of it. I think he was in error in making that statement. The Bill covers a great deal of ground, and much time, thought, and consideration has evidently been given to its provisions. It is an honest effort on the part of the Minister to make provision for the defence of the country. I hope that it will be many years before there will be any need for us to defend ourselves against invasion ; but in order that we may be in a state of peace and security it is absolutely necessary that we should prepare to resist an enemy. Our security lies in the fact of preparation. Complications may at any time arise between the. motherland and other countries which may be fraught with danger to Australia. Besides that, we must always keep in mind our proximity to China and Japan. I am pleased that provision is made for the formation of junior and senior cadet corps, because I am of opinion that boys and youths should be taught military drill and the use of firearms. Boys are only too glad to receive such instruction, and what they learn will never be forgotten. If cadet corps are formed in connexion with all the city and country schools, the Commonwealth, in a few years time, will have an army in each State ready to take the field at short notice. We must rely upon our citizen soldiers for our internal defence, and therefore the sooner ' our youths are taught the' use of firearms the better it will be for us. I recognise, too, that there must be a standing army of professional soldiers, but its numbers should be small. The honorable member for Maranoa, who has some practical knowledge of military matters, said that he thought about 500 men would be sufficient. I am somewhat in doubt about that. There are six States in the Union, and it will be necessary to have a certain number of soldiers in each State to train our volunteer forces, and for other purposes, so that possibly more than 500 permanent men will be required. I hope, however, that our

standing army will be a very small one. I favour the volunteer system, and I would encourage the formation of rifle clubs, and provide them with expert instructors, giving every facility to our young men to make themselves expert shots. I object altogether to compulsion or conscription, which I think would prove very distasteful to Australians. I feel that the young men of this country- would regard any system of compulsion as a' reflection upon them. Should the Commonwealth get into trouble with any other power, every man in the country would be only too glad to come forward in its defence. The difficulty would be not to get volunteers, but to restrict the applications for enrolment. - The honorable and learned member' for Bendigo mentioned the omission to deal with the fire brigades of the Commonwealth in the Bill. I think that that fine body of men, who are accustomed to a certain amount of drill, would be a great acquisition to our defence forces.

Mr MAUGER

- The Bill could be made to ' apply only to the country firemen, because the city firemen will always be wanted -for the performance of their ordinary-duties.

Mr R EDWARDS

- I recognise that. The Bill also omits to deal with the police force. I think honorable members will, agree with me that in no part of the world is a finer body of men to be seen than the police force of Australia. These men have been drilled, and are familiar with the use of firearms. Many of them are expert shots, and their services would be invaluable in times, of emergency. I believe that in Queensland the police force are brought within the provisions of .the Defence Bill, and I think that this Parliament might very well follow the example of that State. The best-trained soldiers would be of little use unless armed with modern weapons, and provided with a plentiful supply of ammunition, and in order that we may always have these requirements at hand, I would urge upon the- Government the necessity of establishing factories in all the States. According to what we have read of recent years, when two nations go to war it is invariably found that one of them was quite unprepared for a contest. It should therefore be our aim. to be- always prepared by having a plentiful supply of arms and ammunition, and the Government ought to take this matter in hand and not leave our supplies to be furnished by private enterprise. There is little reference in the Bill to any system of naval defence, and possibly it would be better to legislate on this branch of our defences in a separate measure. Mention has been made by several honorable members of the cost of battleships, and from these statements it appears that the expenditure that would be involved in providing a fleet adequate to the protection of our coasts would be utterly beyond the reach of this Commonwealth. For some years to come it would be wise for us to leave ourselves in -the hands of Great Britain, so far as naval defence is concerned, instead of plunging tile country into an outlay of many millions of money. We are at present contributing £126,000 per year towards the Australian auxiliary squadron, and it would be better, even if we doubled this amount, to continue under the protection of the-British navy. At the same time I should like to see a beginning made in the establishment of a purely Australian navy by the building perhaps of one ship at present, and then gradually increasing the number year after year. As our own squadron increased in size and efficiency, our contributions towards the auxiliary squadron might be gradually lessened. The canteen question is one of great importance to our defence forces, and I hope that in the beginning of our history as a Commonwealth we shall prohibit the sale of intoxicating drinks in all military canteens. The highest military authorities condemn the system in the strongest terms, and in the best interests of the Commonwealth, and in the interests of the young men who will form our defence force, I hope that this Parliament will be unanimous in removing temptation as far as possible. The Bill is a good one, but far from being perfect, and I am sure that honorable members on both sides ' will do their best in committee to make it as complete as circumstances will permit.

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Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - The debate on this Bill has been an extremely long one, but I do not think that the most exacting of the critics of this Parliament can complain of its length when they consider how fertile it has been, in discussion and suggestion. Of course, it was natural that there should have been a great many suggestions made on the opening up of a new system. Whatever the Bill might be, there would bo the same number of suggestions and criticisms, simply because such suggestions and criticisms arise from the difficulties of the subject - difficulties that would apply to almost any measure that could be framed. So

far as I am concerned, I am not going to say for a moment that any attempt is to be made to rigidly stick to every term of this Bill, but the suggestions, most of which have been made in a friendly spirit, will be handed over by me to the Minister in charge of the Bill. I have taken notes of the suggestions of honorable members in a form which condenses what the pages of Hansard would make it most difficult to read in full, and these notes will, at any rate, serve as finger-posts for the right honorable gentleman. I may say that if this debate concludes soon, as I hope it will, the House will be asked to go into committee only proforma, for the present, so that an opportunity may be allowed to the Minister for Defence to take charge of his own Bill, and to deal with those matters which have been so fully laid before the House in the course of debate. I propose to address myself to some of the objections that have been urged against the provisions of the Bill. A number of these I consider to be well founded, but, of course, not all of them, because we must differ in opinion. In the first instance, I should like to reply to the charge of absence of policy in this Bill. A Bill of this kind, I take it, ought to be free from anything that might be regarded as equivalent to the fixing of a policy by Act of Parliament. Questions of policy are for Ministers controlled by Parliament to deal with from time to time. The policy of today must be the policy of to-morrow, except in the hands of those who can see the signs of the times, and see that the advances and developments in all directions may necessitate action of a different character. The provisions of a Bill like this should be so framed as to enable the necessary machinery to be set in motion with fair smoothness, subject to those acts of policy which may from time to time become necessary. With reference to the charge that there are no provisions in this Bill regarding the navy, I would point out that the very debate that has taken place on this point has shown, how dangerous it would have been to lay down our proposals on too distinct or rigid lines ; but it is fair to mention that all clauses relating to the defence forces, to the permanent forces, militia, or volunteers, specifically include the naval officers and men in their meaning, as defined in the Bill. This is a fact which appears to have been overlooked by several honorable members, but it is nevertheless clear that the powers given will apply to naval as well as military matters. Then,, again, there is a clause which makes pretty clear that whatever is necessary may be done. Clause 37 provides - The Governor-General may cause to be raised, maintained, and organized in a manner prescribed such permanent and citizen forces, and may equip with such arms and materiel, and may construct and maintain such forts and defence works, and may cause to be built or acquired, commissioned, armed and maintained such ships, vessels, and boats as he may think necessary for the proper defence of the Commonwealth.

The Governor-General referred to there means the Governor-General, under proper advice. It seems to me that we have here, together with the other clause as to the appointment of the naval commandant, the nucleus of what is necessary. A considerable difficulty presents itself at the outset in connexion with the consideration of naval defence. The finances of the Commonwealth hinge for the first five years upon the bookkeeping clause and the Braddon clause, as it is colloquially called, and for five years after that on the Braddon clause, whatever, may be done with the bookkeeping clause. Honorable members may therefore recognise that, however good the policy of the limitation placed upon the expenditure of the Commonwealth by these clauses may be, they impose serious restrictions upon the Commonwealth in dealing with these other matters, and it is quite out of the question for the Commonwealth to engage in the building of a sufficient navy to protect her shores, whether that navy be built in Australia or in the old country. It would probably cost £4,000,000 for the construction and equipment alone of a sufficient naval force for the defence of these shores at all times and in all emergencies. The Commonwealth is not likely to undertake any such outlay as this, because apart from the £120,000 to £160,000 a year that would have to be provided for interest on the initial outlay, we should require to spend probably a little short of a million of money in the maintenance of our navy and for the repairs necessary. Of course, such a thing is not to be thought of. Now, as to the present or existing conditions in connexion with our navy, there are two alternatives. The Commonwealth may, at the expiration of the present naval agreement, apply the contributions now made to the Imperial Government, on account of our naval defences, to equipping and improving our military forces. That is one way of dealing with the matter. Another way of proceeding would be to enter into a fresh agreement with the naval authorities of the United Kingdom for an up-to-date and efficient squadron of cruisers, numerous enough to enable us to keep two boats always in reserve. As to these latter vessels it might be a good thing to suggest that the reserve ships should be available for the training of Australian naval men. If that were done we should gain considerably by

relieving ourselves of the heavy initial cost of a navy, and we should, notwithstanding our financial difficulty, at any rate, be doing something vastly in advance of anything we have formerly done. Therefore, I say that the whole matter of naval defence presents great difficulties, and that it would not have been a wise thing to attempt any settlement of it at this time. The powers provided being sufficient to meet any emergency, and the Commonwealth having perfect competence to deal with the matter at any time, it is far preferable to allow the question to remain open as it is. One of the courses mentioned would involve the doing away with a good deal that has been done in Victoria. Out of the £126,000 which is paid towards the maintenance of the Australian auxiliary squadron under the naval agreement, £106,000 is contributed by the Australian States, the balance, being made up by New Zealand. In addition to that, the Australian States spend about £75,000 upon local naval forces. Most of this expenditure, as far as permanent forces are concerned, is incurred in Victoria, in connexion with the manning of the Cerberus, but there are also naval brigades which are not permanent, in the various States. All that costs about £75,000 a year in addition to the £106,000 contributed towards the Australian auxiliary squadron. There is the ironclad turret-ship Cerberus in Victorian waters. I believe she is a good strong ship, but there may be a very great difference of opinion as to whether her day, as a fighting ship, is not done. She may be a very good movable floating fort, but I am not going to enter into that question now, because it is one that must be left to something like wise administration hereafter. It is not an easy matter to decide at the moment, because the vessel is manned by men who have been found necessary as a minimum force in time of peace. I am pointing out the wisdom of the course that has been pursued in connexion with the framing of this Bill. Sufficient power is provided, which Parliament may indorse and so meet all emergencies. I now pass on to the general question of military defence.

