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1901-08-13

House of Representatives.

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

PETITIONS

Mr. HARPER presented a petition from the Federal General Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia, praying that the Post-office may not be prostituted for the facilitation of gambling, and that clauses . 54 and 55 of the Post and Telegraph Bill, may be retained.

Petition received and read.

Mr. BARTON presented a petition from residents of the district of Uralla, praying that clauses 54 and 55 of the Post and Telegraph Bill may be retained.

Sir WILLIAM MCMILLAN presented" a similar petition from certain gentlemen connected with the churches of New South Wales and others.

Mr. BARTON presented a similar petition from the president and secretary of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Sir LANGDON BONYTHON presented a petition from the Executive Committee of the South Australian Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, praying that the Post-office may not be used_ for gambling purposes.

Petitions received;

PAPER.

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Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - In conformity with a promise made by me to the honorable member for Parramatta, I beg to lay upon the table -

The agreement of the 16th January, 1901, between the Government of New South Wales, by its Agent-General, and the Eastern Extension and China Telegraph Company.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS

TELEGRAPH COMMUNICATION

Sir LANGDON BONYTHON

- I wish to ask the Minister representing the Postmaster-General, when a decision is likely to be arrived at in regard to extending telegraph communication to Tarcoola? I ask the question because the work is urgent and because I believe the reports for which the Postmaster-General was waiting are in Melbourne. At the present time, when silver and lead mining is in a very depressed condition, the development of a new goldfield would be of great advantage to Australia. Yesterday the Minister of Mines at Adelaide received the following telegram from the Government official at Tarcoola : -

Third cleanup at Tarcoola blocks. 77 tons treated for 1 80 ounces gold.

This return, taken in conjunction with other recent returns, is extremely satisfactory.

Minister (without portfolio)

Sir PHILIP Fysh

- In view of the great importance of the development which has just been disclosed by the honorable member, I would say that every facility shall be furnished at as early a date as possible.

ISLANDS IN THE PACIFIC

Mr CROUCH

- Some time ago the Prime Minister promised to make arrangements to have placed in the Library a map showing the claimed and unclaimed portions of the Pacific in Australasian waters. I wish to know if he has been able to make the arrangement yet?

Mr BARTON

- At the time the honorable and learned member spoke of I gave directions for the preparation of such a map, but I have not received it yet.

EXCISE ON BEER BILL

Bill read a third time.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed (from August 9th, vide page 3621) on motion by Sir Philipfysch -

That this Bill be now read a second time.

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Mr MAHON

- So far this House has been engaged in considering what have been termed machinery Bills, and possibly the measure now before this Chamber would come under that description, but, to my mind, it goes much further.

It embodies not merely the existing law in the various States, but introduces several new principles. It confers powers that seem to me to be unnecessary for the proper administration of the Postal and Telegraph departments, while some of its principles do not appear to be reconcilable with the spirit of individual liberty. We are not told from what source all these novel principles come, but certainly some of them have a Russian flavour, which suggests a continental origin. Before this debate closes I hope we shall hear from the Minister in charge of the Bill some more convincing justification than has so far been offered to us of the new legislative features presented. In moving the second reading of the Bill, the Minister did not explain or dwell upon these principles at length. Unless we have better reasons advanced for some of the clauses, I hope the House will modify or eliminate them. I think we are all willing to give to the Postmaster-General every power which may be necessary for the efficient and economic management of his department. We might even go further and assist him - so long as there is no undue departure from his proper functions, and private liberty is not infringed - to promote the moral and social well-being of the community. I cannot, however, understand why it is that the Ministry found it necessary in a postal machinery Bill to attempt not merely to interfere with the liberty of the press, but to restrict the liberty of the subject. I think the proper business of the Post-office - if I may be allowed to say so - is the reception, despatch and delivery of mail matter, and that the proper business of the Telegraph office is the reception, transmission and delivery of telegrams. Possibly the mere mention of these elementary truisms should be accompanied by an apology. But the authors of this Bill, and those also responsible for some of the existing legislation of the States, have surely lost sight of the objects for which the Postal department was originally instituted. It seems to me that we are over-loading this department with extraneous duties which, if they are to be discharged by Government officers at all, should be undertaken by others, on whom the necessary powers would be conferred by specific enactment, and not indirectly in the way this measure proposes. We are virtually making the Postmaster-General a censor of morals and of literature; and, moreover, he is to be a censor from whose decree it will be a difficult matter to appeal. I do not wish to speak disrespectfully, but the office of Postmaster-General is the reward, and must always continue to be the reward, of politicians. The politician has been described, 'not inaptly, as a retailer of borrowed convictions and imitated enthusiasms, and I would ask honorable members what special aptitude the average politician has for moulding public morals? I never heard it claimed for the politician that he has a keener perception of what is morally right than the average man. I will take it for granted that he is a man of higher ability and sagacity than the average, but the qualities which help a man to rise in politics are not those which fit him for the judicial office. This Bill, however, proposes to take from the courts some of the functions now discharged by them, and hand them over to a politician. That is to say, we are setting aside the courts, and passing on some of their functions to a man who may be in office to-day and out of it to-morrow. It is proposed to make the Postmaster-General the sole judge of what is seditious, blasphemous, indecent, or obscene in literature. Not one of these terms is defined in the interpretation clause, so that the freedom of the press is to be made practically dependent upon the passing caprice of a politician. If the Bill is passed in its present form, the Postmaster-General may not only refuse to transmit and deliver newspapers, but he may also destroy any journal which may happen to offend him. His powers go even further, as under the 41st clause his discretion is extended so as to include any publication containing libellous matter. If this sweeping power is granted to the Postmaster-General, history will surely record that we have been singularly unmindful of the struggles and sacrifices by which freedom of speech has been transmitted to this generation. This clause is admittedly aimed at a certain class of weekly publications. I am not here as an apologist or champion for this kind of newspaper. Yet, these journals must serve some good purpose, otherwise they would not be accorded

the patronage which they receive throughout Australia. Honorable members may explain the position as they like, but any other hypothesis than that mentioned implies a reflection upon the large number of our fellow citizens who read these papers. I can conceive that one of these newspapers may become very objectionable to a Minister - possibly something of the kind has already occurred. We know that a newspaper can be very outspoken and make itself very objectionable to a Government or to a Minister, and, I think the Postmaster-General would be a little more than human if he did not take the first opportunity, or some opportunity, of getting even with an unsparing, and - it might be according to his point of view - an unjust critic. Thus honorable members will see that the plaintiff, as Postmaster-General, is constituted a judge in his own cause, or in the cause of some of his colleagues, which is practically the same thing. For the publication of anything which is "seditious, blasphemous, indecent, obscene, or libellous," or - to quote the monstrous language of another clause - "for any other reason," a paper may be practically suppressed. As these terms are undefined, everything is left for adjustment to the individual, and thus a loop-hole is presented for the perpetration of acts of the greatest despotism. A man would be more than flesh and blood if he could reject some of the opportunities which this Bill will give to the Postmaster-General. Moreover, a journal which is hostile to the Ministry may be penalized for any indecency, or "for any other reason," whilst another journal, equally prurient, and differing from the first only in its attitude towards the Government, may obtain unrestricted circulation. This is a possibility which should make the House pause before passing over to a politician the power which this Bill confers. Before we give such enormous powers in this irregular way to a gentleman who may have no special qualities to exercise them wisely, but who, on the contrary, may have a strong temptation to abuse them, we ought to very seriously consider the matter. Of course we shall be told that these are mere disordered fancies, and that no newspaper which keeps within proper bounds will ever be interfered with. But who is to say what are proper bounds? Who is to decide when a paper crosses the limit of what is proper and attempts to do what is improper? If the test be the susceptibility of those whose feelings are attacked, as Mill points out, then "experience testifies that offence is given whenever the attack is telling and powerful." "Every opponent," says Mill, "who pushes his attack hard, and whom it is found difficult to answer, is regarded as an objectionable opponent." And he truly adds :-

With regard to what is commonly meant by intemperate discussions, namely, invective sarcasm, personality and the like, the denunciation of these weapons would deserve more sympathy if it were ever proposed to interdict them equally to both sides ; but it is only desired to restrain the employment of them against the prevailing opinion ; against the unprevailing they may not only be used without general disapproval, but will be likely to obtain for him who uses them the praise of honest zeal and righteous indignation. Yet, whatever mischief arises from their use is greatest . when they are employed against the comparatively defenceless.

Exactly. That is the point which I wish to make. All these powers it is proposed to give to the Postmaster-General will be used only against the helpless, against the man who has the courage to voice unpopular opinions, and to lead a political forlorn hope. That is the unfortunate part of it. This weapon will never be turned against a powerful newspaper which offends. The great metropolitan daily newspapers, which number their readers by the hundred thousand, will never be called upon to appear before the Postmaster-General. We cannot conceive that any powerful journal - especially in this State where politicians are mere puppets in the hands of the press - :will ever be called upon to appear before the postal tribunal. These papers will be answerable only to the courts of law and to public opinion, the only tribunals after all to which every paper, great and small, influential or weakly, should be subject.

Honorable members will find that what is merely a choleric word in the A & T;~gus, is flat blasphemy when published in the Tocsin. In this connexion I must thank the honorable member who introduced this Bill, for the naive admission which he made in rather an unguarded moment, that the object of this clause was to suppress a newspaper charged with such offences as that alleged against the Tocsin. Well, as long as we have courts of justice, I think that offences - or what the authorities believe to be offences - should be tried by those tribunals. Our existing laws - and I think the laws of every civilized State - prohibit the publication of seditious, blasphemous, obscene, and indecent matter. If that be so, and if our courts are established to try persons charged with such offences, then I think that they should be utilized. They have all the requisite machinery to do the work. We have taken most elaborate precautions - adopted almost every possible safeguard - to render our judges independent of all external authority. They have nothing

to hope for from any Government by betraying their trust ; nothing to fear from any Government by a just and courageous exercise of it. That being so, why are we taking from these judges some of the functions which they were appointed to perform 1 The honorable member for Tasmania, Sir Philip Fysh, in introducing this Bill, did not tell us why he cast such an imputation upon the judges of the Supreme Court, or upon the judges of the court to be constituted later on by this Parliament. It seems to me that he should have done so. He certainly should do so before this Bill finally passes. But he is as dumb as a Tasmanians oyster when he comes to the debatable and! important parts of the Bill. Why does he prefer a Star Chamber inquiry, before a possibly biased judge, to an open trial before a judge and jury - the latter composed of men who are sworn to try the issue according to the law of the land ? If a man prints seditious or blasphemous matter, that is an offence which, if serious enough, calls for expiation by imprisonment or fine, or both. But every accused man should be judged by the proper method - by the method which is sanctioned by usage, and which gives protection to the subject from any exercise of lawless authority. That is not done by this Bill, in which there is a reversal of the principle almost universal in the administration of the law in all countries. In every case or nearly every case, the onus of proof is properly placed on the man who makes the charge. There are, I admit, exceptions, but that is the general rule. By this Bill, however, the owner of a suppressed newspaper is compelled to prove his own innocence, and even when he has proved that what he published is perfectly harmless, there is nothing to enable the court, on a reversal of the Minister's decision, to award compensation to the man whose property has been confiscated and, it may be, destroyed. It is not equitable, if an unwarrantable action on the part of the Postmaster-General has been reversed on appeal, that a newspaper proprietor should receive no compensation, for the damage he has sustained. By the action of the Postmaster-General in suppressing a newspaper, a man may be put to enormous loss. The delay in transmission through the post means the practical suppression of that particular issue, and we all know that a newspaper five or six days old is valueless. It is not even provided in the Bill that this despotism and tyranny shall be uniform throughout the States. There are to be six Deputy Postmasters-General, to each of whom the powers of the Postmaster-General are extended, so that there is afforded a lovely opportunity for the free exercise of discretion, and great scope, undoubtedly, for favouritism, in rejecting or destroying offending newspapers. There being no definition of what is seditious or blasphemous, we may expect each of the deputy Postmasters-General to exercise his own sweet will. That is not desirable ; because we can quite see, for instance, that the character of the criticism or the cartoons in the various newspapers of the States, would be or might be regulated by the condition of each Deputy Postmaster-General's liver. I do not think that is the intention. The House should therefore wipe out this absurd clause, and let the Government understand that any attempt to muzzle the press of the country will not be tolerated. But a stronger case can be made out against taking power to tamper with the letters of insolvent debtors. Here, again, there is an effort made to deflect "the Post-office from its true function, and the duty which it was instituted to perform.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- That is done by order of the court.

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Mr MAHON

- I admit the court orders the letters to be opened ; but if the court ordered the Postmaster-General to stand on his head in the street, we should not be disposed to back up the court's action. We should direct the court to order only what is reasonable and fair between man and man, and I do not think the clause is a fair proposal. It is not right, because a man happens to be 'unable to pay his debts, that all his correspondence should be handed over to a perfect stranger. Is it right that the Postal department should be converted into a sort of detective agency? Surely when the Post-office was instituted to carry and deliver letters it was never understood that the department would be used to pry into a man's secrets. I doubt whether this clause can be justified, and even if it can be justified, I doubt whether it will succeed in doing what its framers intend. Is it to be supposed that if an insolvent's friends wish to help him to secrete some of his assets, they could not find other means than the Post-office 1 If a man wants to cheat his creditors, and his friends wish to assist him, it is ridiculous to suppose they will not be able to do so without using the Post-office. Another effect of this clause would be to weaken the feeling now universally entertained that letters in passing through the Post-office are

inviolable. And if this lack of confidence were to grow, as it would grow under the practice permitted by the clause, the Postmaster - General might find his revenue not so buoyant as it used to be, seeing that people will not use the Post-office if they have reason to believe their letters may be tampered with. I now come to the clauses which are exciting some attention outside the House. The question whether clause 55 does not amount to an invasion of State rights may be left for the constitutional lawyers to wrangle about ; at any rate it cannot finally be determined here. I prefer to discuss the clause not only as an invasion of States' rights, but as an invasion of the rights of the individual, and as little short of an outrage on the liberty of the subject. The avowed object of the clause is to suppress a certain form of gambling. We have no power under the Constitution to regulate or restrain the practice of gambling, and in passing this clause we are exercising indirectly power which the framers of the Constitution refused to confer on us. If the Prime Minister can justify these proposals in his own mind, I should like very much to hear the arguments by which he arrives at the justification. Although it is sought to justify the power on the pretence that the Post-office should not be made an auxiliary to vice, I regard the clause as an unworthy attempt to enlarge our legitimate functions, and as irreconcilable with a rigid and honorable observance of our agreement with the States, that the rights which we will exercise are those put in black and white in the Constitution, and not powers grabbed indirectly, as this Bill proposes. Honorable members who are favorable to the clause should reflect that if it be passed it may ultimately be made use of as a precedent. If we are right in doing what is proposed under this clause, we shall also be right in assuming, by similar indirect means, other powers not expressly committed to us. The case against this clause is even stronger from the point of view of the liberty of the subject. The object of anti-gambling laws is, I take it, to save men from the consequences of their own folly, and also to protect society from dangers which may threaten it. Even if the right of this Parliament, or of any other Parliament, to do this be conceded, I question the wisdom of making laws restricting what are called the self-regarding actions of individuals. If a man, having discharged all his obligations, having paid his just debts, and, being in a position to do so, invests a few pounds in a consultation, whom does that man injure? Does he injure society, and if so, in what way? And if he does not injure, society, what right has society to intervene to restrict his liberty ? That is the point. If that man's action in taking up tickets in Tattersall's sweeps, or in anything else, does not affect his fellow men in any way - and I am assuming the case of thousands of people in this country who can well afford to pay for these tickets, and who, in buying them, do no Wrong or injury to any man, woman, or child - what right has society, or Parliament as its representative, to interfere with that man's liberty ? The honorable member Sir Philip Fysh, has had a large experience of this world, and he must have read something about political economy in his time, so he would do well to enlighten the House upon this point. If a man has paid all his debts and discharged his obligations, if he done everything that a law-abiding citizen should do, why should he be interfered with in this matter ?