Mr A McLEAN

- - If we do not make provision under the Defence Bill for the necessary arrangements with the Imperial Government in connexion with naval defence we shall be committing ourselves to such a large amount of expenditure for military purposes that it may be very difficult to make any arrangements subsequently.

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Mr BARTON

- The honorable member for Gippsland reminds me of another difficulty - that we may by committing ourselves to an overweening amount of expenditure upon military defence preclude the possibility of making satisfactory arrangements for naval defence later on, but I may tell him that that is not the intention of the Government. I have sometimes been amused to find in the newspapers statements as to the inordinate expenditure of the Commonwealth, and as to the estimates which we have had hitherto, when most of that accumulation of expenditure arises from the inflation of the sums voted from the various States themselves to those services which have been transferred, and transferred as they stand. Before we had an opportunity of dealing with the finances of the transferred departments these inflations took place. Before

We could take over the defence forces of New South Wales and Victoria, whatever has occurred in the way of expenditure that was not necessary had been done for us, and done at a time when it was known that this Commonwealth was to take control. It has been known for three or four years that the Commonwealth would take control of the Defence department, and the estimates of one department and another, which were made in Adelaide in 1897, have been necessarily swelled since, not only by the increase of the population in the various States, but also by a more profuse expenditure which was not contemplated by those who framed those estimates. As to that matter, therefore, there is an opportunity in the future for dealing in a more economic way with the question of defence. I hope my right honorable friend will take advantage of that opportunity, and I am sure he will be backed up by the Treasurer.

Mr Mauger

- And by the House also.

Mr BARTON

- Yes, and by the House too. We have seen something in print with regard to the extraordinary allowances made to military officers.

Mr Mauger

- Very striking.

Mr BARTON

- I agree that these allowances are excessive. Whatever is absolutely necessary for the up-keep of the officers' branch of the force should be given in the shape of salary and not in the shape of allowances. But it must be remembered that all these allowances - and my honorable friends opposite will bear me out in this statement - have been shown for years, for example, in the military expenditure of New South Wales, at first in the Estimates, and in more recent years in a schedule accompanying the Estimates. So that these things have been going on under the public eye until the Commonwealth took control, and the difficulties now in existence are not only the manufacture of public men, but have grown up under the eye of the public. It is as well to take these things into account, first for the purpose of showing that there ought to be economy, and next, of showing the difficult task of the Commonwealth Ministry in enforcing such economy under the circumstances.

Mr O'Malley

- Now is the time.

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Mr BARTON

- I admit that the present time presents a better opportunity of undertaking that task than was ever before presented, and I hope that the opportunity will be taken advantage of. Passing away from the matter of naval policy, I quite agree with the honorable member for Gippsland that the expenditure upon the land force - whatever it may be - must be largely affected by the amount which we are going to spend upon naval defence. I wish to say a few words regarding the remaining provisions of the Bill in respect Of land defence. In the first place, I wish to make a passing reference to what seemed to thrill through every speech which has been delivered upon this question - -the important subject of gold lace. I do not think there are any gold lace provisions in this Bill. I do not think there is anything which entails loading down the able-bodied soldier with weights of that character. There is no intention of that kind on our part. There are, I suppose, a number of gold-lace uniforms which will require to be worn out if we are to be economical. But at the same time it will be one of my suggestions to my colleague, the Minister for Defence, that the difference in the uniforms of the various grades of the service shall only be sufficient to enable the troops on parade to know who are their officers and to act accordingly. I do not know that one button would be sufficient for this purpose. We are not so primitive as that. But at any rate steps of that character ought to be taken, and I will make that recommendation to my right honorable friend. There is another aspect of the Bill which is perhaps most important. I refer to the provisions relating to a citizen soldiery and to a standing army. A standing army in the ordinary sense of the term is far from being contemplated in the provisions of this Bill. It is impossible in inaugurating a new defence system for six States which have only been amalgamated recently, to say precisely what will be the number of our permanent force, or what will be the number of the militia or volunteers, or of the rifle clubs. That cannot be laid down with precision at the present stage, even if it can be ever done, which I doubt. The policy of the Ministry in this Federal Parliament will be to maintain just such a permanent force as is necessary for the keeping of our guns and munitions of war in order and for providing sufficient drill instruction for the remainder of the force. That, of course, is essential, because we cannot have men made soldiers unless they are trained by experts. The man who has seen so much service as he may have got under the new and isolated conditions of the war in South Africa, could not, because of that experience, be regarded as an efficient instructor in all events and circumstances, of the Australian forces. Therefore, there must be a number of men of high training who will be sufficient to see that our land defences are not taken by surprise, and also that our militia and volunteer forces - and when the time comes our rifle clubs - are properly instructed. I do not think that Ministers dream of going beyond that. I would very much, like that there should be no distinction between volunteers and militia, and that beyond the permanent force there should be nothing but volunteers. But I am afraid that cannot be or cannot be yet. The very fine material which makes the Australian volunteer has not so much leisure as that which makes the English volunteer. Numbers of men of means and leisure belong to the volunteer forces of England, and are glad to belong to them. They would rather spend money upon their soldiery than have money spent upon them. But here we have no leisured class. .

Mr Fowler

- The majority of volunteers at home belong to the masses.

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Mr BARTON

- The majority of them do, but there is a large number who do not. The difference here is that almost without exception the citizen soldier belongs to the masses in the sense that he has to work every day with his brain or his hands, and can ill spare the time to be given to soldiering. If a man takes up his soldiering in the right spirit, that does not mean going leisurely through so many evolutions or obtaining an imperfect acquaintance with conditions as they appear in print. It needs a good deal of hard work to make a good soldier. If we are not going to take this business up in a mere devil-may-care spirit* as a sort of haphazard defence, and if it is to be regular in this sense, that the soldiering will be" earnest and attentive, I am afraid we must make some allowance to those who lose their time to go in for soldiering. The volunteer force, it must always be recollected, is a fluctuating one. With every credit given to those who -are ready to make sacrifices, it must be remembered that the strength of the volunteers depends upon the, spirit of the time. In time of war it may be that those who have allowed their duty to their country to sleep within their breasts for a long period will come out actively as volunteers. But war is a matter of emergency, and a man wants some little training to meet that emergency. It is a splendid thing to be a marksman. I agree with those who have urged that more time must be given to making men efficient with the rifle and a little less time to parade drills. In the old country this matter has- engaged the attention of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts, and there is no reason why it should not engage the attention of the Commander here when he arrives. I have no doubt that it will. But all that means expense. We have still to recollect that in the case of any outwitting of the naval forces of the United Kingdom by any possible combination - and little changes may make a great difference in the power of successful attack - or if that line of defence, were once broken, even though only for a short time,' we must be prepared on shore. Of course we must spend money primarily on having our arms and equipments in order, and in making our men proficient, especially as regards marksmanship. That seems to show that both these arms are necessary. The volunteers will make a very successful force if any prolonged attack occurs, and if the ranks of the citizen soldiery need to be reinforced. There are a large number of volunteers in the principal cities who will always be available. There are a large number such as the force with which the honorable member for Melbourne is connected, who are giving their time and their money in this way. There will always be a large number. But there will not be enough without the militia forces, and to prevent surprises we must have our forces effective. Consistent with economy it must not be forgotten that self preservation is the first of our duties. There is no danger, therefore, of an exaggeration of the number and duties of the permanent force. On the contrary, there ought to be, I think, such a safeguarding of the status of the other branches of' defence - the militia and volunteers - as to see that the heart is not taken out of those who belong to them by any undue preference being given to the permanent force.. The Minister for Defence has been taken to task for his differing from the Committee of Commandants. Let me point out two. important matters in which he has differed from the committee, and ask whether the House does not indorse the action of the Minister. It was the desire of the commandants to make the permanent force officers rank as senior to the volunteer and militia officers for all purposes, and on all occasions. That suggestion was not allowed. Then it was the desire of the committee to bar the appointment of militia and volunteer officers to such positions as that of district commandant. That was not allowed ;. both those avenues of honorable ambition are to be open to all officers. As to the men themselves, I come to a more important question. These ambitions should be such as may animate the men themselves- and in order to attain that, we must make it possible for the citizen-soldier to rise from the ranks to the highest position. In that respect, I am at one with every critic who believes there should be that possibility. This is a matter of administration, and it may be that the House will think that the intervention of the civil power in administration would be a greater safeguard for the advancement of those who distinguish themselves in the force, than if the administration were wholly and exclusively military.

Mr Wilks

- It would kill " jingoism."

Mr BARTON

- It may be that it would kill " jingoism." At any rate, all of us who are professional men, have sometimes too much tendency to deal with matters according to the canons of the profession to which we belong. But where the spirit to be encouraged is one of patriotism, which has a right to certain fair ambitions,

surely there ought to be care taken for the protection of every soldier, to enable him to get his rights if he deserves them in the way of promotion.

Mr Salmon

- The rule in the Victorian Mounted Rifles is that every officer has to pass through the ranks.

Mr BARTON

- And a very good rule, too. Honorable members may ask whether the meaning is that when a general officer commanding comes out to take charge, he is to be hampered at every twist and turn. I say emphatically - no. There is no danger of the sort. When we employ an expert, whether he be soldier, engineer, architect, or barrister, in matters peculiar to the knowledge of his profession - in the technique of the profession, so to speak - we must leave him to act for us, unless we desire to bring disaster upon ourselves. Not to so leave him to act would be as bad as if a man were to design and build his own house, or conduct his own law case.

Sir William McMillan

- But the officer commanding should be consulted on everything, financial and otherwise, in connexion with the forces.

Mr BARTON

- There is no doubt of that. But the necessity for some civil power intervening arises chiefly, of course, on financial questions. An accomplished soldier may be able to tell to perfection what exactly is required, and what will be the result if those requirements are not satisfied. That may be useful as showing how so much money should be spent, but it must not go to the extent of saying how much shall be spent. If the latter were the case, it would be in the power of a military expert to bring financial trouble on the whole community. This is a question which arises in all similar measures; and that is why I want to explain.

Sir William McMillan

- It is in the hands of the Minister.

Mr BARTON

- It is essential for us to have the words "Governor-General" as meaning the Governor-General in Council, not because the Governor-General was made Commander-in-Chief by the Constitution Act, but because this Bill is subject to the Bill which makes "Governor-General" mean the Governor-General in Council. It is necessary, in respect of executive acts of defence, that there should be a responsible Minister, who, I hope, will never unduly intermeddle, but who will be the guardian of the finances of the forces, and also the guardian of citizen-soldier-rights.

Mr Wilks

- Has a commandant been decided on yet?

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Mr BARTON

- We have not had an opportunity yet, I am sorry to say, but I expect to have good news to communicate on that subject very soon. That then, is the position in regard to the question of citizen soldiers and the permanent forces, and the question of military and naval control. I am not disposed to think that if we were, on the one hand, to substitute for the civil control provided in the Bill, an entirely unfettered control by a military authority, or, on the other hand, some civil board or committee not responsible to Parliament, that would be an improvement in any direction, because we would be running the Commonwealth into dangers of one sort or another. Those dangers might arise, so far as the public are concerned, from irresponsible people going to extremes suggested by professional expert knowledge, at a cost too great, and in a direction not fair to the Commonwealth. On the other hand, some civil board or other, not responsible to this House or to the Minister, might, in such a peculiar matter as the defence of the Commonwealth, lead to equally unsatisfactory results. This is a totally different matter from the civil control of the Public Service. Before I pass away from this matter of officers of the citizen soldiers being allowed a fair position in relation to the permanent officers, and also, of course, the citizen soldier himself having the path thrown open to him to become an officer on showing he has the proper merit and knowledge, let me remind honorable members of what is indicated in the records of the war in South Africa. Have not the officers of the citizen soldiery, not to speak of numberless cases of individual valour. On the part of soldiers, distinguished themselves in a very large measure? Have they not put a further claim by their conduct to be put on an equal footing in regard to the permanent soldiery? I will not

particularized, because that would seem to be altogether unfair but take those who have gained the rank of CB., or the Distinguished Service Order, not to speak of those who have gained the Order¹ of St. Michael and St. George. Do not all these cases, as we recollect them, and as they have been notified by cable from England, show that these men are entitled to take rank with any one in the service ?

Therefore, I do not think that by any mere military arbitrary act these officers should be debarred from promotion, any more than I think a private soldier should be blocked from rising to a commission. A further objection has been taken in reference to the age clauses, and also to another portion of the Bill by which there has to be change of command after five years. I take these two objections together, for the purpose of uniting them in one comment upon the criticism I have heard. There is no doubt that those who have command over our citizen soldiers would, if they were transferred to other districts, or ordered to be transferred, either have to resign their commissions or their business as citizens. It has been demonstrated beyond dispute in this debate that we should in this way lose the services of a great many most efficient officers in the militia and volunteer regiments.

Sir William McMillan

- We should lose the benefit of the officer's knowledge of the district.

Mr BARTON

- An officer's knowledge of the district in which he has acted is just as valuable as his command of his corps. It takes a man a little time to form a knowledge of the men under him, and, having gained this knowledge, he may be proceeding to administer the corps to the best advantage, when he is uprooted and placed in a position in which he will have to undergo a second education in regard to those around him. I can see that there may be overwhelming reasons for such transfers with regard to the permanent forces, but I have been convinced by this debate that there are equally overwhelming reasons why it would be arbitrary and unreasonable in regard to officers of citizen soldiers. A good way of obviating this difficulty might be to give power to the Minister, on the recommendation of the general commanding, to extend the period of service in a particular place, upon its being shown by medical or any other necessary examination that the officer is fit to continue to command.

Sir William McMillan

- Where is the necessity for hampering the Government by this limiting provision?

Mr BARTON

- The reason is that there is a tendency, which has been sometimes observed, of men getting too localized in their knowledge and ideas.

Mr Wilks

- And cliquy.

Mr BARTON

- And cliquy. There must always be a reserve power on the part of the authorities in such cases, in order that there may not be a perpetuation of evils of this kind."

Mr McCay

- The difficulty might be met by making the command for a specific period, at the end of which there would be no need to renew it.

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Mr BARTON

- I shall have some suggestions to make upon this point, and the honorable member who has just spoken will see that I am quite alive to his meaning. A similar remark also applies to the age clauses. Instead of the schedule of ages now in the Bill, I think it would be possible to improve the measure by providing an all round age, with power to extend it for a short period in cases of merit and of need to the service. After all, a man can always be dispensed with if he has passed effective service, because service under the Crown means service during the King's pleasure, and if a man becomes unfit his engagement can be terminated. That must always be recollected as one reason against making too arbitrary a rule in regard to age, and for allowing some discretion in cases of merit, where the service itself would be improved and helped by the retention of officers a little beyond the age, provided they show that medically as well as in a military sense they are fit. I do not propose to extend my remarks to a much greater length, but I desire to say a few words with regard to rifle clubs and also on the question of conscription. In regard to rifle clubs, I do not think there is any tendency amongst us as a Ministry to undervalue them in any way.

Members of rifle clubs would have the advantage that when they were called on for necessary training in the way of drill, they would be required to give less time because they would have already gone through one portion. That is so patent that it is almost a platitude to state it; nevertheless, the clubs would constitute a highly useful portion of . the service. Steps should be taken to encourage the creation of marksmen, and I consider that the use of the rifle should be more encouraged in the permanent portion of the service such as the militia and the volunteers - or quite as much encouraged - as in the rifle clubs. But it would be another tiling to carry out the suggestion made by the honorable member for Flinders, that there should be free uniforms, free ammunition, and a capitation grant at the rate of 5s. per annum. If I were to indulge my imagination as to what the cost would be of equipping the existing and expected forces with Only the requisite up-to-date small arms, I should be telling a tale of finance which I think it would be better for honorable members not to exact from me. The only thing to do is to go as far as we can in finding proper ammunition and equipment for our men. But as a Commonwealth we have not an easy task in that matter, because, whilst some expenditure is increased, there are many places and districts in which the supply of arms and ammunition has been allowed to decrease, and the Federal Government must make this decrease good. We must engage soon in the purchase of an amount of ammunition which may seem to the House to be very large, but which will nevertheless be below our actual needs. I wish to impress this upon honorable members, in order that they may see that we have a common duty to perform in this matter, and that any large expenditure which may hereafter be made in procuring arms and- equipment must not be attributed to us, but to those through whom the need for expenditure has arisen.

Mr Crouch

- What does the honorable and learned member mean by extended forces ?

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Mr BARTON

- Any increase in the militia or volunteer forces which honorable members may expect to be made under the Bill. The state of our finances will dictate the whole position, and we are so tied down to the financial aspect that we shall not be able to make any large additions to our forces just at present. In dealing with a department like this from one stand-point and upon one set of general principles, it may be that there will be an opportunity of, making savings in some directions, and the money saved will be applicable to increasing the efficiency of our defences. I cherished that hope before federation, and I cherish it still, and I think it will be realized. With regard to what has been said about conscription, I wish to assure the House that no attempt has been made, and* there is no desire to provide for, in the Bill, anything in the nature of conscription which would come into the same category as continental conscription. Our only desire is to embody in the Bill the assertion of a principle which has been stated to be unnecessary, but which we think should appear in the forefront of a measure like this, because it will be a statement which will inform not only our own people, and especially our youths but also the people of foreign countries, as to what we propose and are able to do in the event of war. We do not mean to suggest that there should be conscription in this country, or that an attempt should be made to compel Australian soldiers to serve abroad. But we wish to lay down the principle that, unless a man is exempt, he owes military service to his country in time of stress. If we are all agreed that that is so, there should be no hesitation about placing a statement to that effect in the forefront of the Bill. I care not about any slight alteration that may be made, so long as we observe the principle. I think, therefore, it will bc a good thing to allow the provision in the Bill to stand. The continental system of conscription is as wide apart from what is provided for in the Bill as two things could be. On the Continent, except in Switzerland, men are taken away from their usual avocations and compelled 1 to devote two years to military training. We do not propose anything of the kind, but provision is made in the Bill for giving an . allowance which will add slightly to a man's means of livelihood, upon his undertaking to devote some attention, in the time, that he can spare from his business, to preparing himself for the defence of his country. We do not force men to do this ; they can remain outside our defence forces. It is only when the national peril is such that the troops have to be called out that men who have stayed outside the defence forces may he compelled to do their duty to their country. It may he said that there will then not be time enough to train men for military service. If, in the month or two which will then be available for training, these men are not made the best soldiers in the world, we think they will be efficient for the work of a citizen soldiery, knowing, as we do, what history

tells us of the defence made by citizen soldiers against invasion. I therefore think that the Bill should not be seriously altered in regard to that matter.. There should be a reserve power, not a conscriptive power, to say to Our citizens - " It is your duty to give military service to your country in time of her distress." I am willing that that meaning should be made clear by any amendment of the clause, but it should be laid down that the duty to which I retells an obligation upon our citizens, and I have very little doubt that honorable members, as representing the people, will voice their willingness to accept it. I apologize for having taken up so much time, but I have had a duty to perform on the part of the Minister for Defence, however feebly I may have discharged it, in replying to the criticisms which have been advanced against the Bill, and I hope I have dealt with them in a fair spirit.

Mr POYNTON

- I have listened with considerable attention to the objections which have been raised against this measure, and I have come to the conclusion that to make its provisions conform with the wishes of the House it must be amended lock, stock, and barrel. I object very much to the unknown quantity contained in the Bill. The Bill may require the expenditure of a very large sum of money in connexion with our defence, but we have not had the slightest information from those who are responsible for the measure as to what the expenditure is likely to be. This year our defence expenditure has been something like £1,200,000, which is a great advance upon the previous expenditure of the States, which amounted to £700,000 or £800,000 a year. I do not believe that there is any likelihood of our being attacked at the present time; but if we knew what money we had available for the purpose of defence, we might cut our coat in accordance with our cloth. Our revenue, however, is still an unknown quantity, because we do not know what the Tariff which is to be proposed will produce. Until we know that, I think that this Bill might very well be hung up. The South African war should have taught us that there is no violent hurry for preparations for defence. Have we not seen in South Africa a handful of Boers defying the greatest power in the world, and causing that power to spend many millions of money? It is hard to over-estimate the cost of the South African campaign to the British Government. But has any one considered what it would cost any other power to transport troops to Australia for the invasion of the Commonwealth 1-

Mr.W atkins. - The honorable member must not forget that the Boers spent a good bit of money in making their preparations.