Mr Mauger

- Will the honorable member say how many people would gamble if only those in that position gambled 1
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Mr MAHON

- I know thousands of people in my constituency who are in a position - I will not say to gamble, but to take up tickets in sweeps, and who do not wrong anybody by doing so. They are perfectly solvent, and have a perfect right to do so, and the honorable member has no right whatever to interfere with them. The excuse - I will not call it an answer - is this : that a man's liberty is to be curtailed because other people abuse their liberty. Some few people steal, others get into debt or evade their just debts in order to procure means to get tickets in sweeps. And granting all this, the honorable member's contention is that therefore the majority who can afford the money, who like the excitement, and who hope to draw a prize - and do not let honorable members forget the fact that these affairs are conducted legitimately, and people go into them with a fair and honest expectation of winning a prize, and, it may be, a competency to last them for the rest of their days - the majority who can afford the money and are buoyed up with the hope of winning a prize are to be deprived of their just rights because some few people abuse their liberty. Let us see, where this argument is going to lead us. If every good thing abused by a minority is to be tabooed by the Legislature to the majority, I am afraid that we will arrive at a very unpleasant state of society. Take the case of stimulants : The primary right to gamble, Of a man who can afford to gamble, is on exactly the same plane as the right of a man, who can afford to pay for liquor, to get drunk. By the same logic with

which we suppress gambling, we must also prohibit the use of liquor. I have heard some very liberal and democratic members of this House say that they are in favour of this clause, but, if we are to be logical, let us go to the logical end, and let us not try to put down gambling while we allow other evils, quite as injurious to the community, to flourish in our midst. If we attempt to put down gambling, we must, if we are consistent, proceed with legislation against other practices which we cannot put down. A temperance advocate, quoted by Mill, says -

I claim, as a citizen, a right to legislate when - ever my social rights are invaded by the social act of another. If anything invades my social rights, certainly the traffic in drink does. It destroys my primary right of security by constantly creating and stimulating social disorder. It invades my right of equality by deriving profit from the creation of a misery I am taxed to -support.

That is as strong as anything we can say with reference to gambling.

It impedes my right to free moral and intellectual development by surrounding my path with dangers by weakening and demoralizing society, from which I have the right to claim mutual aid. and intercourse.

Precisely the same arguments as are used to support the suppression of these consultations. Mill points out what this amounts to:-

It is the absolute social right of every individual that every other individual shall act in every respect exactly as he ought ; that whoever fails thereof in the smallest particular injures my social right and entitles me to demand from the Legislature the removal of the grievance. So monstrous a principle is far more dangerous than any single interference with liberty. There is no violation of liberty which it would not justify. It acknowledges no right to any freedom whatever, except perhaps to that of holding opinions in secret.

That is exactly what such legislation leads up to. It logically leads up to this position : That if we interfere with what are called the self-regarding actions of men we must go on and interfere with other operations of social life. I doubt very much whether we can extinguish gambling in this way. People participate in what is admittedly a fair and properly managed game of chance ; and if this is prohibited they will find vent for their propensities in some other way where the same precautions may not exist. Honorable members favorable to this clause will see that it is not a bold straightforward effort to grapple with the evil, because gambling will still flourish in other forms in spite of this Bill. Those supporting this principle on high moral grounds may take the assurance that they are pursuing a will o' the wisp, and that this Bill will not lessen the total volume of gambling, or any of the evils attendant upon the practice, and will in fact do more harm than good. I would like now to direct the attention of honorable members to clause 18 of this Bill, which to my mind gives very excessive powers, and may result in very great hardship being imposed on those far off and thinly settled communities in States like Western Australia and the remote portions of Queensland. This clause speaks of indemnifying the Postmaster-General for any loss incurred in providing postal facilities for such places by the local governing bodies. If the revenue from some little post-office in some remote town does not equal the expenditure, I suppose the municipal council or some other local authority is to be called upon to make good the shortage. I agree with a good deal of what the honorable member for Parramatta has said in regard to this clause. It contains a new principle, implying, as it does, that the Postoffice must pay its way. On that point I think the House can do no better than consider the arguments advanced on Friday last by the honorable member for Parramatta, who has had very extensive experience of the working of the Post-office in New South Wales. I do not deny that the clause may be necessary ; it may be a judicious power to give the Postmaster-General, but there is no other power conferred by this Bill which will need to be exercised with more discretion or with more generous consideration. The members of the Government for the most part are men who have resided comfortably all their lives in large centres of population on the eastern sea-board. If they have ever been out back, it has been on a holiday trip when the weather was fine and the grass plentiful. I should like to remind them, however, that the interior parts of Australia are not very pleasant to live in, and if they are going to add to the hardships, the monotony, the wearisomeness, and to the expensiveness of life there, by throwing on these small communities the liability to make good any deficiency in regard to the carriage of their mails, they will greatly retard settlement and development. The mail coach is the only connecting link between the people of some of these outlying settlements and civilization, and the Government ought not to do anything to render less frequent the visits of that mail coach. I do not see anything in this clause but an attempt to give the Postmaster-General power to deprive these people of some of the mail deliveries they

now possess. In my opinion we should avoid doing anything to add to the discomforts or increase the deprivations of the bold and hardy men who have pioneered our wildernesses ; yet this is what the clause will do. I think we ought to endeavour to make life in these remote places as pleasant as possible, or, at any rate, a little more tolerable than it is now. I can tell the Ministry that any harsh exercise of this power will be deeply felt and bitterly resented. Already we have had some developments not calculated to strengthen the enthusiasm with which federation was welcomed by the people of Australia, and if we have clauses of this kind, which impose further disabilities on the people of these outlying portions of the continent, Munsters will have to look forward to something more than a little trouble in this House. They will have to look forward to a revolt outside. If we pass this clause it will allow the Postmaster-General to compel contributions from local governing authorities in localities where the postal revenue does not meet the expenditure.

Mr Barton

-We want to confer a facility, not to impose a burden.

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Mr MAHON

- The Postmaster-General will be able to say to the people of a certain locality - "We are losing so much over your service. Unless you contribute a certain sum, to make good a portion of that deficiency, we shall have to restrict your mails."

Mr Barton

- That does not appear to be possible under this clause. It provides for the giving of additional facilities on payment of a contribution. It does not restrict existing facilities. The honorable member perhaps has not noticed the word "additional." That governs the whole clause.

Mr MAHON

- That is very clever on the part of the Prime Minister, but it does not meet my point. My contention is that facilities may at present exist for delivery of 26 mails per year at a certain place, but the growth of population in that place may shortly require a daily mail. If a daily mail were granted then under this clause the Postmaster-General would require from the local governing body a certain sum to indemnify him against loss.

Mr BARTON

- I do not think there is any such power in the clause.

Mr MAHON

- What does it mean, then ?

Mr Barton

- It means that where the ordinary and usual facilities are given, further facilities may be acquired by arrangement.

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Mr MAHON

- Exactly. That is just what I wish to point out. I have known a place to have a mail service once a week, and the growth of population within six months to have required a daily mail. It would be absurd to suppose that a daily service would pay in remote places, and under this clause the Postmaster-General would require the local governing body to come in and pay portion of the loss incurred in supplying that daily mail. I do not want to labour the point. I only wish to remind Ministers that they ought not to do anything which would make life in these places less tolerable than it is now. As the Bill is likely to be discussed largely in committee, I need only add at this stage that I approve of the proposal to impose a postage rate on newspapers. I think that provision will work out for the benefit of those newspapers that are doing their best to open up the country. At the present time in some of the States all newspapers are carried free. The metropolitan newspapers real) the greater benefit, and the local journals are undoubtedly handicapped.

I do not object to a man getting his metropolitan paper whenever he likes, but for the carriage of that paper through the Post-office and over the railways some one should pay. The State renders a distinct service for which it should be paid. A number of honorable members have spoken of the educational value of newspapers. I do not agree that newspapers give any education in the true sense of the term. A paper like the Spectator may be said to have an educational value, and when a gentleman like the Prime

Minister has leisure to write an essay for a high-class publication like the Nineteenth Century, we can, perhaps, say that it is educative. But the average newspaper article does not educate, though it may amuse or inform. At any rate I think the carriage of newspapers should be paid for. In conclusion I simply say that I hope both sides of the House will join in making this measure acceptable to the community, and will so shape it as to make it meet the needs of the people of the Commonwealth without infringing unnecessarily upon the liberty of the subject.

Mr. BATCHELOR(South Australia).I suppose the advantages to be derived from the amalgamation of the Post-offices of the States was the subject most commented upon by the advocates of federal union. It was pointed out that the system of having, in half-a-dozen postal laws, different methods of procedure and administration was exceedingly irksome to commerce, and led to very inharmonious results. It was very properly urged that there would be considerable advantages from unifying these different systems, and bringing the whole under one administration, so that we might have the advantage of a uniform law and method of administration in connexion with the Post-office. As the result of this uniformity we ought also to have the Post-office business conducted more economically than has been the case previously. I hope, as I am sure we all do, that that result will eventually be secured. This Bill, is intended, I take it, to bring about uniformity of administration, uniformity in the rates and charges for performing the same services all over the Commonwealth, and uniformity of administration and economy. If the Bill is not likely to produce those results it will be the business of honorable members to try to amend it in that direction. The Post-office has been taken over by the Commonwealth Government since the 1st March. That is to say, the Government has had charge of it for about five months.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- And has spent nothing since.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I would not undertake to say that. The probabilities are that something has been spent. At any rate, a good deal of time has been expended in obtaining reports from various officers of the Commonwealth as to which are the best systems under which certain work is done in the States. I have no objection to that. It is the proper thing to do. We cannot expect the Commonwealth Postmaster-General to begin the work of administering a huge system like the post-offices of Australia fully equipped, and naturally a considerable amount of exploratory work has had to be done in order to ascertain which methods were the best.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Ought that not to have been done before the Post-office was taken over ?

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Mr BATCHELOR

- There is a good deal to be said in favour of the honorable member's suggestion, but still the department has been taken over, and we could hardly expect the Postmaster-General to do much within five months. We cannot, therefore, fairly criticise the attempts that have been made up to the present to bring about uniformity. There has been too short a time for results to follow. The only thing concerning which we can fairly offer criticism is as to the way the central staff has been constituted. Though I do not want to treat the subject in a parochial sense, it strikes me that it is somewhat unfortunate, at any rate, that all the best and most capable men to fill the high positions in the central executive of the department appear to have come from the same State as the Postmaster-General himself. I am quite sure that the Postmaster-General, in his own opinion, has made the best selections. I do not suggest for a moment that the gentlemen who have been appointed are not the best men. What I say is that it is rather unfortunate for the administration of the department that all these men should have come from one State only, and should know only one set of conditions. It would have been better if the staff had had a little wider knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the various States. I should have preferred the Postmaster-General to see whether there were not persons capable of filling some of these positions in other States than Queensland, so that a knowledge of the conditions prevailing in various States would have obtained at the head-office. Every honorable member from Queensland will agree with me in that. We do not want the Post-office to be administered entirely in accordance with Queensland views any more than we want the Customs department to be administered entirely under the South Australian practice, and by those who are conversant only with South Australian methods. That, I think, goes without saying. I hope that in

any future appointments some good men -fill be found in the other States, so that a general knowledge of the conditions prevailing throughout the Commonwealth may be at the disposal of the Postmaster-General. There is one thing upon which I wish to congratulate the Minister, and that is as to his decision not to have too much centralization in connexion with the Post-office. The postal arrangements come very near home, for they have a direct bearing on the daily life of the people, and I am glad to see that the Minister has decided that there shall be a Deputy Postmaster-General in each State to look after the details of postal arrangements in that State. It would be most injudicious, and lead to a lot of red-tape and delay in government, if minor details had to be brought all the way to the federal capital, wherever it may be situated, to be discussed - for instance, the details as to the erection of an additional postal pillar at Geraldton. I know there was a good deal of fear in the minds of many persons with reference to the amalgamation of these services. It was thought that there would be so much red tape used before anything could be done, that instead of leading to greater facilities being given to the people, it would tell against that object. The Bill provides for uniformity in a number of details of administration. There is to be a uniform charge for the carriage of newspapers, and I quite agree with the last speaker that that is desirable. I know that there are some honorable members who disagree with me, but the services rendered by the State to newspapers are such that they should be paid for. There is no public advantage in carrying newspapers free - at any rate, I do not think the advantage is sufficient to warrant our imposing the burden on the people generally. It was put by some honorable members that newspapers do a considerable amount of educational work and give a lot of information.

Mr.Kennedy. - Correct or otherwise.

Mr BATCHELOR

- Which of the two daily newspapers in Melbourne gave correct information about a function which took place last night 1 I read both accounts of the free-trade banquet.