Mr Wilks

- And they were getting ready for years.

Mr POYNTON

- But it has cost Great Britain many millions to defeat them, and no other power in the world has equal means of transport. The South African war should teach us that encouragement should be given to rifle clubs. But, instead of 'the automatic practice of shooting at fixed targets at a known distance, men should be taught to judge distances. The men who were so successful in South Africa were men who had learned to shoot turkeys and kangaroos with the rifle at unknown distances, and who were accustomed to the use of that arm. We do not want too much military training; we want practical acquaintance with arms rather than the glittering show of parade. . Therefore, we cannot do better than to encourage men to learn the art of shooting. But, as I have pointed out, we do not at the present time know what money we shall have to spend on military matters, and, therefore, I think the question of defence might very well be hung up until we have dealt with the Tariff.

Mr McCay

- The Customs Bill must have become law before we can deal with the Tariff Bill.

Mr POYNTON

- We have been sitting for three or four months now, and we are not very far ahead.

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Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- If every one had talked as much as the honorable member, we should not have been nearly so far ahead.

Mr POYNTON

- I think a reference to Hansard will show that I have not unduly occupied the time of the House.

Mr O'Malley

- The honorable member need not apologize.

Mr POYNTON

- I do not intend to. I shall speak whenever I consider it necessary to do so. If there is to be any true defence, and if the States are to receive that protection which they were led to expect under federation, I cannot conceive of any scheme being complete that does not connect Western Australia by railway with the eastern States. That State is in a worse position than any other so far as being exposed to attack is concerned.

Mr Cameron

- What about Tasmania ?

Mr POYNTON

- Tasmania is so much closer to the more populous States, and whilst she has the honorable member for Tasmania and his brother, who did such good work in South Africa, she need have no fear. So far as naval defence is concerned, I consider that it is beyond us altogether to raise a fleet. One honorable member suggested that we should start by building one man-of-war, which would probably run us into an expenditure of £1,250,000, but if we were to adopt that course our first ship would probably be obsolete before we could construct a second one. If there is a division on this Bill I shall vote against it for the reasons I have advanced. There is no necessity for pushing this matter on at the present stage.

Mr Mauger

- Not in view of all the expenses we have heard of in connexion with the Military department ?

Mr POYNTON

- I very much question whether we shall be able to do anything with regard to military allowances. They are certainly not touched by the Bill, and I very much question whether we can deal with them unless we get rid of the officers, and that will mean the payment of large sums for compensation, because under the Constitution all rights are protected.

Mr McCay

- But they have no rights.

Mr POYNTON

- I think it will probably be found that they have rights. However, I do not think there is any necessity to occupy the time of the House at this stage with this Bill. What is required is that we shall get our Tariff through first in order that we may know what we shall have available to spend on defence.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee :

Clause 1 (Short title).

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- We have three or four Bills on the business paper at the second reading stage. We have had the explanations of Ministers in regard to them, and it would conduce very much to the convenience of members and facilitate business if we went through each of these Bills in succession.

Mr Barton

- I am going right through with the Post and Telegraph Bill as soon as I can.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- That is what I am desiring to ascertain. . I understood that the Minister for Defence was to be here next week.

Mr Barton

- So he will, but I cannot make any promise as regards the Defence Bill until he comes.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I am not speaking in any dictatorial spirit, but I think we ought to go right through with each Bill in succession instead of turning our attention from one Bill to the other as we are now doing. It would save a lot of trouble if the course I suggest were adopted, because it is unreasonable to require that members should come here prepared to speak on the second reading of any one of the three or four Bills. We ought to have some sort of order and some understanding in the matter.

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Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - I have on more than one occasion stated that one of these longer Bills shall be gone on with, and as far as possible adhered to until we have finished with it. I am not going to promise that, however, because I do not wish to involve myself in a breach of a promise.' Occasions may arise when changes must be made in the order, of business, and I am not going to make any promise upon which, if changes were made, I might be attacked as having broken faith. There are always difficulties surrounding the adherence entirely to one measure, and these difficulties are more important to us in the new and difficult position in which we stand. I always said I would go on with the Defence Bill until we reached the committee stage, but that I would not go into committee to deal with the Bill in substance until the return of the Minister for Defence. One reason for that is that I must consult him before the order of the Bill can be fixed. My intention is to go on with the Post-office Bill until it is carried through, and, with that object in view, I will have it placed next to formal matters on the list for Tuesday.

Progress reported.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed (from July 30, vide page 3177) on motion by Sir Philip Fysh -

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. JOSEPHCOOK (Parramatta).I do not intend to occupy much time in dealing with this Bill, although I recognise that it is* perhaps one of the most important with which this Parliament will be called upon to deal. Of all Government institutions, the Post-office is the one that appeals most directly to the people. It is of the utmost importance that in laying down the principles under which this institution is to be governed, we should do nothing to interfere with the liberties of the people, except so far as those liberties may be regarded as license and to the extent, which has always been recognised to be the legitimate sphere of Government, of refusing to sanction anything which is unlawful. The Post-office to-day is a great institution. This was made clear by the figures submitted by the honorable member for Tasmania, Sir Philip Fysh, when moving the second reading of this measure. He quoted figures to show the character of the enormous business which was carried on by this great organisation. Indeed, the Post-office to-day is very different from what it was when it was originally organized in England for the purpose of providing funds to carry on the Duke of York's household, It has become to-day part of our very life, and because of the silent way in which it ramifies into that life we are sometimes apt to overlook the services rendered to us by this organization of Government. In my opinion the Postmaster-General of the Commonwealth ought to occupy a seat in this House instead of in the Senate. The constituencies which return honorable members to this House are small, whilst the constituencies which return senators to the other Chamber are the various States of the Union. As a very natural result, nearly all matters connected with the Post-office are of especial concern to honorable members of this House. I believe that there are two States which have not yet been divided into electorates for the purpose of returning members to this Chamber, but I understand that it is intended to divide them. The work is being undertaken in one of those States by the electoral commission which is now sitting. In the immediate future we may be certain that every State will be divided into constituencies, each of which will send one representative to this House just as is the case now in the larger States. Honorable members here will, therefore, be the means of communication between their constituencies and the Postmaster-General with regard to postal requirements. That is not the case with senators. I believe that because honorable members of this House come more closely into contact with the Postmaster-General, that gentleman should occupy a seat in this Chamber.

Mr O'Malley

- With the War Minister in the Senate.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I think it would be a very much better arrangement if the Minister for Defence was in the Senate and the Postmaster-General occupied a seat in this Chamber. I do not urge this in the nature of a complaint, because the treatment which we receive here by those who act for the Postmaster-General is uniformly courteous. But it is always inconvenient to deal indirectly with the Postmaster-General instead of directly. This Bill does not pretend to lay down the policy of the Post office with regard to the charges to be levied and other postal conditions. In the very fore-front of this Bill I take exception to clause 2, which seems to

give the Government the right to continue the unequal conditions of the Post-office which now obtain in the various States. Some of the States, for instance, have the penny postage system, others have not. Some have postal advantages which others have not. We were constantly told in the contest which preceded the adoption of the Constitution Act that one of the results of federation would be to level up the conditions of our post and telegraphic services. That was held out as one of the great advantages to be derived from federation. This Bill, on the very face of it, sets out with the distinct object of perpetuating the present inequalities and of carrying on the services as they are now carried on. I cannot help feeling that this is a mistake. If ever there was a time when we ought to make a bold plunge with regard to our post and telegraph rates, it ought to be at the beginning of Inter-State free-trade. I believe that the breaking down of the artificial barriers which at present exist, and the institution of Inter-State free-trade will give such a tremendous fillip to our Inter-State relationships as to make up the margin of loss that would accrue from the adoption of the penny postage system. That has been the case in Canada and in New Zealand. In Canada there was at first a slight loss. In New Zealand there was no loss. The aggregate business there under the lower rates of payment is much greater than it was under the higher. If this is so in New Zealand, where no advantages are to be gained by the breaking down of internal barriers, surely the abolition of those barriers here will give such a fillip to our commerce as to more than recompense us. To me it seems peculiarly appropriate that, with the advent of Inter-State free-trade, we should make this plunge and begin our national life by adopting the penny postage system. In moving the second reading of this Bill, the honorable member for Tasmania, Sir Philip Fysh, gave us some figures which showed that there was a resultant loss at the present time on the operations of this department of about £200,000 per annum. The Postmaster-General, in introducing the Bill to the notice of the Senate, said that the loss was about £119,000. That is a very small item indeed when spread over the whole of the States, and should afford no obstacle to the immediate adoption of the lower uniform rate. I do not pretend to be a lawyer and to interpret the Constitution, but it appears to me that if we are going to continue differential postage rates in the various States we shall come into conflict with section 99 of the Constitution Act. I leave that point, however, for other honorable members to deal with, as I do not pretend to be a lawyer. We are told by the Postmaster-General and his representative in this Chamber that the Post-office is going to take away from us some of the privileges which we now enjoy. If that be so, what advantage are we to gain from the accomplishment of federation, so far as the post and telegraph services are concerned ?

Sir Philip Fysh

- Take away these privileges from whom ?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I think that the honorable member said the public must concede something. ^

Sir Philip Fysh

- Newspapers.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

-The honorable member said that the public must concede something, the press must concede something, and the Government must concede something, all with the object of striking a financial balance at the Post-office, It appears to me that the present central control is very much more cumbersome than was the State control formerly. I do not believe that this is essential to federation. It indicates rather that there has been a precipitancy in taking over these departments before a better scheme had been, preferred for their more facile working. The Government were so anxious to multiply their functions that, the moment they had the power so to do, they took over this department without waiting to elaborate a plan which would give us a better and not a worse service. The result is that the machine moves very much more slowly than it used to do under State control." As an instance, I may mention a letter which I wrote to the Postmaster-General in reference to a certain matter. A fortnight elapsed before I received an acknowledgment of the letter. How long it will take to get the business through I do not pretend to know. But I insist that the advent of federation was supposed to be the * beginning of a new order of things for the more efficient working of the Post-office. If we are to have a more cumbersome scheme, where is the advantage of taking over that department ?

Mr Thomas

- What is the advantage of federation?

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I do not say that. I do not think that federation is an inherent disadvantage. The difficulty arises from the too great precipitancy with which the department was transferred. Another illustration is afforded by the fact that when an honorable member wants repairs effected to some local Post-office he is told that there are no funds available. But the Treasurer tells me that there are funds. If there are funds available for this purpose, and if the States do not know that these funds are available, that indicates a want of proper relationship between the State control and the federal control. It is due to a want of proper and efficient organization of the federal machine. If these difficulties are to be met with on the threshold of federation, I think that we ought to strain a point to give the people some compensating advantages, and it would have been a timely thing at the beginning of our federal existence to have boldly gone in for the penny postage system. Within a measureable distance I think we ought to revert to sixpenny telegrams within the States. I take exception also to the attitude of the Postmaster-General, as to his functions, and as to the prime object which the Post-office should have in view. I find from the speech of the Postmaster-General that he lays down this dictum -

The duty I take it of the Postal department is to convey messages, newspapers, and parcels for payment, and I think we will never get upon a sound financial basis until all the revenue that is collected by the Postal department is used exclusively for that purpose and for no other.

I take the strongest possible exception to that dictum. The idea of running a Post office is not to make money out of it, but to serve the convenience of the public. If we make money in the process so much the better, but the prime purpose of the Post-office is not that it shall be run merely as a private concern is run, but that it shall serve equally the whole of the people, and be strained to suit the convenience of the public in their social, commercial, private, and domestic life. If we are to run the Post-office to make money, the first thing we shall have to do is to cut away all the subsidies which that department now pays for the conveyance of its mails, and the keeping open of its telegraph and cable communication. What does the Post-office get out of the cable communication directly, arguing the matter as one of pounds, shillings, and pence? For years past we have been paying the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company £32,000 annually for cable communication. Not a penny has come directly to the Post-office in return for that expenditure. The same remark is applicable to the subsidizing of our mail boats. None of these services pay for themselves. If we are to apply the principle of pounds, shillings, and pence to the Post-office, and to lay down the dictum that our duty is to convey messages, parcels, and newspapers only for payment, we shall have to lop off all these subsidies to begin with.

Sir William McMillan

- It is possible for the Post-office to be made to pay, and at the same time for it to offer all conveniences to the public.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am not arguing the possibility of such a thing. I believe that it is possible to make the Post-office pay. We have merely to regulate our outlay by our income and the thing is done. The man who has the powers which are proposed to be given to the Postmaster-General under this Bill need have no fear of being unable to make the department pay. He has only to lop off the privileges which we now enjoy until the paying point is reached. The Postmaster-General proposes to do that. We were told the other night that the Government were going to take away £80,000 worth of our privileges as a first instalment of this idea of making the Post office pay. In this connexion reference has been made to a probable discontinuance of the practice of carrying newspapers and weather telegrams free of charge, and of other privileges which the people as a whole now enjoy. But let it be understood that whatever is thus gained in money will be lost from the point of view of the convenience of the whole community.

Mr THOMAS

- Why not charge that amount of money to the proper departments?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- What on earth difference would that make to the nation as a whole? It is a mere matter of bookkeeping.

Sir William McMillan

- It is the only check upon extravagance.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I doubt if it would even be a check upon extravagance. That is the only argument which could be advanced in its favour. I doubt whether we ought to take such an extreme step, at this early stage of our career, in a new country which needs development. I could understand a balance being sought by those commercial methods in the older and more thickly settled countries of the world, but our main purpose on this continent is development, and to give as far as possible those communal advantages which arise from the aggregation of the people in large numbers, to those in our back country who cannot enjoy the privileges we have in more settled parts. It becomes a question, therefore, whether, and to what extent, these advantages and communal privileges should be extended into the back parts of the country, or whether the people there should be sacrificed - for that is simply what it means - to the idea of striking a balance in the Post office at this early stage of our federal career. I say again that the main purpose of the Post-office, particularly in a new country like this, is the convenience of the people. If we can make the Post-office pay, all the better ; but I go the length of saying that a bold policy now would be economically good. I believe, as I have already said, that we are on the eve of such an advance in our commercial interests, and the correspondence is going to be so much greater as to readily overtake any debit balance that might be caused by reverting to the smaller rates. We have been told that greater care is to be taken in the Post office in the letting of mail contracts, so that the department may have nothing whatever to do with opening up passenger conveniences in the interior. The Postmaster-General tells us that very often postal contracts are let for the reason that they are needed in order to give travelling conveniences; and that is so in some cases to a limited extent, though, here again, we cannot strike a hard-and-fast rule. While the Post-office gives with one hand it receives with the other, and receives very much more than it gives, if the country be taken as a whole. Let me illustrate what I mean. In the carriage of the European mails, for instance, we get a weekly service guaranteed for the small sum of a little over £70,000 a year. But is it that payment which gives us the service? Is it not the passenger traffic, and the goods and commercial traffic generally, independently of the mails, which guarantee the ships coming here? If our European mails depended on the ' payment I have mentioned, we should have a very poor chance of getting the communication. For the benefits of which the Postmaster-General speaks, as given to the people in the direction indicated, the Postal department gets greater advantage, postally speaking, than is given to the community, so far as striking a balance is concerned in pounds, shillings, and pence. Let me tell honorable members what takes place now. In New South Wales, in order to carry the mails last year, there were travelled over 12,000,000 miles at a, COSt of £160,000, or an average per mile of 3£d. In Victoria there were travelled over 7,750,000 miles at a cost of £93,000, or an average of a little under 3d. per mile. In Queensland the distance covered was 6,500,000 miles at a cost of £94,000, or an average of 3Ad per mile. Will honorable members tell me that if this matter be reduced to one of pounds, shillings, and pence, and postal considerations alone are to be regarded, the Postmaster-General will get his mails carried at an average of 3d., or 3 £d., or 3-Jd. per mile ? The plain fact of the matter is that many of the postal contractors make no profit whatever out of the money paid to them by the department, but rely for their return on the passengers they cany ; and if we did not give these reciprocal advantages to other sections of the community, we could not get our mails carried at these ridiculously low rates. When we are talking about what the Post-office does for other people, we ought not to forget, per con*a, what this national traffic does for the Post-office in the way of facilitating its arrangements. The Post-office is so interwoven with the commercial life of the community in all its ramifications, that we cannot reduce a great department like this to a mere matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. In the way of weather telegrams, for instance, it is estimated that in New South Wales there is furnished in formation which, if paid for, would cost about £35,000 per annum. Do honorable members suppose for a moment that if all that' information had to be paid for it would be given? Undoubtedly it would not be given ; and the fact that the information costs practically nothing is the only reason why this information has been furnished so freely in the past. In replying on this point, the Postmaster-General said that this particular kind of telegraphic information costs as much as any other. That is correct from an abstract point of view, but not from a practical point of view. Does the Postmaster-General mean to say thathe employs any more hands in the up-country post-offices by reason of the weather telegrams which are sent in the morning or the evening, as the case may be? The fact is that the employes in the Post-office do this work in addition to their other work, and they get no more pay, in the same way as they would get no less pay if the information were not sent.

From a practical, common-sense stand-point, no one can pretend to say that the Post-office should pay for everything that is done in the way of distributing information in the country. Further, I say that the Post-office is preserved as a monopoly for the convenience of the people, rather than with any idea of making it a paying commercial concern. If we are going to have the office made to pay - if the Post-office is to be run because it will pay, and run for what it will pay - we might as well leave it to private people. The idea of having a State monopoly is that the people may be guaranteed a service which is uniform as to its cost, and uniform, as far as may be, as to its utility and value. For all these reasons it would seem best that the monopoly should be in the keeping of the State rather than given over to private individuals, who could, at their own sweet will, adopt such preferences as they deemed desirable. In America, as honorable members know, telegraphs are in private hands, and all sorts of preferences are given, and all sorts of inequalities exist. The same might very well be experienced here, did not the State resolutely treat the postal service as a monopoly. ; But it is not the idea that the Post-office should be made to pay which constitutes the chief reason for its being a monopoly, but that it may be utilized for the convenience of the people in all the ramifications of our social and commercial relations.

Mr O'Malley

- Telegraphing in the United States is much cheaper than here.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I have no doubt. But does not the honorable member see that my point is that if we are going to run the Post-office in order to make it pay, it could, perhaps, be made to pay better in the hands of private individuals? I do not know whether that would be the case here, though the honorable member says it is the case in America. I do not care about this idea of the Post-office paying, except that we want to make it pay if that can be done consistently with conveniences being given to the public. The main purpose of the Post office is not to make money, and we should keep that steadily in view in making such disposition of it as we do from time to time.

Sir William McMillan

- We must also keep the principle in view of its being made a self-supporting service.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member may make it a self-supporting service, but with the limited constituency we have in this young country, we could only do that by taking away some of the present privileges.

Sir William McMillan

- I do not say it can be done, but it is the principle which, in the main, ought to guide us.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- In connexion with the conferment of further privileges that view might be taken, but, when it comes to lopping off privileges we now enjoy, it is a different matter.