Mr Reid

- They are both correct, because it was a very dreary evening for the Age.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I could not help wondering, while the honorable member for Coolgardie was speaking, which of the two newspapers contains correct information and which, therefore, should be allowed to be disseminated free. One of them is quite at variance with the other.

Mr.Joseph Cook. - It is only in the comments they differ. The reports in both newspapers are very good.

Mr BATCHELOR

-Probably if I had read the reports in the two newspapers in order to ascertain whether there was a discrepancy, I. would possess some knowledge which I have not got just now. I support the proposal to make the tax on newspapers the same as it is in some of the States. I do not think we can. afford to be particularly liberal just now. We do not know what our circumstances will be ; we do not know what we can afford to do ; and, so long as some of the States have to bear the pretty heavy burden which they carry, we should place them in serious difficulties if we relieved them of the payments which they have been receiving for the carriage of newspapers. The honorable member in charge of the Bill stated in his speech that it was intended to abolish the system of franking letters. The honorable member for Parramatta in his very excellent speech, which I read with a great deal of pleasure, expressed the view that this business of trying to make the department pay - of debiting to other departments all the service rendered to them by the Post-office - was one with which he did not agree. Coming from a State in which this system of debiting against a department all work performed for it by other departments, and crediting it with all work done by it for other departments has obtained for many years, it seems to me somewhat strange that the practice, which of course is only a matter of bookkeeping, has not been adopted throughout the States, because it is certainly a more accurate method of keeping the public accounts. The Commonwealth ought to have credit for the work it performs for the States. The Post-office should stand by itself.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- From which department in South Australia used the cable subsidy to be paid?

Mr BATCHELOR

- The subsidy was charged against the Post-office, and the revenue received from the shore end of the cable was passed to its credit. South Australia has been able to show much better returns than some of

the other States because of the system of bookkeeping adopted. Probably if some of the other States had credited to their Postal departments the work done for other departments better returns would have been shown. The South Australian Postal department is a paying concern, but that is partially due, at any rate, to the fact to which I have referred. The honorable member for Parramatta made some reference to the work done by the Post-office in connexion with the development of the country, and I agree with him that it would be quite impossible in many cases to altogether separate the postal work from other services which are found of great advantage to the public in newly settled districts. If, where a coach is running to carry the mails and also to give facilities to travellers, we were to replace the coach by a bicycle or a man on horseback to carry the mails only, we should make a mistake, viewed from the point of view either of the interests of the Commonwealth, or the general interests of the public. Where, however, letters are carried by the Post-office for other departments, the Postal department should get the credit of it.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- They do that in New South Wales now - the Postal department gets credit for £30,000 a year on that account.

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Mr BATCHELOR

- New South Wales is not so far behind as I thought. Whilst the Bill will secure uniformity in many matters, it cannot be said that it holds out any hope that the public expectations with reference to the assimilation of telegraphic, telephone, and letter rates in the States will be realized. These rates at present vary very much in the different States. One of the great advantages which was mentioned as likely to follow the accomplishment of federation, and one which the general public ardently desired to have, was uniformity of rates throughout the States. Now we are told that there cannot even be InterState recognition of the stamps issued by the different States under present conditions. For instance, if a man in Albury purchases a dozen stamps from the Postmaster-General of the Commonwealth, and crosses over to "Wodonga he will find that the stamps are useless.

Mr Reid

- Surely they have got over that ! They might manage that very well.

Mr BATCHELOR

- They have not done so. I cannot see any great difficulties in the way, but I am told that before this reform can be brought about and before we can have uniform rates, we shall have to wipe out the bookkeeping clauses of the Constitution Act. These are thwarting us at every turn, and we are always running our heads against them. We do not seem to be able to do anything for the benefit of Australia generally, because of these bookkeeping clauses.

Mr Reid

- That is a very good excuse, at any rate.

Mr BATCHELOR

- There is a good deal in the statement that we cannot very well fix the financial responsibilities that ought to lie upon the various States, so long as the bookkeeping clauses remain. Therefore if we introduced a uniform stamp, we should not be very much further forward, and the public would not be very much better off. Some administrative matters may be managed on a more uniform basis, but upon all those points regarding which the public are most concerned and which most appeal to them, we shall be about as we were.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Ministers say they are going to curtail the privileges now enjoyed by the public.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I think we can trust the members of this House not to allow Ministers to curtail the privileges that the public now enjoy. I remember, Mr. Speaker, that at the Convention you uttered the prophetic words that, so long as the bookkeeping clauses existed, so long should we have to postpone true federation - that we could not have any true federation under that system - and that is certainly being borne out by our experience. It seems that when any matter is brought before us we are called upon to consider, not what would be the best for the Commonwealth, but whether the proposal, if carried out, would embarrass any one of the States. It might be shown that on the whole it would pay the Commonwealth to adopt a certain course, but if that course would operate to the disadvantage of any one State we are obliged to leave it

alone. For instance, penny postage might be a remarkably good thing for the Commonwealth generally, and pay specially well in the more thickly populated States of "Victoria and New South Wales ; but if it were considered that it would operate to the disadvantage of say, Tasmania or South Australia, we could not introduce it. The honorable member for Parramatta expressed the opinion that it would have been well to postpone the taking over of the Postal department by the Commonwealth, and I quite agree with him, because all we seem to be able to do is to pile up expenses without giving any advantage to the people of Australia. All we can do is to create a central staff, and make it a little more difficult to carry out the various reforms and improvements, and give the additional facilities that the public require. If we were able to give the public the advantages of uniform and cheaper rates, there would be something in it ; but we cannot do that at present, and it would have been just as well if the Government had not been in such a hurry to take over these services.

Mr Reid

- Hear, hear.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The postal and telegraphic services were being very well conducted, and the Federal Government would have been in a better position if we had gone on under the old conditions for a little while.

Mr KENNEDY

- The trouble was that the State departments would do nothing pending the transfer to the Commonwealth.

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Mr BATCHELOR

- I do not think that was so generally. I know that in some of the States anxiety was shown to do a great deal of work prior to the transfer to the Commonwealth. I am not going into the details of this Bill, because I think they can be discussed with more advantage in committee ; but I wish to refer to the difficulties that have cropped up in connexion with the cable services to Australia. Three of the States have agreed to guarantee a certain proportion of the loss, if any, incurred in connexion with the Pacific cable.

Naturally it is to their interest to push on that scheme as far as they possibly can, and to force the business, on to that particular cable. On the other hand, there are some States which have concluded an agreement with the Eastern Extension Company - the telegraph company - for a cable by way of the Cape. At present the State of Victoria stands out of that agreement. The very fact that all the States do not subscribe to the same agreement causes a considerable amount of difficulty in dealing with this question. In this connexion the South Australian interest is quite different from the interests of all other States. My remarks, of course, are applicable only so long as the bookkeeping system obtains. When the Commonwealth actually takes over the whole of the postal business, and entirely ignores the boundaries between the different States, the circumstances will be quite changed. But, in the meantime, there are some rather difficult matters to be settled. Certainly Australia will be very well served with three cables, compared with the way in which it has been served hitherto. As we shall have the Pacific cable, when completed, the Cape cable, and the Eastern cable via Port Darwin. I am surprised, however, to learn from the statements of the Postmaster-General that he does not intend to give the commercial public the advantages of these three cables. He does not intend that they shall necessarily have the advantage of sending their messages by any one of the routes which they may choose. I was extremely surprised to find that the Postmaster-General strongly objected to an amendment which was proposed in another place, and which gave the public the right to say by which cable they wished their messages sent. This is a right which is guaranteed to the senders of telegrams all over the world by the International Conference which was held at Budapest in 1896, and to which each of the States were parties. It was an international agreement, and it certainly came as a shock to me to find the Commonwealth suggesting that they should have the power to repudiate it if they chose. That agreement was entered into by every one of the States represented in conjunction with the British Postmaster-General. The clause reads as follows : -

The high contracting parties undertake to enable every sender to profit by the different arrangements agreed upon between the telegraph administrations of the contracting States for the purpose of giving additional guarantees and facilities for the transmission and delivery of messages.

Regulation 42 sets out -

When the sender has prescribed the route to be followed, the respective officers are bound to conform to

his instructions, unless the route indicated be interrupted, or is known to be overcrowded, in which case the sender cannot make any claim on account of the employment of another route.

Sir Philip Fysh

- That is still an international agreement.

Mr BATCHELOR

- That is exactly what I am pointing out. But I am also pointing out that the Postmaster-General, when an amendment was proposed in the Bill, fought that proposal very hard.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Why does the honorable member want to put it in the Bill?

Mr BATCHELOR

- Why not, if it is an international agreement ?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I know why the honorable member wants it inserted. He wants it inserted in the interests of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company and of his own State.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I want it in the interests of South Australia, which has a separate interest" in the matter of cables from some of the other States. I am justified, I think, in putting the South Australian position. I want to propose an amendment to the effect that the regulations of the international convention shall be upheld and carried out so long as the convention exists, and that we shall not go back upon our agreement, as was certainly indicated by the Postmaster-General in his speech. If the honorable member for Parramatta will look up the official report of the debates, he will find that the point was put by the Postmaster-General that the right of choosing by which route a telegram should be sent should be taken away from the public, as otherwise the Pacific cable might be injured or destroyed.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Not destroyed, but injured.

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Mr BATCHELOR

- "Destroyed" was the word used. If it is not intended that we shall, go back on the international agreement, what becomes of the honorable member's argument? The only way in which the Pacific cable can be upheld as against the other cables, is by forcing the business on to the Pacific cable, contrary to the wishes of the senders.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member is wrong.

Mr BATCHELOR

- If the honorable member for Parramatta can show me any other way in which it can be done, I shall be glad to hear him. , The public will have three routes, and in order that the greatest facilities may be offered them, they should have the right of choosing any one route by which to transmit their messages. All the cables should compete on equal terms, and the service which is the most efficient, should get the greatest public support. The Postmaster-General says that secret rebates might be adopted by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, but I would point out that this is contrary to the international agreement. Such a thing cannot be done. Anything which is in the direction of creating unequal terms, and of giving one company the advantage as against another, would be a breach of the terms of the convention, and would lead to the non-recognition of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company in the comity of telegraph companies.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- There is nothing to prevent that company from doing business for five or six years ahead at lower rates.

Mr BATCHELOR

- Does the honorable member seriously contend that, if lower rates generally are made for the whole of the Commonwealth, the public should not have the right to take advantage of those rates?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- That all depends.

Mr BATCHELOR

- What is the object of our cables if not to give the cheapest possible telegraphic communication with the

old country 1 For the sake of bolstering up the Pacific cable, and making that a financial success, we are surely not going to injure the people of Australia.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member is afraid the Pacific line will injure the South Australian land line.

Mr BATCHELOR

- Of course it will. Does the honorable member really think he has made a discovery 1

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- And the honorable member is fighting against the Pacific line.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I am fighting against anything that will give an unfair advantage to one line over another. The honorable member is clearly fighting for the Pacific line as against the South Australian line.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- No such thing.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The honorable member is fighting for one line, and wants the Postmaster-General to have power to say that all business shall go by the Pacific line.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- If the honorable member will look at the records he will find that the States offered to take the South Australian line over if South Australia would go into the Pacific arrangement ; but South Australia would not. South Australia was asking too much for the land line.

Mr BATCHELOR

- What has that to do with the question 1 South Australia did not find it convenient to hand over her telegraph line ; and I should think not. In the days when Australia was without telegraphic communication with the old country, and when there was only a handful of people in South Australia, that State took up the burden of providing communication.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- In order to prevent Queensland snapping the advantage.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The honorable member is talking nonsense. It was open to any one of the States to do the same thing, but none of the States did it. South Australia alone did it, with her small population, knowing she would have to face a tremendous loss. South Australia expended a sum of £570,000 on the work, and to this day the line is not paying, taking into account the whole amount expended. The honorable member interjected on one occasion that South Australia was making 20 per cent, profit on this line.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I say that, in the year referred to, that profit was made.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I have not the figures with me, but I can give the honorable member the exact amount South Australia has earned on the capital outlay year by year, and I think he will find that in no case has the profit reached 6 per cent., let alone 20 per cent.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- With the profit, another section of the line was constructed.

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Mr BATCHELOR

- The honorable member is quite in error, as he will see when details are supplied. There is another quotation I want to give from a reply by Mr. Chamberlain to a question addressed to him on this subject. He said -

In regard to the claim in paragraph 16 of your letter, that the company should have the right to collect and deliver their international messages in Australasia in the same manner it prevails in this country, I am to observe that the Australasian colonies are parties to the International Telegraph Convention, and are therefore bound to send any telegrams marked to go by the company's route by that route.

That being so, there certainly could be no objection at all, in order to protect the interests of South Australia, to placing a provision in the Bill to the effect that the terms of that convention should be carried

out so long, as we are parties to the convention. We certainly have very grave reasons for believing that an attempt may possibly be made by some Postmaster-General - not the present Postmaster-General - who is specially interested, in favour of one line in the Pacific as against the South Australian line or any one of the other lines ; and we are justified in believing that some protection is required. Of course, the object of the refusals to place the amendment in the Bill was to enable those interested, if they chose, to force the business on the Pacific line, not because of overcrowding, because in such case it is provided that the Postmaster-General has the right to send over any line he likes. The Postmaster-General, referring to the Eastern Extension Company, further said -

So surely as this monopoly is able to destroy the State-owned cable, so certainly will the rates go up again.