Sir William McMillan

- That is another thing.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- We have had it stated that the first thing to be done in connexion with the postal system is so to arrange its business that we may get a financial balance. But, the first duty of the Commonwealth should be to so arrange its postal and telegraph facilities that the greatest possible convenience of the people of the continent may be served. I have already referred to our foreign mails, and the same remarks may be made in regard to other services. For the Canadian service in New South Wales there is paid a subsidy of £10,000 a year, though that service does not return in postage anything like an equivalent to the subsidy. If I remember rightly, only some £1,200 a year is returned in the way of postage ; but we think the service pays New South Wales, and I suppose the subsidy will go on under the Commonwealth. Why do we think it pays New South Wales to make this contribution ? It is not for any postal convenience, because we can send our letters by the other route direct to America; but it is because we believe it to be in the interests of the people of New South Wales that they should have direct mail communication with Canada. Further, we believe it to be to the interests of New South Wales that a line of commercial steamers should ply regularly between Canada and that State, and in that respect New South Wales is amply recompensed for every penny paid towards the cost of maintaining the service. Then we have some idea in regard to the carriage of newspapers, which I do not propose to touch on at present. Newspapers are carried free

through the post in three of the States ; the underlying idea of this being that newspapers, in a country where the aim is development and the pushing of communal advantages and conveniences of settlement into the back parts, are valuable as active educational agents. Whether that view be correct I am not prepared to say at present, although personally, I think, that whatever we have of educational advantages, so far as political life is concerned, we owe mainly to newspapers. Whatever we may sometimes think about the views and the privileges of newspapers, it appears to me only fair to say that they do more than any other institution at present in the way of educating people on social questions, and in conveying' news of what is stirring in the world, thus leading the public to take a just, comprehensive, and intelligent view of their responsibilities as citizens. Referring to the Bill itself, I must say that since it left the Senate it is in a very much better form than when originally introduced. The framing of the Bill was more or less a piece of patchwork, sections of State Acts having been incorporated with the usual result. The Senate has, however, rectified many of the anomalies, though some, it seems to me, yet remain. In regard to our mail contracts and clause 15, when this matter was before another place, an effort was made to incorporate a provision that all contracts should be operated by our own labour and not by foreign labour. The position has changed even since the Bill was introduced in the Senate, and we find that the second contracting party in the matter of our European mails has also reverted to black labour. I feel this matter to be so serious that, if it be raised in committee, I shall be bound to vote for a clause providing that black labour shall not be used in preference to our own white labour. "We, and not the coolies of India, maintain this service ; and that is an essential fact. It is not equal treatment when people who contribute nothing to the service - who are not concerned directly in it, and who have no responsibility - are given preference over our own labourers, who have to pay to keep the service in existence. It is time we put our foot down, and said that the country which maintains the service shall at least be considered so far as the labour which operates it is concerned. I do . not intend to speak at any great length, because this is a machinery Bill, and we may have all this discussion again in committee. ' But I want to make some reference to clauses 53, 55, and 56, which are known as the "Tattersall" clauses. I said nothing this morning when the question was raised as to the bona fides of petitions presented to the House, because I intended to say one or two words at this stage on the same matter. In the first place, it occurs to me that in clause 55 there is no provision which will prevent Tattersall's sweeps being continued in Tasmania.

Mr Spence

- Is that a lawyer's opinion?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am afraid my opinion on this point is not so good as that of a lawyer, though I may say that some of the best lawyers in Parliament are of the same opinion as myself. Senator Sir Josiah Symon, I believe, has the greatest possible doubt as to whether this provision as drawn will shut Tattersall's sweeps out of Tasmania, and, I understand, he is going to give them the benefit of the doubt until we have a High Court to settle the matter. When we find a gentleman of so high a legal standing as Sir Josiah Symon expressing such an opinion, we may well admit there is some doubt as to the powers under the clause. Reading the clause from the point of view of a humble layman, it seems to me that a Tattersall's sweep is a lottery or scheme of chance which is sanctioned by law, and that there is nothing to prevent its being carried on under the clause, which expressly states that if the Postmaster-General has any reasonable ground to suppose that a person is engaged

In promoting or carrying out a scheme connected with any such assurance, agreement, or security, . or a lottery or game of chance not sanctioned by law he may do the things mentioned in the Bill. If Tattersall's is not a scheme of chance, what other terms describes it ?

Sir Philip Fysh

- Paragraph (a) might enlighten the honorable member.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I do not know that it does. There may be other games than Tattersall's provided for in paragraph (a), but paragraph (b) seems to me to be intended to meet the case more than paragraph (a), because it distinctly uses the words "lottery or scheme of chance not sanctioned by law." As Tattersall's, however, is sanctioned by law in Tasmania, I do not think that the Bill will affect it.

Mr Piesse

- Tattersall's is not a lottery sanctioned by law.

Sir Philip Fysh

- Reading the three paragraphs together, there is very little doubt as to the result.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- It seems to me that we cannot more accurately describe Tattersall's than as a game of chance sanctioned by law. I never tried to win a Tattersall's sweep, but other honorable members who may have tried will know by experience that it is a game of chance, and that the chances very often go against them. Whatever may be said of this clause, the intention of the framers of the Bill was to bring Tasmania into line with the rest of the States as far as Tattersall's is concerned. In five out of six States it has already been declared that Tattersall's shall not be countenanced by the Post-office, and it is now intended that it shall be no longer countenanced in Tasmania. The only alternative will be to revert to the old condition of things in the whole of the other States.

Mr O'Malley

- Adams is a philanthropist.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I suppose he is. He gets 10 per cent, on all the money that is paid in, and makes hundreds of thousands of pounds.- However, we are not concerned with Mr. Adams, whom I believe to be an honorable and honest man. I am opposed to the countenancing, in any shape or form, of anything that may be done by the Post office to minister to the passion of gambling that is doing so much to degrade the people of this continent; and anything in this Bill that aims at withdrawing any such countenance will have my support. With regard to the means taken to get signatures to the petitions which have been presented to this House, I have no hesitation in saying that many people attached their signatures in the belief that they were petitioning against something altogether different from that which they actually signed against. I believe that thousands of the signatures would never have been obtained if it had been made clear that the petition was simply in favour of granting facilities for the carrying on of Tattersalls sweeps at Hobart under federation. What the petitioners were told can easily be deduced from the way in which the petitions are printed. All the big letters relate to the proposed violation of the secrecy of correspondence by the Post-office authorities, and everything has been designed to keep horse-racing and gambling in the background. People have been told in big naming type that it was intended to protest against the opening of their letters by the Postmaster-General. I have had four years' experience in the Post-office in New South Wales, and I can say that all the fears sought to be aroused in the minds of the people who signed these petitions are absolutely groundless. I venture to say that it cannot be established that a letter addressed in the ordinary way has ever been opened by a country postmaster upon mere suspicion, during the existence of the Post-office. I took the trouble to question a Deputy Postmaster-General on this point a day or two ago, and he told me that within his experience, extending over 30 or 40 years, he had never known a letter to be opened on mere suspicion in a country post-office. He said, further, that he had never known a case, where letters had been opened in a post-office unless directed to a prohibited address, or unless there was some outward indication that the letter contained something which was proscribed by law. That is the ordinary rule in the Post-office, and the idea that country postmasters are going to concern themselves in these matters is unreasonable. Any country postmaster would in such a case be told that it was not his business to open letters, but to forward them to the head office. At the metropolitan centres, letters which are open to suspicion are not opened by the Postmaster-General, nor by the Deputy Postmaster-General, but by two sworn clerks in the dead-letter office ; and I have never heard that any secrets have leaked out from the Post-office. Therefore, all these fears are so many chimeras, that may be brushed aside. These petitioners are not so much concerned about the secrecy of the Post-office as they are about the carrying on of Tattersall's sweeps' and other gambling transactions of that kind. Why is it that nothing is said in these petitions about other proscribed traffic than that relating to gambling? It is open to the customs officials, under the Customs Act, to open any letters that are supposed to contain any indecent matter ; but we do not find that any objection is taken to that, and the opponents of the Bill leave out all reference to many of the matters that are dealt with in this 55th clause. At the public meetings held in reference to this Bill, all reference to Tattersall's has been omitted, and attention has been confined entirely to the question of the violation of the secrecy

of correspondence passing through the Post office. At a recent public meeting one speaker stated that he purposely refrained from referring to Tattersall's, and objected to the Bill on the ground that it gave the Post-office authorities powers that were not contained in any other legislation in the world. I would, however, inform that gentleman, although he is a very high legal authority, that the same powers as are to be enjoyed under this Bill are being exercised in every country in the world where a just and reasonable control is exercised in the public interest. The Post-office is a common carrier, and regards itself as such, and no letter is ever opened on any pretence unless it is made abundantly clear that it ought not to be carried in accordance with the law. I say further that no letter has ever been opened except in the dead-letter office.

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Mr Sawers

- Why not stop betting telegrams? If I were to send a telegram asking some one to put £5 on Carbine, would the honorable member stop it?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- If the honorable member's telegram were brought under my notice, as Postmaster-General, I probably would stop it. I admit that the honorable member's question is a legitimate one, and that if we are going to prohibit gambling by refusing to deliver letters we should also refuse to countenance gambling by transmitting betting telegrams.

Mr Cameron

- Then we must refuse to carry papers as well.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- One thing at a time. None of the enormities which are spoken of by the petitioners and other opponents of the Bill, ever takes place or ever will take place, even if the Bill be passed in its present form. I do not say that the wording of the Bill should not be altered in some respects. Clause 53 allows the letters of persons adjudged to be bankrupt to be intercepted by the Postmaster-General on the order of a court of competent jurisdiction. Our custom over in New South Wales is, that before any letter can be intercepted in any way whatever a warrant has to be obtained from the Governor. Under this Bill, however, the Postmaster-General can, on cause being shown, intercept a letter on his own responsibility. Now, this is an alteration that is made purely in the interests of the public. The other day a man had a bank draft sent to him, and he wrote out a receipt for it, but instead of putting the receipt into the letter, he put the draft there, and only discovered his mistake after he had posted the letter. He went to the Postmaster-General, and told him of the mistake, and said that if he did not get the letter back he would have no money for three months. The Postmaster-General satisfied himself as to the bona fides of the man, intercepted the letter, and gave the man his draft back, and sent him away quite happy. That is the way in which the power of the Postmaster-General is used in the Post-office, and that is why the Bill is framed as it is. It frequently happens that one man, on failing to receive a letter from a friend, becomes very much incensed at the seeming neglect, and, during the height of his resentment, sits down and writes a warm communication, which would probably have the effect of rupturing friendly relations of many years standing. Perhaps by the next post the delayed reply may come from the apparently neglectful friend, and the man who has written the second letter in the height of his indignation rushes off to the Post-office to intercept it. These are frequent cases, and the powers, given in the Bill are intended to meet the public requirements and not to give unduly arbitrary powers to the postal authorities. These powers, high and big as they are, are used with the greatest discretion, and infinite good has resulted.