That was in reference to the reduction of rates which has recently been brought about by the agreement between the Eastern Extension Company, the British Government, and all the States, except the State of Victoria. It is suggested that if any serious damage is done to the Pacific cable, the rates will go up. But the Postmaster-General of the Commonwealth is making a somewhat serious slip, because had he read the agreement at all, he would have seen that what he suggests is quite impossible. The agreement says that there shall be a gradual reduction of the rate - it has been reduced twice already - down to half-a-crown, according to the amount of business, and once a reduction, is made the rate cannot be again raised, even if the project for a Pacific cable were not to be carried out. If either of the lines was "knocked out," it would not make the slightest difference ; because the rates having once been lowered, cannot, according to the agreement, be again raised. This is not an international agreement, but an agreement between the Eastern Extension Company and all the States. The Eastern Extension Company undertook to lay the Cape cable without any subsidy, or any concession except the right, when the Pacific cable was started, of delivering and despatching their own telegrams from their own office. In return for that, they undertook to construct another line and to reduce the rates, on the basis of a business of £330,000 a year, until 2s. 6d. was reached, the rates not to be raised again, and the agreement to be dissolved only by mutual consent. The Postmaster-General has evidently not read the agreement, and has no idea of its terms. He, as well as a good many other honorable members, make a great deal of the "State-ownership" of the Pacific cable. It is true that between some point in Queensland and Vancouver the line will be State-owned - owned by Canada, Australia, and the Imperial Government. But the Pacific cable can only be called State-owned in the sense that the railway line between Adelaide and Sydney may be called a Victorian line, it being Victorian over a part of the way. The Pacific cable is State-owned from Australia to Vancouver, but from Vancouver the line is owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Across Canada not a single foot of the line belongs to the State, but is entirely held by private companies. When it reaches the eastern sea-board of Canada, it again switches on to private lines in Nova Scotia, and thence on to Great Britain and other parts of Europe entirely by private lines owned chiefly by foreigners. I use the word "foreigners" merely as referring to a nationality which is not British, and nearly all the cables are owned by American firms. The business will largely be done on the Pacific line, which is called a State-owned line which, as against the other, is called "all British" or "all red," and which so much has been made of. As a matter of hard fact, when we come to look into it, we will find that the business will be done through the greater part of its length on private lines, and on lines owned by American companies. So that there is not so much "all British" about it after all. The only thing that makes it "all British" is that it touches only on British territory, but of course the same argument could be used in favour of the Cape cable, which also touches only on British territory. I do not want now to discuss the merits of the Pacific cable further than just to point out that the argument about its being "State-owned" is not stronger, or not much stronger, than in the case of the Port Darwin line. The Port Darwin line, taking it right through, is, of course, largely privately-owned, but from Adelaide up to Port Darwin it is Commonwealth-owned, and we have really a much more vital interest in that line than we can ever have in the Pacific line, because, as I have pointed out, the Pacific line is only State-owned across the Pacific, and all the rest of the way is entirely in private hands. I have found, on reading the debates, that it has been assumed by some speakers in another place that Australia's interest is chiefly centred in the Pacific cable, but it seems to me that the Commonwealth has certainly as large an interest in the line via Port Darwin as it has in any other. Only three of the States have agreed to share in the guarantee in the event of any loss accruing from the Pacific cable. It is admitted, and of course it goes without saying, that there

must be a loss for some time, and three of the States only, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, have agreed to share that loss.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- South Australia will have to pay her portion now.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I should hope that the honorable member will draw the line at that. If not, I say it will be an act of political perfidy and ingratitude such as has very rarely been shown. Look at the position.

Mr Page

- That has touched the honorable member on a sore spot.

Mr BATCHELOR

- It has. there is no doubt about that. If honorable members will pay attention for a moment they will see what the position is so far as South Australia is concerned. South Australia must necessarily lose whatever the Pacific line gains. Whatever the Pacific line gains must necessarily be at the expense of the South Australian line.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The federation will take the Une over and pay South Australia handsomely for it.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I must again draw the attention of the honorable member to the fact that for five years we have got to shoulder the loss ourselves, and every telegram that is diverted from the present line to the Pacific line will be at the expense of South Australia. South Australia is not complaining about that. We have got to grin and bear it, although it is hard to grin under such circumstances. But in addition to standing whatever loss may result from the establishment of the Pacific cable and the diversion of trade from our line to that line, the honorable member wants us also to pay a share of the loss resulting from the working, of the Pacific line. We have not only to stand the rival in trade, but we are to be at the expense of setting up that rival, and to share the loss that will necessarily ensue from its business. Does the honorable member really maintain that position 1

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I do not ; I did not mean that.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I should .think not. I am glad the honorable member withdraws it.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member is forgetting the bargain which was made between the States.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The three contracting States of New South Wales Victoria, and Queensland agreed to share the loss between them ; and now, with the whole wealth of New South Wales at his back, and with all the advantages which that State has, the honorable member wants to still further get out of the little liability which they contracted when they went on their own and pile it upon the other States of South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia, which have not even a magnificent harbor to bless them.

Mr Page

- That is the price of federation.

Mr BATCHELOR

- On the price of federation I am prepared to stand, and the price of federation is this, that the burden which South Australia all these years has had to bear for the sake of Australia generally and for her own sake-

Mr Page

- For her own sake.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The honorable member must not forget that it has been nearly all loss, and we have had to stand it. We have never been helped by the- other States to the extent of one penny in connexion with it, and therefore the fair position would be that the States should share the loss, instead of South Australia having to stand it all, owing to the bookkeeping clauses.

Mr Page

- So we will after five years.

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Mr BATCHELOR

- We do not know how long the bookkeeping is to last. I hope, in the interests of federation and of true federal union, we will see an end to the system in five years ; but we have no sort of guarantee of that, and it may be many years before it terminates. In the meantime South Australia has to stand the double loss, and it is suggested in some quarters that, in addition, she should have piled on to her the liability of the contracting parties to the Pacific cable.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The other States would be glad to relieve South Australia of all the loss.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I hope that they will show more consideration than the Government showed when the point was raised in another place. I ask that the public shall continue to enjoy the right which they have had hitherto - the right given to them by international convention - to send their messages on the line which suits them best. There should be no attempt to bolster up one cable company as against another. I can fairly claim that, if South Australia has to stand the loss consequent upon the establishment of a rival cable company, she should not, in addition, be compelled to share the loss on the Pacific cable. When the bookkeeping sections of the Constitution cease to have force, these difficulties will not occur, because the services will be properly amalgamated, and State interests will not conflict. I wish to draw the attention of the Minister representing the Postmaster-General to clauses 96 and 136, and to several others, which speak of, and provide for, the protection of the " lines of the Postmaster-General." Surely it is not intended that the shore ends of the cable company's lines shall be left unprotected? I hope that in committee the Minister will not object to the omission of those words.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- What a lot of trouble it would save if the Commonwealth took over the lines to which_ the honorable member refers.

Mr BATCHELOR

- Unfortunately, the Constitution absolutely forbids that, and so we have to fight for State rights when we ought rather to be considering Australian interests generally. It was not due to the action of South Australia, or of her representatives in the Convention, that the bookkeeping sections were introduced into the Constitution. I rather think that it was due to the representatives of New South Wales.

Mr Reid

- There were very substantial reasons for the insertion of the provisions to which the honorable member refers.

Mr BATCHELOR

- I am aware that, if those provisions had not been inserted, New South Wales might have been called upon to pay more than her proportionate share towards the expenses of federation - I suppose that is the reason to which the right honorable member refers. I shall not discuss in detail the provisions of the Bill which relate to Tattersalls and other sweeps, because I think that the subject can be better discussed in committee ; but the position I intend to take up with regard to them is that we should leave matters, as much as possible, as they were before the Commonwealth took control of the Post and Telegraph departments of the States. We should all be glad to see the establishment of uniform penny postage, but I agree with the Postmaster-General that, until we know what our revenue and expenses will be, we cannot afford to go in for it. I believe that generally where the system has been adopted it has been found after a short time to pay, but I do not think that we can afford to take any risks just now. I think, however, that it would be well to reduce the rates for Inter-State telegrams. Two shillings is too much to pay for ten words between South Australia and Victoria.

Mr Fowler

- The rate between Western Australia and Victoria is 3s. for ten words.

Mr BATCHELOR

- Such high rates, have the effect of keeping away business. I believe that if the rates were reduced by one-half there would be three times as much business done. I know that I should send ten one-shilling telegrams to South Australia for every two-shilling telegram that I send now. I shall support the honorable member for West Sydney in his antagonism to the employment of coloured labour on mail steamers,

because I believe in a white Australia ; and if the Government are sincere in the principles which they have professed, I think that we are entitled to their support in the matter, and I hope that we shall get it.

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Mr O'MALLEY

- I wish to say a word or two upon clauses 54 and 55, which have created such a profound sensation throughout the Commonwealth. What is meant by the terms " objectionable matter," and " blasphemy " ? It seems to me that blasphemy is a matter which depends altogether upon geographical position. What would be blasphemy in Russia would not be blasphemy in Turkey. If we happened to get a fanatical Postmaster-General, perhaps a man suffering from some hallucination, would he be the absolute interpreter of what constitutes blasphemy 1 Let us look at the matter. In olden times blasphemy was what stagnation called progress. I am just directing attention to these little points because I think we should be very careful not to sell our liberties, and not to enable any one man, in any possible way, to be the custodian of our liberties.

Mr Higgins

- Will the honorable member give us an example of the blasphemy which stagnation called progress?

Mr O'MALLEY

- I will. Nineteen hundred years ago it was considered blasphemy in Judea, for anyone to believe in the divinity of our Saviour; but in Australia, nowadays, it would be considered blasphemy for any one not to believe in the divinity of Christ. Therefore, this is a serious matter, and one which the House ought to deal with very carefully. Our forefathers fought for ages for the liberty we now possess, and let us not surrender it. On that point I am going to have something to say in committee. The question of State rights has been raised, and just for a moment I shall endeavour to deal with the question as I understand it. " State Bights," is the doctrine that every State is supreme within the limits of its own sphere of action, made so by the declared will of the people as expressed in the Constitution, and that will, appropriately manifested, as provided in the Constitution, may change that sphere of action. In the Commonwealth Constitution Act the powers of the Federal Government are distinctly specified. The rights of the States are also held under the State Constitutions, except those expressly specified in the Commonwealth Constitution. The rights of the Commonwealth were gained by each State surrendering some particular power that it possessed prior to the enactment of the Constitution, and the Commonwealth Constitution thus comprises these surrenders of power by each of the States. Tasmania possessed the power to prohibit the carrying of any letters by the Tasmanian Postal department which that State itself considered to be objectionable. The State of Tasmania surrendered these powers to create the Commonwealth, so that the Commonwealth is simply the child of the powers once possessed by the States, but now lost for ever by them and passed over to the Commonwealth. Each of these States did not federate for its own specific advancement, but for the advancement of all, and, therefore, no one State can now exercise the supreme powers possessed by all the States, except through the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government is the supreme power. The Commonwealth has all the elements and insignia of sovereignty, because it has the power to declare war in time of invasion; it has the power to negotiate for peace, it has the power to declare a Tariff ; and it has the power of national arbitration. The only thing given to the States is the power of a majority to stop an amendment of the Constitution. As the State of Tasmania once possessed the right to prevent any matter going through its post-office, then I have only one course left, and that is to endeavour to persuade the House to modify this clause. Why should we interfere with Tattersall - never mind whether he is good, bad, or indifferent - when the people of Tasmania say that they want him. At the same time, however, I am bound to vote for the retention of the clause, because it simply represents the power that Tasmania handed over to the Commonwealth in helping to create the Commonwealth.

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Mr McCOLL

- I do not propose to take up the time of the House for many minutes. I think the most important point that we have to consider with regard to our Post and Telegraph department, is whether we are going to work it for the development of the country or whether we are going to make it a paying concern. It seems to me that, as far as possible, we should make this department pay its own way. I do not think it ought to be a department for the purpose of levying taxation on the people, but I certainly think it ought to claim a fair

remuneration to cover the cost of the services which it renders to the public as a whole. We shall not be able to work this department, as a unified one, in a proper way until the bookkeeping clause has been entirely done away with, but there is nothing to prevent us rectifying at the present time a great many anomalies that exist in the various States. One of these anomalies is the free carriage of newspapers in three of the States, while postal charges are made in the others. There is nothing in the Constitution Act, or any- . where else, to prevent us making a charge for the carriage of newspapers in all the States, and I certainly consider we ought to do so at the earliest possible moment. In introducing the Bill in another place, the Postmaster-General roughly estimated the loss "which the department suffers at about £120,000 per annum. I rather think he under-estimated it, but, at the same time, I believe the loss can be obviated by a small increase in postage, and probably a charge for the carriage of all newspapers would alone wipe out the loss that exists at the present moment. Another remark that struck me in the speech of the Minister was that he had endeavoured to keep the central administration entirely dissociated from the States. I suppose that is the reason why he has seen fit to take up separate offices in this city for carrying on his own particular branch. I think that was entirely unnecessary, and was a useless expense, because there was quite sufficient accommodation in the General Post-office premises in Elizabeth street to have given accommodation to the Minister and Ins staff. He could have closed the doors, and walled himself off from the rest of the building just as effectively had he taken up his offices there as if he had gone miles away. Even now I should like the Government to cancel any arrangements that have been made in order that this useless expense may not be further incurred. Another matter is that I have been informed that the Postmaster-General has appointed Mr. Lambton to act instead of the different public service boards of the States in the matter of making appointments. The Minister should have left the administration of this matter in the hands of the Deputy Postmasters-General of the States. The gentleman appointed was, until the 25th February of this year, in the New South Wales public service at a salary of £920. He retired with a pension of £600 a year, and was appointed by the Postmaster-General shortly after he retired at an additional sum of £600 a year. Therefore he is now receiving £1,200 a year. That also is an entirely useless expense. Other instances have been brought under my notice of undoubted lavishness on the part of the Postmaster-General, and I should like his colleagues to keep some check upon him, or we shall have this department, which at present does not pay, running us into a still further loss. I am glad to see that it is intended to compel the payment for services rendered by the Post-office to the other departments throughout Australia. There is no doubt that the services rendered to other departments have been grossly abused, particularly through the use of frank stamps. These stamps are given to each department, and it often lies at the sweet will of perhaps some junior officer to frank as many envelopes as he chooses. These franked envelopes are to be found in almost every room of the departments. Even those who clean gut the offices have access to them. I am certain that there is an enormous leakage in this respect in Victoria, and I suppose in the rest of the States where this practice is carried out it is the same. I would do away absolutely with frank stamps and compel the departments to use ordinary postage stamps. Then we should know what each department costs in this respect, and it would compel permanent heads, and those responsible for dealing with correspondence, to be much more economical than they have hitherto been. Consequently there would be a saving effected. I should like to ask the honorable gentleman in charge of the Bill to represent to his colleague the Postmaster-General, that greater facilities might be given for the erection of telephone lines in remote districts. The present system carried on by the department is an exceedingly expensive one. The cost of erecting telephones and telegraphs is far greater than it ought to be. Greater facilities should be given to erect lines that would serve the needs of remote districts. They should be allowed to run wires along the tops of fences where it is convenient to do so, and also to cross roads. In Gunbower, the district which I formerly represented in the Victorian .Parliament, there is an estate of 20,000 acres, upon which a telephone system has been constructed by simply carrying the wires over the tops of the wire fences. The lines rust and are thus insulated extremely well, and by means of them the manager can communicate with his boundary riders and station hands in every part of the estate, and know exactly what is going on. We know how exceedingly difficult it is at the present time for people living, say, 15 miles from the nearest telegraph station, to communicate with the larger centres. The extension of such facilities as I have indicated, would enable them to communicate rapidly in ease of sickness or accidents, whilst at the same time the lines would act as feeders to the main telegraph lines, and bring in more revenue to the department. In addition

to that, further facilities should be given for private telephones to cross roads. At the present time in Victoria, a property-owner can carry a telephone line across his estate, but if he wants to cross a road, although he has property on both sides, he has a great deal of difficulty in getting permission, and has to pay very heavily to the department for the privilege.

Sir Philip Fysh

- We have no power to give permission to cross roads.

Mr McCOLL

- -The Postal department can arrange these matters. They must have power to cross roads with their own lines, and could make similar arrangements in behalf of private people.

Mr.Reid. - This Bill gives power to enter upon private property.

Mr McCOLL

- I do not agree with the point made as to the very small amount of work that has been done by the Postal department since it has been taken over by the Federal Government. That criticism is unreasonable. It is not fair to expect that the department could have done much in the way of new work since it has been taken over. There are six different States, the Postal department in each of which has been working on different lines both as regards administration and construction. Some of the departments have paid for their construction out of loan money, whilst others, such as Victoria, have paid for the whole of their construction out of revenue. There has been an enormous amount of work to do, and probably will be for a considerable time to come. Therefore, it is not fair to expect that the department should have initiated new work up to this time. I see that the method of fixing rates is being varied by this Bill from the present practice in Victoria. Hitherto in this State the rates for telegrams and letters have been fixed by Parliament, but under this Bill they are to be fixed by the Governor-General in Council. Probably the change is a wise one, as it will enable the department to modify the rates so as to wipe off the margin of debit and enable the department to be so carried on as to pay its own way. With regard to the clauses about which so much has been said, and around which there will be still more debate in the future - namely, as to Tattersall's sweeps and the opening of letters - it seems to me to be absolutely necessary that the Post-office department should have power to open letters, in order that it may return them where the intended receiver cannot be found. It is a proper power to give, and I have never known any complaint to be made as to its being abused by the Postal department in Victoria. As regards the clause forbidding gambling through the post, I think the Commonwealth is bound to follow the example of those States where this practice has been prohibited. One of the main duties of this House is to conserve public morality, wherever it can possibly do so. Gambling is immoral in its very essence. Therefore I have not the least doubt but that this House, when the numbers are up, will be found to be determined by a large majority to do what it can to promote public and private morality in Australia. I regret that the honorable member for Coolgardie saw fit to make some remarks derogatory to members representing Victoria. I am sure that when he sees the statements in print he will regret them. He criticised the Victorian members as being all mere puppets of the press. That was certainly a remark that ought not to have fallen from the honorable member. I know the members representing this State better than the honorable member for Coolgardie does, and I venture to say that his remark was unmerited, impertinent, and untrue. It is not true as to any one of the members from Victoria.

Mr Mahon

- I did not refer to the Victorian members in this House at all.

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Mr McCOLL

- That disarms my criticism, and I will say no more about it. I have only to add that I trust that as a result of work in this House we shall turn out a good postal measure that, while conserving the interests of Australia and making the department pay, will endeavour to give all the facilities that can be given to the dwellers in remote districts. I quite agree with the remarks of the honorable member for Coolgardie that we should give every facility that we can to those people who live in places far removed from the conveniences of the great centres. They are the pioneers of the country. We must extend to them all the privileges that can be given in reason, and not curtail privileges that they have at the present time. I think the honorable member for Coolgardie has rather misread clause 18. I do not think it is intended to operate in the way he supposes. In fact, the remarks of the Postmaster-General in the Senate made it very clear

that it is intended to apply to cases where a district wants special privileges beyond what are given to other districts similarly situated. Where special privileges are wanted, power is taken so that there may be co-operation between the department and the people of the district, who are prepared to partly pay for what may be extended to them.

Mr CAMERON

- I regret extremely that I cannot compliment Ministers upon their Bill. To my mind, several of its clauses seem to be conceived in an extremely narrow-minded and illiberal spirit. We all know that during the last few years it has been the aim of the various States to educate and improve the minds of the people. They have gone so far as to make education compulsory. In some cases they have thrown the cost on the State, and in other States it has been made compulsory, and parents have paid where they were able. The result of this policy has been that knowledge has been diffused. After a certain time these children have to go out into the world and earn their living. Some of them gravitate towards the larger towns ; others go to the country to obtain the means of livelihood. Those who go to towns have certain advantages over those in the country. They have public libraries, and are able to read and improve their minds by means of the daily newspapers. I contend that, in fairness, we ought to extend any reasonable privilege we can to the people in the country. Take the case of those men who go into the backwoods and the outlying districts in the various States. They have literally no means of improving their minds. They can get no books to read, and after a hard day's work the only thing which is left for them is the newspaper. It seems to me extremely "hard that we should increase the cost of newspapers to those who can so ill afford to pay for them, It was said by an honorable member this afternoon that the newspapers do not improve the minds of the people. I totally dispute it. Take, for instance, the case of the Age. Where would protection be were it not for the support which it has given and the leading articles which it has published from time to time? I put the Argus in the same position. It has been for many years trying to educate the people into the belief that free-trade is the best policy. If that is not education I do not know what education is. Not only is education afforded by leading articles, but newspapers act beneficially in other directions. They enable, farmers to read of the various improvements which are going on in machinery and manures, and all things of that description. I contend that we should take a backward step if we taxed newspapers, thereby increasing their cost to those persons who use them. We have heard it repeated in the House that the Post-office is not self-supporting - that there is a considerable deficit year after year - and that if a tax. is imposed on newspapers that deficiency will be made good. Surely no man can argue that the present cost of the Post and Telegraph department is a very serious matter, when he remembers the lavish and reckless extravagance which has been carried on in the Commonwealth during the last few months ? We have seen thousands of pounds wasted in affording men, and women, too, the opportunity of eating and drinking at the expense of the general body of the people. We have also seen how money is being lavished and wasted in printing Mansard reports, which are never read by the bulk of the people, and in which the people take no interest, for the benefit of 100-odd Members of Parliament. Surely these expenses could be curtailed in order that the working men and those with small incomes might have an opportunity of enjoying the news which they obtain from the newspapers without any increased cost. In committee, if no one else does, I shall certainly move that newspapers be carried free, as is- done in several States.

Mr Mauger

- Would the honorable member make that general ?

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Mr CAMERON

- I would apply the provision to all the States. For a long time in Tasmania we have carried all the newspapers free. The local newspaper has no advantage over a newspaper published in a larger town. It is a right and proper principle to adopt, and the expense which might be incurred in the various States might be saved in other directions. The next clauses I wish to call attention to are those which are popularly supposed to be entirely directed against Tattersall. Tattersall has been established in Tasmania, and I must express 1113' astonishment at the position occupied by the honorable member who has charge of this Bill. He was Treasurer and Postmaster-General of Tasmania some years ago, and to him belongs the honour or the dishonour of having introduced Tattersall into that State. I am surprised that the Minister should at one time run with the hare and at another time hunt with the hounds. There have been

two evils always with us: one has been the vice of drinking and the other the vice of gambling. It has been recognised that it was impossible to stop the vice of drinking, and that the only thing to do was to run it in fairly good channels. For that reason laws have been passed under which heavy fees have been charged to those allowed to sell spirituous liquors. In addition to that, heavy excise duties have been imposed upon the spirits which they sell. So that, if any one wants to indulge his taste for drinking, he has to contribute to the revenue, which is used by the various States for the benefit of the people as a whole. No objection has ever been raised to that, as far as I am aware. Tasmania, which, although small, has in some cases led the way, recognising the fact that the love of gambling is just as inherent as the love of drink, determined to legislate for it. In standing up for the defence of Tattersall, I desire to assure honorable members that personally I have never taken a ticket in Tattersall's sweeps, and that I do not know Mr. Adams, and, as far as I am aware, have never seen him. I am, therefore, speaking from a fair and impartial standpoint. Tattersall, when allowed to carry on in Tasmania, was hedged in with certain conditions, one of which was that no person should be allowed to buy a ticket over the counter, but should apply through the Post-office, enclosing a stamp for reply. In other words, a person desiring to gamble had to do it in cold blood. He could not, after drinking two or three glasses of grog, walk into Tattersall's office and say that he wanted so many tickets, but would have an opportunity of calmly considering what he would do. That seems to me to be a very good provision, and does not, in my opinion, conduce to gambling. During the eighteen months that Tattersall's sweeps have been conducted under these conditions in Tasmania, they have been fair and above board, but the Commonwealth now comes along, and the Ministry say in effect that, as five of the States have declared that there shall be no more gambling as far as they are concerned, Tasmania, which is the black sheep of the flock, must fall into line, and put down Tattersall's sweeps. I could understand the position if the other States had suppressed gambling, but they are "neither more nor less than whited sepulchres. They allow gambling to be carried on in its very worst form. In Victoria, race meetings are being held from year's end to year's end, certainly every week, if not oftener, and bookmakers are allowed to go on to the race-course and ply their calling by crying the odds; whilst various clubs where betting is carried on are allowed to continue. Gambling assumes its very worst form under these conditions, because when men go on to the race-course and become more or less under the influence of drink, they start betting with far more evil consequences than under other circumstances. I appeal to honorable members to say whether it is worse for a man to gamble with his blood heated by wine or spirits, or for him to gamble in cold blood. There has been a deep feeling throughout Tasmania ever since the commencement of the Commonwealth that, because in the opinion of the other States Tasmania is poor, and her population is small, she has not been fairly treated. If we take the history of the Commonwealth from its commencement, we shall find that Tasmania has been slighted and ignored on every occasion. When the first Federal Ministry was formed she was slighted, and then afterwards, as a sop, an honorary Minister without a portfolio, and without any responsibility, was appointed from Tasmania. In my opinion, that was a greater insult than the first, and if I had been offered the position of an honorary Minister I should undoubtedly have rejected it. We find the same slights put upon Tasmania in connexion with appointments to offices under the Commonwealth, because, of all the federal officers, only one has been selected from Tasmania. Where it is desired to cultivate good fellowship, and where so much is said about the universal brotherhood that should exist amongst the States, I think it is a great mistake to single out one State and treat her with contempt. I would ask all those who feel as I do, or who feel the other way, or who think that everything that is done shall be good for the other States, and that nothing shall be done for Tasmania, to remember that the people of Tasmania, although they hold a small country and are small in numbers, made a response in common with the people of the other States when volunteers were called for to proceed to South Africa. Tasmania stands first throughout the southern hemisphere as the only State whose soldiers have succeeded in obtaining two Victoria Crosses for valour, and when we find that her men, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of the other States, can hold their own, it seems to me that the people of Tasmania should be able to pursue their own course, and that if they think Tattersall's is good for them they should not be interfered with.

Mr MAUGER

- I am sorry that the honorable member for Coolgardie is not in the Chamber. He alluded to the liberty of the subject; but he appeared to forget that the party with which he has the honour to be associated are

continually being assailed with the cry that the liberty of the subject is being interfered with. Every Factory Act placed on the statute-book has been assailed as involving an infringement of the liberty of the subject, and every move forward has been stated to interfere with the liberty of some one. I recognise, with the honorable member, that it is undesirable that any powers which are likely to be abused should be conferred upon the Postmaster-General, but it is also undesirable that our moral life should be degraded by some of the hideous prints that emanate from the public press. It seems to me to be the duty of the Government to see that our young life is kept pure. Some of the newspapers now published are immoral in their tendency, and undesirable in every possible respect, and some one should have the power to check them. In regard to the gambling clauses of the Bill, the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Cameron, seems to be exceedingly anxious about his poor little State. He showed by his closing remarks that the people of Tasmania, when on the battlefield, can take care of themselves, and equally in commercial and social life, Tasmania is not going to be ruined by anything this Commonwealth Parliament may do.

Mr Cameron

- I never said she was.

Mr MAUGER

- She is not going to be injured, nor is her real progress likely to be retarded, by any legislation that may be passed to stem the tide of gambling, with all its attendant evils. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the whole of the States, excepting Tasmania, have shut their mail bags against sweep literature.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- No; South Australia still carries letters relating to sweeps through her Post-office.

Mr MAUGER

- South Australia has the power to do just what it is proposed that the Postmaster-General shall have power to do.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- The honorable member made the statement that all the States save Tasmania had closed their mailbags against sweeps.

Mr MAUGER

- I am speaking of the power which they have under their State laws. I would direct attention to the fact that within the last few months America has done exactly what the Bill proposes that the Postmaster-General shall have power to do. The United States postal regulations which have just been gazetted contain the following :-

It having been made to appear to the Postmaster-General, upon evidence satisfactory to him, that Tattersalls, c/o Geo. Adams, Hobart, Tasmania, is engaged in conducting a lottery for the distribution of prizes by lot or chance, through the mails, in violation of the Act of Congress, entitled "An Act to amend certain sections of the revised Statutes relating to Lotteries," &c., approved 10th September, 1890, he directs all postmasters to return all letters and advices, whether registered or not, to Tattersall.

In the interests of the American Republic and of American morality the Postmaster-General has just issued that order. Does my honorable friend desire that this Commonwealth shall be behind America in taking such a progressive step? Evidently America is anxious to get more moral, and that is precisely what honorable members who are opposing these provisions do not desire.

An Honorable Member. - Do they stop gambling in America?

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Mr MAUGER

- Whether they stop it or not is immaterial. The point is that they are making an attempt to stop it, and that is what we desire. Surely the fact that we have not absolutely stopped stealing does not argue that we should abrogate the law relating to the commission of that offence. We merely propose to try to prohibit gambling. The honorable member for Coolgardie reasoned that every man has a right to do as he likes with his own, and that so long as he does not use money which should be put to other purposes, he has a perfect right to gamble or do as he chooses with it. I am informed, however, that, in regard to this lottery business, Tasmania is in much the same position as Lord Rosebery asserted England occupied with regard to the liquor traffic. Lord Rosebery, about twelve months ago, made the "very significant statement that, unless the Commons controlled the liquor traffic, the liquor traffic would

very soon control the public and the business of England. Similarly, I am informed that unless Tasmania rises to the occasion and "controls Tattersall, Tattersall will very soon control the ethics and the life of Tasmania.