Mr MAUGER

- Did the honorable member have occasion to use these powers when he was Postmaster-General?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Certainly; but we had to obtain the warrant of the Governor before we could intercept a letter. There are all kinds of letters carried, some of them containing fine large prospectuses of lotteries, and so on, sent out here in the hope that unsuspecting individuals will send their money back. It frequently happens, when people who have sent money in response to these prospectuses find out that they have been imposed upon, that they tusk the postal authorities to intercept their letters by cabling, so that honorable members will see that the power is really a safeguard to the public.

Mr Page

- Does the honorable member know of his own knowledge that that has taken place ?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I do, because we intercepted a letter either to India or Spain, just before I gave up the control of the Post office in Sydney. A man had been induced to send £50 away to one of these places on representations made to him, and on being afterwards persuaded that the whole thing was a swindle, he communicated with us, while his letter was still on the water, and we intercepted it and got his money back.

Mr MAUGER

- Why are these gambling sheets allowed to circulate ?

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Because the Post office does not do what certain people- say it does - because the Post-office does not pry into every letter. The Post-office does not look at letters sent in the ordinary way, unless it is brought prominently under their notice that a letter contains something which is proscribed by law. I say again, with regard to the petition that has been presented, that a large number of the signatures have been obtained under false pretences, and that the sole purpose of the petition is to secure further facilities for Tattersalls sweeps. The moment the people become aware that there is nothing unusual proposed under this

Bill, they will see that their signatures have been obtained by means that ought not to have been resorted to. It is a common thing for the Post-office to be used as a means of detecting crime. When communications are passing between people whose affairs have been brought within the jurisdiction of a court, the court may, if it thinks that the interests of justice would be served by so doing, order that such letters shall be opened. But before putting such a provision into operation, it is necessary to get the order of the court. I am inclined to go still further, and to provide in clause 53 that letters shall be opened only upon the warrant of the Governor-General. That would be an additional safeguard. I do not propose to say very much with regard to the other clauses of the Bill. Concerning Tattersall's sweeps in Hobart, I feel that we should do as we have done in all the other States.

Mr Cameron

- They legalize gambling in New South Wales.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Why does the honorable member for Tasmania talk like that ? Does the honorable member know of any criminal statute in the world which entirely prevents crime ?

Mr Sawers

- I do not call this crime.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am not arguing that it is crime in the sense that murder is a crime. I am merely showing the honorable member that it is impossible to have any perfect statute.

Mr Sawers

- Will the honorable member take steps to prevent the transmission of betting telegrams?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I quite expect to see the honorable member for New England take action in reference to that matter. I have nothing more to say upon this point, save that I hope we shall bring Tasmania into line with the rest of the States. I believe that the Post-office is an institution which ought to minister to the convenience and welfare of the people of the States, and not to a practice which has a tendency to undermine that welfare. I go further and say, that to carry traffic of this kind knowingly is to share in the moral responsibility attached to it, and since the Post-office belongs to all the people, no practice should be resorted to which so evidently aims at violating the principles of the majority who use it. The Bill contains some very good provisions. For example, clause 83, if passed, will lead to a great difference in the appearance of our streets. It provides that instead of cumbersome telegraph poles studding the streets, and making them unsightly and even dangerous in case of fire, cables may be run up the sides of buildings, and wires carried over the tops of houses. This is a provision which is largely availed of in London at the present moment. There, it is a rare thing to see wires in the streets. They are all carried over the tops of the houses, and thus all possible inconvenience is obviated. Any one can readily

.appreciate the great advantages to be gained by this simple means of overcoming present difficulties. I do not intend to make an exhaustive examination of the other provisions which require criticism. Doubtless other honorable members will do that. I repeat that the Post-office ought to be conducted to suit the convenience of the people. It has been well described as the hundred-handed Argus which carries our wants and wishes from one end of the earth to the other, and, if need be, wafts a sigh from the Indus to the Poles. I repeat that we should discountenance anything which conduces to the deterioration of the race, or which ministers to those passions which we believe are not for the uplifting of humanity, but have rather an opposite tendency. That ought to be our object, and if we attain it, We shall do well.

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Mr CLARKE

- I think, that the House is indebted to the honorable member for Parramatta for the information which he has given to honorable members, and for the light which he has thrown on this Bill. As Postmaster-General in New South Wales for many years, the honorable member is in the position to speak with a great deal of authority upon postal matters. Personally, I feel that his speech will assist the House in arriving at a reasonable conclusion upon this important measure. At the same time, I do not agree with all that the honorable member said, although I am quite willing to admit that, as an administrator of the Postal department in the adjoining State of New South Wales, he showed very great ability. I am not in agreement with the honorable member when he says that the Government are acting wrongly in taking to themselves power under clause 2 to continue some of the regulations under existing Postal Acts. Doubtless the honorable member is anxious to see a uniform penny postage system introduced as early as possible. But the Government will be making a mistake if, before knowing exactly how the finances will pan out, they rush blindly into the adoption of such a scheme. I believe in a uniform penny postage scheme, and I have faith that the Government will introduce it at the earliest possible moment. But I do not wish to see such a scheme introduced until we know exactly how the ledger balances. I agree with the honorable member for Parramatta that the Postal department ought not to be run altogether upon commercial lines. In administering a great department of this character, the object should be, whilst not altogether ignoring the financial considerations of the Post-office, to extend postal facilities to the out of the way places in the back blocks of the various States. I have had instances brought before me in which the Postal department seem to have adopted a very unwise policy. Instances have come under my notice where in out-of-the-way places a resident has offered to conduct a post-office, if established, free of charge, besides undertaking to bear the cost of conveying the mails perhaps a distance of ten, twelve, or fifteen miles. But for some reason or other the Postal department absolutely refuse to accept offers of that sort.

Mr Mauger

- A good job too. It would lead to sweating of the very worst sort.

Mr Mahon

- Nothing of the kind.

Mr CLARKE

- The honorable member for Melbourne Ports, if he had lived in these out-of-the-way places, would quickly alter his tune. Considering the hardships which these people endure, and that their only means of communication with their fellows is through the medium of the Post-office, I think that the authorities should unbend from the position which they have taken up.

Mr Mauger

- Give the people all they want, but pay for the service.

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Mr CLARKE

- I do not think that the honorable member for Melbourne Ports understands this question. He has lived too much in and around Melbourne. If he resided in the back-blocks he would entertain very different views. Another complaint against the Post-office has reference to the supply of local shipping reports. A couple of days ago a case was brought under my notice where the postal authorities refused to supply local shipping news. It is a place situated on the coast of New South Wales, and the movements of steamers going to and from Sydney is a matter of vital importance to the shippers in that locality. The cost of supplying these reports would not exceed £3 or £4 a year, but the department state that the facilities

sought cannot be granted. Since the Federal Government have taken over the control of the Post-office that department seems to be more hidebound than ever. I want to make due allowance for the fact that the Federal Government have just taken over a new department which has not yet got properly on its legs. I recognise that it takes a little time to put everything in smooth working order. But after making such an allowance it seems to me that the Federal Government are rather slow in realizing the wants of the country, and therefore equally slow in responding to them. At the end of last month I drew the attention of the Postmaster-General to one or two cases which had been brought under my notice with regard to the establishment of telephonic communication between certain parts of New South Wales. I asked whether it was the intention of the Government to carry out proposals which had been entered into by the State Government, prior to the transfer of the Post and Telegraph department to the Commonwealth, and if so how long it would be before those proposals were given effect to. The answer which I received was as follows : -

I have the honour, by direction, to inform you that as such lines are constructed from loan funds, no action can be taken until such funds are available, but so far as this department is concerned there will be no undue delay in dealing with the matter.

This letter did not surprise me very much, but I was surprised to-day to hear, in answer to a question by the honorable member for Gwydir, that there were funds available. I hope that the present condition of affairs will not be unduly prolonged. In one of the cases to which I refer, the guarantee has actually been signed, and the guarantors approved of by the Postal department of New South Wales. This matter has been hung up for a considerable time, although it was on the verge of completion when the department was taken over. It is a mystery to me why it cannot now be gone on with without this unnecessary delay. I hope that the Federal Government will impose a postage on newspapers. Notwithstanding the educational effect which newspapers have on the community, I think that to carry tons and tons of newspapers over the different States without any postage being paid upon them is more than the Government should undertake. It is a reasonable thing to impose some charge for their carriage. In country districts, the mail bags are frequently made up of newspapers alone.

Mr Mahon

- Metropolitan papers generally.

Mr CLARKE

- Tes, they are chiefly metropolitan newspapers.

Mr Page

- The honorable member must be referring to New South Wales.

Mr CLARKE

- New South Wales is not the only State in which newspapers are carried free of charge. I now want to come to a matter which engaged a good deal of attention during the passage of the Bill through the Senate, and was also the subject of some comment in the earlier part of the debate this sitting. I refer to clause 55, called by some the " Tattersall " clause. I am one of those who do not object to this clause because it is likely to interfere with Tattersall. Personally I am not concerned about Tattersall or anybody else who chooses to run a sweep. But I do not want to leave the Postmaster-General or his officers too great a power in opening letters, and I do not want to see the Federal Government exercise a power, even if they are right in exercising that power, in such a way that it can be construed as interfering with the right of any State. If such a power were exercised in the direction indicated, it would be overriding and interfering with State rights. I do not -pretend to speak as a lawyer) but I think it will be admitted that every State has the right to pass its own laws with regard to gambling and betting.

Mr Mauger

- If that does not injure any other State.

Mr CLARKE

- These laws can only apply to the State which passes them.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The point is, can a State use the Post-office in any way it thinks fit?

Mr CLARKE

- It will be admitted no one has so far contradicted the statement - that each State has the right to pass its own anti-gambling laws, whether they be against betting, lotteries, or totalizators. In the State of

Tasmania an Act was passed, not called an Act to legalize lotteries, but rather an Act to control lotteries, and at the same time there was legislation passed prohibiting betting. Now it is proposed to pass clauses which some interpret as giving the Postmaster-General or his officers power | to open and intercept letters to any person in any of the States or anywhere else, who may be engaged in an illegal occupation, so far as gambling is concerned.

Mr Piesse

- The name- must be gazetted first.

Mr CLARKE

- Of course certain formalities have to be complied with, but that fact does not make the interpretation any less accurate. That the Postmaster-General, having complied with these formalities, may have these letters opened, is in my opinion an interference with the rights of the State of Tasmania.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- What right does it contravene ?