Mr Cameron

- I may answer that the honorable member is very ill-informed.

Mr MAUGER

- I am very glad to hear that my information is not correct, but I have gleaned it from the Tasmanian newspapers. I have been reading some exceedingly instructive articles in the Tasmanian press on this question, so that my information comes from the tight little island itself. I am sure that this gambling evil is getting a great hold upon the Commonwealth. It is undermining our young life, and making labour problems more difficult to solve. It is in reality the very antithesis of all true progress and social life.

An Honorable Member. - Go to Flemington.

Mr MAUGER

- My honorable friend advises me to go to Flemington. I have never been there yet, but I intend to go some day. To Flemington per se I have no objection. But to the bookmaking and the gambling that surround Flemington I have a very strong objection, because it is injurious to social life. It may be asked, "Why do we not attack the stockbrokers and the Melbourne Club" '? The answer is that we attack the forces which are nearest to us, and we use this opportunity to gain a victory in order to assist us in achieving other victories.

Mr Conroy

- The honorable member does not assert that the end would justify any means ?

Mr MAUGER

- Surely I have not said anything that would lead the honorable and learned member to that conclusion. I am pointing out quite the opposite. I have never argued in favour of that sort of thing, and I hope I never shall. I am reminded of a sermon which was preached by the Rev. Dr. Marshall just prior to the running of the last Melbourne Cup. That gentleman emphasized the evils of gambling, painted a graphic picture of a gambler's hell, and then, in order to placate some of the rich men in his congregation, told them that he had no objection to little wagers so long as they could afford them. They could gamble in gloves and little wagers. But I contend that, as gambling is wrong in principle, it must be wrong in degree. If it is wrong to gamble with a pound or upon the Stock Exchange, it is equally wrong to gamble in a lottery, or by means of the game of "pitch-and-toss." We should use all our efforts to stem the tide of gambling. I wish briefly to allude to the question of contracts in connexion with our mail and postal service. ' I have in my hand an exceedingly interesting document. The postmistress who is interested makes the following memorandum

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I am open to the public 57 hours per week. My salary is £67 per year, out of which I pay £36 8s. for rent, provide light for the office, and pay an assistant. I find that there passed through this office . 1,249 Savings Bank deposits, amounting to £4,893 3s. ; there were 263 Savings Bank withdrawals, 507 money orders issued, 1,098 money orders paid, 1,004 postal notes paid, and 1,646 postal notes issued ; there were 1,471 letters unregistered, 289 parcels transmitted, 1,500 telegrams despatched, and 88 telegrams received, for the year ended 30th June.

In other words, £15,993 12s. 3d. worth of business passes through that office, and the department which we have under review pays the lady in question the handsome sum of £67 per annum.

Mr O'Malley

- That is governmental sweating.

Mr MAUGER

- It seems to me not only governmental sweating, but also putting a premium on dishonesty.

Mr HUME COOK

- Is that a tender office?

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Mr MAUGER

- Yes; and when I interjected during the speech of the honorable member for Cowper, it was this kind of office that I alluded to. The Government have no right to be a party to such conditions as I have depicted, and when they come to let mail contracts I hope that they will see that the officers and men on the ships,

and the men who drive the mail coaches, are treated like human beings and not like dogs. I have no complaint to make specifically about ship-owners ; but I know that many men who drive mail coaches, especially on country lines, are sweated in the very worst form to the last degree. Some months ago I rode with a man who had been driving a mail cart for over eighteen months, for something like sixteen hours a day, without a day of rest or any holidays, and who received a miserable pittance.

Mr Page

- Was he a Government servant ?

Mr MAUGER

- He was the servant of a contractor. The Government, in arranging contracts, should see that white labour only is employed, and that reasonable hours and proper conditions are insured for the workers.

Mr THOMAS

- I quite recognise that this Bill does not need any long second reading speeches, and my remarks shall be as brief as possible. In the first place, as representing a constituency on the border, I am very greatly disappointed that the Ministry are not prepared to immediately issue a uniform postal stamp and arrange uniform rates for telegrams. These comprised one of the advantages, I venture to say, -that were offered to the people when they were asked to accept federation. The Ministry is supposed to be a very strong Ministry - a Ministry of ex-Premiers, and a Ministry of " all the talents " ; and yet they are not prepared to come down with any. proposals in the direction I have indicated.

An Honorable Member. - That is because of the bookkeeping clauses.

Mr THOMAS

- We are told that the bookkeeping clauses stand in the way ; but it is about time that we, as a Parliament, got tired of this cry. Some time ago we were told that we could not have old-age pensions for many years, simply because of the bookkeeping clauses ; and unless we speak on this matter in no uncertain voice I am afraid the Ministry will ride those clauses to the death. Whenever we ask the Ministry to do anything, no matter what, they tell us that the bookkeeping clauses prevent them offering any reform. Then, I should like to see clauses 26 and 27 altered by the time the Bill gets through committee. These clauses, as I read them, seem to provide that a newspaper, before it can be carried through the post as a newspaper, must have more reading matter than advertising matter.

Mr Mahon

- Or it can be suppressed for any other reason.

Mr THOMAS

- Just so. If the clauses be strictly carried out I venture to say that it will not be possible to send the Sydney MorningHerald and the Sydney DailyTelegraph through the post. I think these provisions are copied from the New South

Wales Act ; and I have been supplied with some figures by a friend of mine, who some time ago desired to register a newspaper in that State. It was a trade or technical monthly journal, and he was refused registration at the Sydney Post-office on the ground that the paper contained more advertisements than 'reading matter. He pointed out to the officials that the Sydney Morning Herald was exactly in the same position.

Mr Wilks

- The Saturday issue.

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Mr THOMAS

- Yes. When my friend pointed this out to the official, the latter gave way. From some figures compiled by my friend I find that on the 13th July, which, I think, was a Saturday, the Sydney DailyTelegraph had 60Jj columns of reading matter and 67J columns of advertisements ; the Sydney MorningHerald had 50^ columns of reading matter and 93 J columns of advertisements ; the Bulletin had, including the cover, 67^ columns of reading matter and 76^~ columns of advertisements; Progress, which I believe is an important newspaper in Brisbane, had 27.V columns of reading matter and only 20.^ columns of advertising matter, one-sixth of the latter being Government advertisements. If the Bill passes in its present form, the only paper, of all I have mentioned, which could be carried through the Post-office as a newspaper would be Progress in Queensland. Before the Bill gets through committee, I hope, if no one else does so, to have the opportunity of moving an amendment to the effect that all periodicals, whatever their size, weight,

contents, arrangement of matter, or intervals of publication, shall be forwarded through the post at newspaper rates. The present system of charging more for the circulation of religious, scientific, and educational matter than for the dissemination of news, seems rather absurd. Whether newspapers should be carried free through the post and over the railways, as in New South Wales, may be a debatable question. I do not feel very strongly either way, though I admit that when I was a Member of Parliament in New South Wales I was always in favour of their free carriage. In New South Wales, however, the State owned the railways as well as the Post-office, while we as a Federal Government do not own the railways, and that, possibly, may make some little difference. It may be a debatable question whether newspapers should go free or be charged a small postal rate ; but, whichever course be taken, publications of the character I have just mentioned should go through on exactly the same terms. If newspapers are carried free or cheaply simply because they are educational, then it seems to me that what we want is not quantity so much as quality, and the larger the advertisement columns are, the more likely we are to have good reading matter. It seems to me it is rather absurd for the Post-office to say that a newspaper must necessarily add to its weight simply for the sake of adding to the weight. We take a newspaper through the post either free or for a certain rate because it is a newspaper, and not because of its weight. If the Post-office says there must be more reading matter than advertisement matter, it will mean that those publishing newspapers will simply resort to padding. That will be adding to the weight of the mails merely for the sake of adding to the weight of the newspaper. We are surely all of the opinion now, that political news is not the only kind of information and news that we require. I venture to say that in the opinion of every member present Australia is greatly in need of technical education, and whilst we are all glad to see large technical colleges springing up here and there, at the same time, in order that work of a technical character should be properly done, we need the technical journal. It would be foolish to say that these technical journals must produce as much reading matter as advertising matter. There are three or four journals of a technical character in Australia which, considering the limited number of people who subscribe to that kind of journal, are a credit to the publishers and to the subscribers. They are not, of course, equal to publications of the kind in Europe and America. We could not expect that because they have not the same number of subscribers. If we take papers of this kind, especially in America, where the finest of such publications are produced, we shall find that the advertising columns run to from two to four times as much as the reading matter. It is only proper that it should be so, because we cannot expect a high-class technical journal to be produced if the reading matter is to be equal in extent to the advertising columns. I think we should endeavour to have these clauses altered so as to provide that irrespective of the proportion of reading matter to advertising matter, these publications should be taken through the Post-office at newspaper rates. It may be argued here, as I know it used to be argued in New South Wales, that if something of this kind were done, big wholesale firms like Hordern, or Lassetter and Company, would publish circulars and catalogues and take advantage of the newspaper rates. Even if they did I cannot see that it would affect the Post-office in any way, because advertising certainly increases the revenue through the Post-office. That was proved some time ago in a case, in which I believe the right honorable the leader of the Opposition was one of the barristers engaged, where it was shown that by the expenditure of one shilling in advertising a certain matter in one of the papers, some 72 replies to the advertisement were received, and if half of those replies were posted at a cost of a penny, and the other half at a cost of two pence, it would mean that while the newspaper received a shilling for the advertisement, the Post-office received 9s. in stamps on the replies. It is certainly the quality rather than the quantity of its matter that makes a publication valuable. If a publisher does not give his readers value for their money, there is not much likelihood of his publication lasting very long. The system proposed under clauses 26 and 27 seems to me to penalize the publishers of high-class journals who pay for their matter, and they will lead to the burdening of the mails with matter which is included simply to equal the number of the advertising pages. As regards clauses 54 and 55, the part of the Bill which affects Tattersalls, I had intended to say a few words upon them, but having promised one or two honorable members who come from Tasmania that I will not definitely make up my mind on the subject until I have heard what they have to say in committee, I will wait until then, before I say anything about those clauses. As regards the telephone system, which has also been taken over by the Postmaster-General, I would very much like to see it greatly extended. I hope to see the time when every householder will have a telephone in his house, and look upon telephonic connexion as necessary as

having the water or the gas laid on. I think a different system from the one we have now, of simply charging so much for business places and so much for the householder, might well be adopted. I do not know what the charge is in Victoria, but in New South Wales, if a person desires to have the telephone laid on to his business house he pays £10 a year, and if to his private house £5 a year, irrespective of the extent to which the telephone is used. It seems to me rather absurd that an hotel like the Hotel Australia should pay a rate of £10 a year for a telephone that will probably be working all day and all night, while a business person will have to pay exactly the same amount for a telephone which he may not use for more than half an hour in each day, and that the same anomaly should exist with regard to private houses, irrespective of the size. I think a telephone should be laid on anywhere that it is required, and that a small charge should be made for laying it on, say, an annual rental of a guinea : and then there should be a meter attached to the telephone, which would register the time during which it was used. A person could go round once a month, as is done now with reference to gas and water, and tick off the time each telephone had been in use, and in accordance with the registration the person to whom the telephone had been supplied should pay. If people had to pay in accordance with the time they used the telephone, they would not put up with the telephone communication we have now, and would want telephones more up-to-date. People would not be prepared to stand a long time talking over a telephone, when they would know that every moment was being ticked off and recorded against them. Although subscribers to a telephone are not supposed to allow other people to use their instruments, most of those, who have telephones in their business premises or private houses often allow them to be used by other people, and the Government are, therefore, to a certain extent defrauded ; but if a record were kept of the number of times a telephone was used, and a charge made accordingly, one would either have to ask his friend to put threepence in the slot, if he wanted to use the instrument, or would have to pay for its use himself. I should like to see the Postmaster-General introduce a system whereby, instead of it being necessary to go to the Post-office to cash postal notes or money orders, the money could be delivered to the payee at his own house, just as letters are now delivered. They do that on the Continent and in India.

Mr Wilks

- But the population is more settled there.

Mr THOMAS

- There is always some difficulty raised. The honorable member would make an ideal Postmaster-General, because he would oppose all reforms. I should also like the postal authorities to make provision for the removal of men from Sydney, Bathurst, Melbourne, and other large centres of population to the country post offices, to allow country officers the advantage of spending part of their service in town. In New South Wales we used to be told that the authorities had no power to send people out into the distant districts ; but I think it is unfair that men should be kept all their lives out in the back country, while other men are allowed an uninterrupted term of service in the large towns. All should take turn about. In France I believe there is a committee of 26 persons, composed of Members of Parliament, business men, and representatives of various local bodies, to act as an advisory board to the Postmaster-General, and to bring under his notice reforms that are needed, or improvements that can be effected. Of course we could not expect anything so up-to-date as that out here, but I think that if an improvement is suggested by a postal employe for the better working of the office, and it is adopted, a bonus should be given. In New South Wales, however, several postmasters have told me that they are not expected to think, and that suggestions which they have made, to the head office have brought them only snubs in return. Then, seeing that the Post office is so important an institution, I should like one of the best and ablest administrators in the Cabinet to be at the head of it. In New South Wales, the custom has been to give the portfolio of the Postmaster-General to either the weakest or the least experienced member of the Ministry

Mr Chapman

- That is a reflection upon the honorable member for Parramatta.

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Mr THOMAS

- No. At the time he was appointed he was an inexperienced Minister, but he proved a very capable administrator, and, as a consequence, was afterwards transferred to the Department of Mines and Agriculture. If we had the best men obtainable at the head of the Post-office, and good feeling amongst

the employees, we should have, instead of an institution bound round with red-tape, a service which would be a pride to the people of Australia.

Mr. RONALD(Southern Melbourne).Speeches on the second reading of a Bill are usually made to affirm or deny its general principles ; but as this Bill is only a bundle of details, it must be discussed chiefly in committee. There are, however, several clauses to which I should like to refer now. In the first place, I think we should do all we can to prevent the passing through the post, under the definition of newspapers, of printed matter which is merely so much advertisement for business firms. Then clause 53, which gives the Postmaster-General power to open the letters of insolvents, is to me an exceedingly objectionable provision. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the postal laws of the various States to know if this provision is a general one, but it seems to me likely to inflict great hardship. Insolvency is not an unusual occurrence either here or elsewhere, and no man can be certain that it will not be his lot. It seems to me to be a greater injustice to allow the Postmaster-General to open the letters of an insolvent than to allow him to stop letters addressed to sweep promoters.

Mr G B EDWARDS

- An insolvent's letters can be opened only on the order of the court.

Mr RONALD

- Yes, but why should the court have the power to make such an order ?

Mr G B EDWARDS

- The order -will be made only where fraud is apprehended.

Mr RONALD

- It will be an easy matter to say that fraud is apprehended, just as it is easy to say that there is an apprehension of an invasion. I do not think the court should have the power.

Mr Higgins

- In Victoria it has it now.

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Mr RONALD

- Yes, and I believe in South Australia, too; but that does not make it right. I should like to say a word or two about clause 55, which strikes at the promotion of sweepstakes. In my opinion it should go a good deal further, and we should omit the words " not sanctioned by law," which screen lotteries and games of chance in connexion with bazaars and such like entertainments for charitable and religious purposes. "We ought not to make any invidious distinctions. If we hold that gambling is an evil, per se, then the end does not justify the means, and we ought to strike out the words I have referred to. If it is an evil, then the fact that it is done in the sacred cause of charity, will not make it a virtue. If it is a vice, the fact that it is practised in the interests of any religious denomination will never make it a virtue, and I will certainly fight my best and hardest to see that these words are excluded. AVe know very well that any one can get the sanction of the law for an art union. People say - " We have to sell tickets in connexion with an entertainment for some cause of charity, but we cannot sell them unless there is an art union connected with it." There has been a great stir in Victoria with regard to the Australian Natives Association Art Union. The churches rose in arms against it, ignoring the fact that many of them were themselves promoting far more dangerous art unions. If this Bill has a vital principle or a general principle in it at all in regard to gambling, I hope that we will not make an invidious distinction, singling out Tattersalls and protecting religious and charitable institutions in this way. We should deal fairly and with equal justice to all. I am thoroughly in favour of preventing the use of the Post-office as a means of promoting gambling. I am equally sensible of the great evils of gambling, but I am certainly against the making of an invidious distinction between Tattersalls and lotteries conducted by churches and charities. We know perfectly well that the name of charity is dragged into these things as the merest subterfuge, so as to gain legal sanction for conducting art unions and lotteries. I sincerely hope that clause 55 will be carried, minus the words which cover these presumably charitable art ZU11011,S. I am surprised at the argument used by some honorable members who are against this " clause. One of them used the tuquoque argument, and told us to cast the beam out of our own eyes. We do not propose to deal with gambling in this clause ; we are simply protesting against the great social and civilizing agency of a State ser--, vice being used to promote gambling, which we do not believe in. Whether Tattersall be or be not the nursery of gambling, this much is certain, that by far the largest proportion of our population believe that gambling is the parent

vice of all vices ; they believe that gambling promotes all other vices, and that the sweepstake is the initial step in the career of the gambler. They are determined that the Post-office shall not be used for the purpose of fostering the love of gambling, which is covetousness, in our young people. They believe that by our gambling methods we are rapidly creating a nation of fatalists, men who trust to luck, and not to energy, to get on in the world, and they are determined that the Commonwealth Post-office shall not be used for such a purpose. That is our answer. We are not dealing in this Bill with gambling at the Melbourne Club or at the stock exchange, or at Flemington, or anywhere else ; we are simply saying that the Commonwealth Post-office, which is intended to promote communication and intercourse between the various States and countries shall not be used, so far as we can prevent it, in the interests of any one class of men, and certainly not in the interest of that class of men who we believe are perverting the best morals of our young people. As far as I can see that is an answer to the argument ; that is the only answer we require to make to those who are opposed to this clause. Honorable members for Tasmania, with some honorable exceptions,, are in favour of the clause, seeing the evil that gambling has wrought. I am perfectly certain that this provision is not intended by the other States as an injury to Tasmania. I am equally positive that it -will not result in that way, and that it is in the interests of the whole of the States. I would remind honorable members that it is simply a matter of levelling up or levelling down. The majority of the States as well as the majority of the people of the States are against the form of gambling aimed at, and we must either come down to Tasmania's level or bring Tasmania up to our level. I consider it is a levelling up, and not a levelling down. Some people are crying out about this clause, and have tried to make it appear by various petitions with which we have been deluged, that the voice of the people is against it. The voice which we hear against this clause is but the echo of Tattersall. Tattersall has created the outcry. The people have been misled, and there is no real protest against the clause. We shall make the law absolutely uniform in the several States, by providing, as proposed in this clause, that the Post-office of the Commonwealth shall not be used as a means of promoting the spirit of gambling, and encouraging that which is sapping and undermining the morals of our young people.

I have nothing more to say in regard to the Bill except that I hope that some means will be taken in it to prevent the sweating that is now prevalent in the Post-office. I hope that steps will be taken to do away with the letting of post-offices by contract under which men and women have been forced to conduct the business of a post-office, and to try to make a living out of it, and in doing so have run head over heels into debt. It is a disgrace that a national institution should be used in that way, and that people who are trying to do the work by contract should be placed practically in a worse position than if they were carrying their swags. It is about one of the hardest things in the world for persons who undertake the management of post-offices under the contract system to secure the contracts at a figure that will enable them to make a living wage. They can only eke out a miserable existence. I sincerely hope the Postal department will see to it that this contract system is completely done away with, and that the service is supplied by trained men who have served a term in the various branches of the Postal department. I also sincerely trust the Post-office of the Commonwealth will never get into the state into which the Victorian office has drifted, in regard to some of its employees. We have had young men trained as telegraph operators, who have come to years of maturity, and have married and created families, and yet are only receiving some £60 or £70 per annum as operating messengers. This state of affairs is due to the want of provision for their advancement. Of course the Commonwealth Public Service Bill will protect us against that evil, so that I need say no more on the subject. I hope now that this great public service, which employs so many of our young men and women, is under the Commonwealth, that it will not be an object of scorn to which men may point as being the greatest sweating institution in the community. They are able to do so in some parts of Australia at present, but I trust that this state of affairs will not be continued. The other clauses to which I should like to refer can be dealt with in committee. Therefore, I need not detain the House longer.

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Mr PIESSE

- One .or two remarks have been made in regard to Tasmania which I think call for some notice on my part. I hope we are not going to pass the clauses which have been the subject of so much discussion because, as one honorable member put it last week, Tasmania has to be "brought into line" with the other States, or because, as the honorable member for Southern Melbourne put it to-night, Tasmania has to be brought " up to the level " of the other States. That would be exercising a power which I trust this

Parliament does not intend to exert - of dealing with the internal affairs of any State. "We are going to pass these clauses to deal with acts which are committed by the citizens of this part of Australia. The gambling complained of is not done in Tasmania, where the balls are moved about, but in Australia, where the citizens choose to go to the Post-office and buy postal notes in order to remit money to Tatter-sail's. It is because I recognise that there is a general Australian sentiment, evinced by the legislation which has been passed in the several States, against the encouragement of gambling, or the use of the Post-office as a means of encouraging it, that I think we are right in taking up the inheritance which has been committed to us by the States. I mean the inheritance of continuing in this Bill the provisions which the States themselves have already embodied in their own laws. That is the reason why, although I come from Tasmania, I intend to vote for these clauses. The argument is put 'forth that if we pass these clauses we shall be interfering with State rights. I do not know that any remark need be offered upon that argument ; but when we hear it said that Tasmania is "coming into Une" with the other States, I reply that if the other States had come into line with Tasmania the proposals of this Bill would not have been needed, because the Tasmanian law provides for the prohibition of advertisements of lotteries. If a similar law existed in the other Australian States, the sweeps in question would not be known, and therefore there would be no need to prohibit matter going through the post concerning them.

Mr Higgins

- I think there is a law in Tasmania also prohibiting bookmakers?

Mr PIESSE

- Yes, that is so; so that there are in existence in Tasmania laws with which it would be well for Australia in general to come into line.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- Is the totalizator legalized there ?

Mr PIESSE

- Yes. I think the honorable member who has just resumed his seat has rather taken fright at some parts of the clauses in question. He used the term "Church lotteries," but, as far as I know, the Post-office is hardly ever used for such purposes. I am against any such means of making money on behalf of any church, and if I thought we could in any way prevent it, and it were necessary to do so, I should go with the honorable member in doing it. There are certain art unions, such as those of London and Edinburgh, which are legalized in England, and I presume the exception in this Bill is meant to' cover those cases. The other points in the Bill can be better dealt with in committee, and I content myself with making these few remarks in answer to the reflections which have been cast upon the State I represent.

Mr CONROY

- In the first place, I have to regret the absence of the members of the Government from this chamber. I notice that whenever any important discussion is in progress, the members of the Government are never in their places to listen to any observations that may fall from honorable members.

Mr Chapman

- I rise to a point- of order. Is the honorable and learned member for Werriwa in order in giving a lecture on the absence of Ministers, when he is supposed to be discussing the Post and Telegraph Bill?

Mr SPEAKER

- The honorable and learned member for Werriwa is quite in order in calling attention to the absence of Ministers from the chamber.

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Mr CONROY

- I do not see why we should be surprised at the absence of Ministers, because not once, but half-a-dozen times, attention has been drawn to the fact that when important Bills have been discussed, Ministers have not been here to listen to the debate. On the second reading of the Defence Bill, I pointed out that it was a pity that the Defence department had been taken over by the Commonwealth. It is also a pity that the Postal department has been taken over. What we are doing now is simply to provide for further taxation, especially for one or two of the States. It has been said that no economies can be effected, and that the advantages of unification cannot be secured, at present, on account of the bookkeeping clauses. To a certain extent Ministers are right in making that assertion ; but that is the very reason why the department ought not to have been taken over yet. I should like to know whether

Ministers really intend dealing with the Tariff Bill this session, and what work they propose to put before the Senate when , the Tariff is engaging the attention of honorable members in this House ? We are now going on with a Bill that has already been considered by the Senate, and what is the Senate to have to discuss when this House is engaged upon the Tariff?

Mr Chapman

- I should like to take your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the honorable and learned member for Werriwa is in order- in discussing the question when Ministers are going to bring down the Tariff, upon the second reading of the Post and Telegraph Bill?

Mr SPEAKER

- I have not heard the honorable and learned member for Werriwa say anything out of order. I will call him to order when I hear him say anything that is irregular.

Mr. CONROY. - I do not think that the House should have been called upon to discuss this Bill at the present time. The more one looks at the Bill, the more one is struck with the fact that at least one-half of its 153 clauses should be eliminated, for they have no place in a Bill regulating the postal and telegraph services of Australia. The greater part of them ought to be the subject of regulations. At the outset of our federal life we cannot be too careful in laying down as far as possible great principles, on which the various -services ought to be conducted. That is the rule on which we ought to act, not only in this Bill, but in all other measures. But one is quite struck with amazement at seeing the load of detail which has been put into this Bill. The pinpricks of federal legislation will be felt throughout Australia, but, unfortunately, its influence will be distributed over such a large area that we shall not be made sensible of the annoyances which arise from legislative provisions in the same manner as the members of a State Parliament would be. Any legislative mistakes are very much more easily remedied in a State Parliament than in a Federal Parliament. In the case of a State it is very much more easy to bring such mistakes under the notice of a Minister and the body or clique who are able to point out disadvantages are also able to take care that a remedy is applied as soon as possible. But the members of a Federal Parliament are much more difficult to be got at by the great mass of the people.

Persons may be suffering injustice from our legislation a hundred times over without it coming to our knowledge.

Mr McCay

- That would be one of the reasons for increased postal service.

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Mr CONROY

- It is a reason why a great deal of this proposed legislation should be done by regulation, which, may be altered very much more easily than an Act of Parliament. Certain portions of a Post and Telegraph service ought to be controlled by regulation, because the forms through which a Bill has to go prevent easy amendment of the law. All we shall accomplish by this Bill, until the bookkeeping provisions of the Constitution are exhausted, could have been accomplished just as well by getting the Deputy Postmasters-General to assemble and arrange everything as they used to do, and the arrangement would have been much more complete and full than it has been in times past, because they would know that it would all come under federal control. In two or three respects a very great departure from the law of some of the States is proposed to be made. It is proposed that in two or three States there shall be a postage on newspapers. Newspapers are highly educational, and it is a very great advantage to the bulk of the people that so far as possible newspapers should be carried free. It might be that in some cases we would like to impose a slight tax so as to see that the Postmaster-General is not taken advantage of, and that matter which otherwise ought to pay a certain amount was not carried under the guise of a newspaper. But when we know that the tax on newspapers will fall most heavily on the people of those parts of- Australia to which we wish to see information given, it ought to make us pause. In the city information can be given quite readily enough ; no postage of newspapers will affect the citizens in the slightest degree ; and in places like Bendigo and Ballarat the newspapers are distributed by hand. A tax on newspapers will fall exclusively- on the country subscribers, who do not enjoy the advantage of having two or three deliveries a day as we do in the city. They have to go from 5 to 20 miles" to a post-office, and yet they are to be debarred from any slight advantage which accrues to them from getting their newspapers carried free. If it were proposed to send telegraph boys from each railway station to deliver

letters and newspapers to the houses of country people, then I could quite understand that there should be a tax imposed on the newspapers for country people. Can we not make some allowance in their favour ? Why should we put this burden on the country people of two or three States ? Why should we put on the country people of New South Wales the disability of having to pay postage on their newspapers 1 Why should the people of New South Wales have to submit to a newspaper tax for four or five years until other advantages can result from the union 1 The tax would not fall on the proprietors of big newspapers, because their circulation is confined to the city. I intend to vote against giving any power to the Postmaster-General to impose postage for the carriage of newspapers. Some clauses of the Bill empower the Minister to open letters to see what they contain, and the reason which is assigned for this power is that publications offensive, seditious, or blasphemous, or relating to gambling, are sometimes inclosed. In this respect the Government is claiming a monopoly - it certainly would be so termed if it were in private hands - and just as we would object to any private letter carriers opening letters under any pretence whatever, I contend that we ought to object to the Federal Government doing so. In one of these clauses it is sought to confer power on the Postmaster-General to say whether a newspaper is seditious or libellous, but I hold that if a newspaper is seditious or libellous the question should come before the courts and be dealt with there. If a man sends an obscene publication through the post, the common law is quite wide enough to enable him to be dealt with ; but if it should be held that it is not, then the statute law could be extended to meet the case, instead of our allowing the privacy of letters passing through the Post-office to be in any way interfered with.