Mr CLARKE

- It contravenes, the Act which Tasmania passed, called " The Anti Gambling Act."

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Tattersall's sweeps could still be conducted in Tasmania.

Mr CLARKE

- From the interjection, I take it that the honorable member means, to infer that if I addressed a letter to Tasmania, to the address of the gentleman who is conducting these sweeps, it might be intercepted at any of the post-offices in Victoria

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- My point is that, this Bill only deals with the Post office aspect of the matter

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Mr CLARKE

- Then I do not understand the honorable member's contention. In illustration of what I mean, I may say that each of the States at present has power to pass laws dealing with the liquor traffic. If five out of the six States pass prohibition laws and the sixth State, which we will assume, for the sake of argument, is Tasmania, chooses to continue to- trade in liquor as at present, does any honorable member mean to tell me that the Minister for Trade and Customs would be justified in forbidding, or in not passing through the customs, liquor which might be consigned to that State, simply because the other States had decided not to carry on the trade ? Such a thing is monstrous and absurd. It may be argued that because people outside Tasmania are not concerned in her gambling laws, or her liquor traffic, therefore, the clause does not override the rights of that State. But if the customs officer or the chief of customs has no right to forbid liquor, for instance, entering Tasmania, I contend that the Postmaster cannot stop letters without overriding State rights.

Mr Piesse

- The liquor is drunk in Tasmania,, but the gambling is done here.

Mr CLARKE

- I am speaking 'of the question in its broadest aspect. If the State right is overridden in the one case, it must be in the other. I do not say the =ass9 are quite parallel in every respect, but so far as the legal aspect is concerned I contend they are parallel, though the practical effect and result would not, of course, be the same. When the Constitution Bill was submitted to the people a great many electors voted against it because they believed that the laws of the Commonwealth would limit or probably take away from the rights of the States. «That point was put very prominently before the public, and used as one of the reasons why the Bill should not be accepted. And now, at the very beginning of our Commonwealth career, we are deliberately attempting to override what I believe is a right of the State of Tasmania, namely, the right to legislate in regard to her own domestic affairs. If we do that in one case we may do it in others. I read the speeches of the members of the Senate on this clause, and some of the honorable and learned members of that House give it as their opinion that this clause interferes with the rights of Tasmania. If there be any doubt, we should avoid passing the clause in its present form, in order to avoid overriding the State rights of Tasmania, and in order to avoid as much, and as long as we can, any reference to the High Court which is to be established. We do not want to render the Commonwealth

unpopular. I was one who rightly or wrongly supported the Constitution Bill from the very first, believing that it would be beneficial to the people of Australia ; and I am anxious that we should not unnecessarily bring the Bill into discredit by dealing with matters of this sort which we can well leave alone. Some reference was made this' afternoon to the bona fides of the petitions which have been presented here from time to time in' favour of the elimination of these " Tattersalls" clauses. I am not in favour of the elimination of clause 55. Some such clause is necessary, but it should be modified in such a way that there will be no interference with any State rights or laws in existence now, or which may hereafter be brought into existence. With regard to the petition which I presented from New South Wales, I can only say that if any members of the public who signed it were gulled, I am not aware of the fact, and I think honorable members will accept my assurance that I would not put anything before the House calculated to mislead. I presented the petition in good faith, and I may tell honorable members, notwithstanding the statements that have been made to the effect that people were gulled by false representation, that attached to the various pages of the petitions were printed slips, giving the exact wording of the two clauses which it was desired should be eliminated. These slips were pasted or pinned to the petitions, so that people could see for themselves what they were signing. It has been said that those engaged in getting the signatures told the people in the street that they were wanted to sign a petition to prevent the Postmaster-General opening letters. If such happened I did not hear of it, though it is possible those may have been used as the first words in order to arrest attention. I venture to say, however, that, in every case, before a name was put to paper, there was ample opportunity to discover what was being signed.

An Honorable Member. - That was not so.

Mr CLARKE

- I do not pretend to know all about the action of those engaged in getting the signatures.

Mr Crouch

- How many clergyman signed the honorable member's petition ?

Mr CLARKE

- I was told, two. In addition to clergymen signing the petition, a clergyman wrote to the Sydney Morning Herald discountenancing the great outcry which was being made in favour of these clauses, and in the direction of not allowing him, as he said, to spend his pound in any way he liked.

Mr Thomas

- Did the clergyman sign his name?

Mr CLARKE

- He did.

Mr Thomas

- Who was it ?

Mr CLARKE

- I do not think I ought to mention names. The Herald did not publish the letter in full, but gave an abstract of it with his name attached.

Mr Thomas

- Then what harm is there in stating the name ?

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Mr CLARKE

- I am not here to state names ; I think the practice objectionable. I am glad the honorable member for Corio interjected, because he read to-day what appeared to be a humorous paragraph in the Age in reference to this very petition. That the paragraph was written in a humorous spirit, is shown by the last few words declaring the writer's opinion that "no blooming Postmaster-General would open letters from his girl." But if the honorable member had followed the matter up, he would have found in a subsequent issue of the Age another paragraph which puts rather a different complexion on the humorous paragraph to which I have referred. The following appeared in the Age of July 30, with reference to the previous paragraph read by the honorable member for Corio : -

It is pointed out that although the petition which is now being signed in the streets is stated to be against giving the Postmaster-General power to open your letters, it is also notified on placards attached to the stands that the petition referred to the 54th and 05th clauses of the Post and Telegraph Bill now before

Parliament.

Mr CROUCH

- That was pasted on afterwards, and in letters so small that it was almost impossible to read them.

Mr CLARKE

- The letters may have been small in comparison with the larger letters, but they were large enough for any one, except a blind man, to read.

Mr Mauger

- It was a subsequent action.

Mr CLARKE

- I am told that before any of the petition placards appeared in the streets, those who had to do with them realized that they might lead people astray, and they had these slips printed and pasted on. Do honorable members mean to tell me that in the 90,000 signatures there is represented any large proportion of the public who have been gulled in the way stated ? I will allow, if honorable members like, 10 per cent, as the proportion of people who have been gulled.

Mr Thomas

- 90 per cent.

Mr CLARKE

- I undertake to say there were not 10 per cent. Already petitions have been presented by myself, signed by something like 114,000 people, and there are more to follow. Do honorable members mean to tell me that well known public men in the State of New South Wales, such as the ex-Premier, Sir George Dibbs ; the present ' Minister of Mines, Mr. John Kidd ; the present Minister for Public Works, Mr. O'sullivan ; and the Minister for Lands, Mr. Crick, were gulled into signing this petition? Whatever the object of honorable members may be, it is going rather too far for them to do anything, the effect of which is to discount the value of these petitions in the eyes of honorable members and of the public outside.

Mr. -Poynton. - Who is paying for getting the petitions up ?

Mr CLARKE

- I cannot tell the honorable member that, though somebody must pay for getting up every petition. I do not think that has anything to do with the matter. I venture to say that if a petition were taken into the streets for the closing of this Parliament, hundreds of people would be got to sign it. People can be got to sign petitions for almost anything. But what I take exception to are the statements which have been made in a wholesale way. I do not deny for a moment that some may have signed the petition under some misapprehension, but I am not going to admit that a large proportion, or even that more than 10 per cent, of the petitioners signed the petition under a wrong impression.

Mr Crouch

- That is quite a sufficient admission.

Mr CLARKE

- That still leaves a very large number who knew what they were doing.

Mr Mahon

- There were thousands and thousands who would have signed who had no opportunity of doing so.

Mr CLARKE

- Yes. I venture to say that thousands of people throughout the country would have signed the petitions against giving such powers as is proposed to the postal authorities.

Mr Crouch

- Not knowing what they were signing.

Mr CLARKE

- It would not say very much for the education of our people if they could not understand what they were signing in this case. If it is desired to stop gambling there is a proper way of doing it, and that is by commencing at the root of the evil. Betting should be prohibited, and horse-breeding should also be done away with.

Mr Mahon

- And we should do away with the stock exchanges.

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Mr CLARKE

- All speculation in raving should also be prohibited, because the whole of it, or nearly the whole of it, is nothing more than gambling. Gambling is not going to be stopped by the operation of the Bill, and the best thing is to regulate and control it as has been done in The mania. Speaking of bookmakers, it seems most extraordinary that when the State of New South Wales passed an amended Postal Act giving the Postmaster-General power to open letters in certain cases, it was a combination of bookmakers and church people who were chiefly instrumental in having the measure brought forward. The church people acted from very conscientious motives, thinking that they would be able to check the gambling spirit, but the bookmakers were actuated by the hope that by banishing the sweep promoters they would have a better field for their own operations. I am told that in Queensland a combination of church people and brewers and publicans succeeded in banishing Tattersall's. Surely those were nice combinations, and honorable members should hesitate to comply with requests that receive such support. I hope the Government will reconsider this clause, and modify it so as to rid it of its objectionable features. I think some such clause is necessary to enable the Postmaster-General to prohibit the passage of objectionable matter through the post, but I do not believe in giving the very full power that is proposed. I am told that in New South Wales, not long after the Act was passed prohibiting correspondence addressed to sweep promoters from being carried through the Post-office, many letters belonging to private individuals who were staying at Tattersall's Hotel were opened by the postal authorities and pried into. If we are going to give the postal authorities the power that is proposed in this Bill, there is no knowing where it is going to end. If by stopping these letters we could do away with sweeps, there might, perhaps, be something in the proposal ; but we shall only be forcing gambling into other channels. In Sydney recently a raid was made on the tote shops, but the law is only spasmodically put in force there, and the proprietors of these tote shops, after paying their fines, will probably go on for a year or two before another raid is made. I had not intended to speak on the Bill at this stage, because I was quite prepared to reserve my remarks for the committee stage ; but I am glad to have had an opportunity to say a few words with regard to the methods that were adopted in obtaining signatures to the petitions that have been presented against the Bill, because, owing to the rules of the House, I was prevented from saying something at an earlier stage of this sitting. Those honorable members who are under the belief that these petitions are bogus will find out that they are not so, but that the majority of those who signed them knew very well what they were doing.

Debate (on motion by Mr. Mason) adjourned.

DISTILLATION BILL

Bill presented by Mr. Kingston, and read a first time.

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15:47:00

House adjourned at 3.47 p.m.