Mr Mauger

- That interference has already taken place in four or five States.

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Mr CONROY

- The fact that meddlesome legislation has been passed in some of the States, affords no reason why we should make it universal. What would have happened 1901 years 'ago if there had been a Postmaster-General aimed with such powers as those now sought with regard to seditious or blasphemous newspapers t He would probably have refused to transmit certain newspapers through the post, simply because their teaching was contrary to the then ruling religion. Supposing, for instance, it were thought desirable in this country to modify or alter certain forms of om- existing creed, the Postmaster-General might, under some of the provisions of this Bill, say that certain newspapers contained blasphemous matter, and refuse to transmit them through the post. It is perfectly clear that, if a newspaper were to contain an attack upon the Postmaster-General himself, although the attack might be purely political, he would have the power to say that it was libellous, and throw the newspaper out of circulation. If a Government, or a Postmaster-General, or any one else should be assailed, the charge against the offending newspaper should be brought in open court and heard before a jury, and not dealt with in the secret chamber of the Postmaster-General, who would be constituting himself a . sort of inquisitor-general. It might be safe to confer the powers sought upon the present Postmaster-General, but those who follow him in office might not be of the same nice, amiable disposition, and might consider the slightest reflection upon themselves to be libellous statements, and stop a newspaper accordingly. Farther, they might regard certain articles as entirely seditious, and would have it in then1 power to inflict great injury by preventing newspapers from passing through the post. What one man considers to be seditious another man may not deem to be so, and the question is a very difficult one to decide. We have seen many instances in the various States in which it has been argued on behalf of the Crown that a certain article was libellous, or that an article was seditious ; but the jury have unhesitatingly decided that there was neither libel, nor sedition. In the face of this we are asked to take the power of decision from a jury and give it over to the Postmaster-General. I think the evil that would arise from the interference proposed would be very much greater than any good that might be hoped for. It has been argued that certain clauses of this Bill will have the effect of putting a stop to gambling, and that, if it were not for the facilities offered by the Post-office, people could not indulge their taste for gambling. Moreover, because the Post-office can be made use of in this way, we are told that we ought to do away with the secrecy of the postal service. I entirely dissent from the view that because anything can be used for a bad purpose we ought to sweep it away altogether. We ought to look at tin's matter in a straightforward way, and ought not to deprive the public of facilities for carrying on secret communications through the Post-office simply

because the conditions may facilitate gambling operations. We have no right to interfere with the Post-office in the way proposed, and I do not think that the restrictions sought to be imposed will in any way prevent gambling. I have been in Melbourne amidst all the seductions of the Melbourne Cup meeting, and have never made a bet nor patronized Tattersalls sweep, but I object to the principle that the Postmaster-General should open any man's letters simply because he has reason to suspect that they contain communications relating to gambling transactions. We ought to expect the same efficient and complete service from the Federal Government as a common carrier that we should exact from a private individual performing similar functions. Many honorable members appear to think that because we have power to legislate, we are entitled to deprive other people of their right to do as they please. Of course, we should all like to see gambling suppressed, but in order to achieve that object, I do not wish to see the evil perpetrated of tampering with people's mail communications. The element of chance or of gambling crops up in our business transactions almost every day. When a man insures his life he engages in a gamble. He practically says to the insurance office, "I think that the amount of money which I will pay to you within a certain period will be less than that which I shall receive from you." The insurance office, on the other hand, says, in effect, "We will bet you that you will live long enough to pay us more in premiums than the amount for which we insure you." Surely that is gambling in one sense. As long as people only invest their own money in racing consultations I do not see why we should interfere with the liberty which they at present enjoy. If we give the Postmaster-General the power which this Bill proposes to confer upon him, he will be enabled to interfere with communications which ought to be held strictly sacred. I am opposed to allowing: the Postmaster-General to interfere with private correspondence in any way whatever. Is he to have power to overhaul letters addressed to the secretaries of mining companies? This matter requires very careful consideration. Many of the clauses in the Bill can be better dealt with in committee, and I therefore content myself with recording my protest against giving the Postmaster-General any right to depart from sound laws. No such provision as is proposed operates in England. There, if offences are committed, the transgressors are punished under the common law, and if that law is not large enough, they create statute laws to deal with them. We ought to prevent the introduction into this Bill of anything foreign to the carrying on of His Majesty's mail services.

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Mr G B EDWARDS

- It has been said by critics of this House that a great deal of time is wasted. Probably that statement is, to a certain extent, accurate, but the fault is really not the fault of the House. It arises from the peculiar circumstances of the business to be transacted during the first session. Even at the risk of wasting further time, I cannot allow such an important Bill to go into committee without expressing my views as to its general principles. Although I have been accused of being opposed to every measure submitted by the Government, I wish to say that in my view this Bill is one of the very best that could possibly have been introduced. It has defects, of course. People cannot always be got to agree upon matters of detail. The Bill is an admirably conceived one, which well meets the whole of the requirements of Australia. Although some improvements might have been included, it has been well prepared, and certainly deserves the best attention of this House. Considering that this is the first session of our national Parliament, I think that the Commonwealth committed an error in assuming control of the Post-office so soon. Many measures, such as this Bill and the Defence Bill, might very well have been left over till next session, when we should have had more time to deal with them. Parliament would then have been able to deal with the Tariff, upon which so much attention is at present being focussed by the whole community. If the Government had devoted their attention to measures which were absolutely necessary, we might very well have allowed the Post-office to have been taken over by the Commonwealth next session. So far the discussion has chiefly turned upon the simple question of whether the Postmaster-General shall have power to open letters addressed to certain prescribed individuals.

Clause 19 gives the Governor-General in Council power to fix the rates and charges on postal matter. Provision is made that this scale of charges shall be laid before Parliament within fourteen days of its meeting, if it be not then in session. Considering that this matter is second only in importance to the Customs Tariff, I think that the Postal Tariff should be dealt with very guardedly. Ministers would have acted wisely if they had provided for putting the Postal Tariff into a separate Bill. This measure provides that fourteen days' notice shall be given. But I would point out that it may possibly happen that that Tariff

may be adopted by Ministers a day or two before Parliament meets. Parliament may meet, and then adjourn possibly for a week or ten days, during which time nothing can be done. When it resumed again there would be no time to give that consideration to the subject which its importance demands before the expiry of the fourteen days prescribed by the Bill. The Postal Tariff should be introduced as a separate Bill in the ordinary way of legislation. This is a measure dealing with large interests, and we have no right to give any Government power to frame the Postal Tariff and get it adopted within fourteen days after Parliament meets, in default of no action being taken. Clause 41 gives the Postmaster-General power to cause any postal article having anything profane, blasphemous, indecent, or obscene on the outside to be destroyed. That is perfectly legitimate. cannot see how a Postmaster-General can come to the conclusion that there is any obscene or libellous matter in a letter until he has opened it; and although this power of opening is one which all Governments have held and probably must hold, it is a power which must be thoroughly safeguarded in the law which confers it. In this clause and subsequent clauses dealing with the same matter these proper precautions have not been taken, and there is no redress, and no action can be brought against the Postmaster-General for using the power, which he could not well use unless it was for some semi-secret purpose. It is different with newspapers. Very good information, may be received that a newspaper contains seditious or obscene articles ; but as to private correspondence, I do not see how the Postmaster-General, or any other official, could have a sufficient warrant for opening a letter to discover whether it contained any seditious, libellous, or obscene matter.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- He would never do such a thing.

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Mr G B EDWARDS

- He would not; and it is a superfluous power which ought not to be given. We know the great outcry there was in England when Mazzini's letters were opened. Indignation then ran from one end of the land to the other, disclosing a healthy state of public opinion, which I will undertake to say exists with quite as much strength and warmth in Australia to-day. We ought not to give this power; but, as I said before, I have no objection to the power, or to the underlying principle, if it be properly safeguarded, and if means of redress are given to people liable to be injured by its exercise. On the question of sweeps and lotteries, a great many honorable members have been quite misled as to what is proposed. The assumption has been that these letters are to be opened in the obnoxious way to which I have been referring. But no such thing is proposed. The Bill is quite clear that, before Tattersall's letters can be opened, Tattersall must be a prescribed person ; and very good grounds exist for dealing with this matter. The spirit of gambling is the greatest curse of the Commonwealth of Australia, which fairly staggers under it. Gambling exists everywhere. No matter what the condition, class, age, or sex, this passion for gambling is rampant in Australia. There are only two points to be considered. The point raised when it was first suggested to take power to deal with this gambling institution, was that the power would be an invasion of State rights. That contention, however, has almost been given up ; and although we hear it raised occasionally, it is quite plain to any one who has given the matter the slightest consideration that there is no invasion of State rights whatever. On the contrary, if these clauses did not exist, the action of Tasmania in keeping this sweep institution going under legislative status is distinctly an invasion of the rights of the remainder of the States. In the other States it has been held to be fair in principle, socially and morally, to say that these sweeps shall not exist, and legislation has been carried to repress, if not stamp them out altogether. If Tasmania remained the single exception, and the institution was facilitated by the postal powers of the Commonwealth, I hold it would be an invasion of the rights of the other States'. The Commonwealth is not invading the State rights of Tasmania. We are not dealing with any gambling institution of Tasmania ; we have no power to do that. If Tasmanians prefer to have gambling institutions in their midst, and to so invest their money, nothing that the Commonwealth can do, or proposes to do, will interfere with them in any way. But, as has been pointed out, the gambling which this institution creates is gambling that is more largely availed of by the people of the other States - by the people of the State I represent and Queensland - than it is by the people of Tasmania. The honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Cameron, in speaking in defence of the institution, said that every precaution is used to insure that money is not taken across the counter. What benefit is that to the residents of the other States, seeing that they cannot pay money across the counter ? The honorable member says that it is better to gamble by means of

Tattersall's, than in what he calls "hot blood" on the race-course, because a man may be spurred by drink when gambling on the course. But I contend that a man may be spurred to gamble in "hot blood" by sending money to Tattersall, just in the same way as he may be spurred to do so on the race-course. The institution is one which, if it does not lead to gambling in Tasmania, most certainly leads to gambling in the other States; and for the sake of peace, good government, and the welfare of the whole of the States, we ought to stop it. I do not say this because the gambling is carried on in Tasmania; and I regret that so much about Tasmania has been brought into this discussion. The Post-office, under the control of the Federal Government, is an institution which ought to be carried on in the best interests of the Commonwealth, and we have a right to say that this institution, devised for the best ends and aims of civilization, shall not be prostituted, no matter how much profit may be brought to a State. I have a right to claim that I represent Tasmania almost as much as those honorable members who are elected by the people of that State. I was born in the country, and hold property and have a business there; and I say that it is the worst thing that ever happened to Tasmania, that this gambling institution, which affects all quarters of the Commonwealth, should have been received there with open arms. I am saying nothing against the individual who goes by the name of Tattersall. I am prepared to admit that he is a man of singular integrity, whose honesty is beyond all question. It is rather a pity, having regard to the progress of this vice in our midst, that he has not proved one of the biggest rogues on earth by walking off with half-a-million of money at some Melbourne Cup time, and "letting in" half the people of Australia. Had he done so we would have had less of this evil; but when we have a man who has earned, and rightly earned, a reputation for honesty and straightforwardness, and when this institution is legalized and supervised by the Government of the State, and a certain security given to investors that they are dealing with a sound concern, those very circumstances in themselves lead to an increased amount of gambling. Now that we have an opportunity of doing "something towards repressing this evil, we ought not to let the chance go.

An Honorable Member. - Start at home.

Mr G B EDWARDS

- An honorable member says that we ought to "start at home." If the Commonwealth Parliament had the power of repressing gambling in this and the other States, I would be one to take advantage of that power; but we have no such power. We are, however, passing a Postal Bill by which we may or may not carry the correspondence of "Tattersall" from one State to another, and, taking advantage of the opportunity, we ought to put our foot down. If we do so, there is every likelihood the States will follow our example and repress gambling in other directions. This institution is a curse to the country, and, if it is allowed to continue, we shall go from bad to worse, and other forms of gambling will be legalized in the little State, until Tasmania becomes the gambling hell of the Commonwealth.

An Honorable Member.- -She could do that.

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Mr G B EDWARDS

- No doubt Tasmania could do it, and we ought to induce her not to do it as an example to the other States.. Unfortunately, Tattersall went to Tasmania when the finances of the State were in anything but a prosperous condition. The fact that by legalizing this Tattersall institution there they would get, as they expected, nearly £20,000 a year out of it was the fact, and none other, that induced the thing to be taken up by the people and adopted there. I say, no matter what the loss is; even if the loss has to be borne by this Commonwealth, let us pay it out of our own pockets and be done with it, and crush out this evil, or it will grow until we have a sort of Monte Carlo in the little island State. I hope honorable members will consider this matter very seriously, and that it will not be approached, as it has been in some instances, as though it were an invasion of people's private rights of correspondence.

Sir Edward Braddon

- So it is.

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Mr G B EDWARDS

- It is no such thing. The petition which was taken around Australia, and hawked about in every street of the leading cities, was a petition so worded as to trap the unwary, and it succeeded in trapping some very well educated men. It had in large red letters "To stop your letters being opened by the

Postmaster-General," and of course unthinking people readily came forward to sign it, because they did not want their correspondence tampered with. It has been signed by hundreds and thousands of persons who little knew what they were signing for. I have sufficient confidence in the moral rectitude of the community as a whole to think that, had people generally known what they were signing the petition for, and had they known thoroughly the circumstances of the whole tiling, the signatures would not have been obtained. I was sorry to hear some one interject the other day that we ought not to receive one of those petitions. I hope the day will never come when this Parliament will refuse to receive any petition from a subject, but if this petition had been understood a very great many people who have signed it would never have done so. We have, therefore, no right to take the fact of this large number of signatures being obtained in favour of this petition as expressing the will or the wish of the people of this Commonwealth. I say the people of this Commonwealth want to be saved from this curse. It has been argued here to-night by one of the members from Western Australia that gambling under certain circumstances is not immoral. I admit that if, for instance, I have £5 to lose which would not affect me one way or the other, whether I lose it or make a win in this way by it, it would be hard from a technical point of view to prove that it was morally wrong for me to risk it. But we cannot take any gambling transaction in that isolated way. In gambling we must deal with some one else, and in connexion with this particular institution we have a system of gambling in which numbers of people throughout Australia take part. Although I may be able to afford the loss, there may be many others entering into the gambling compact with me, for the prospect of gain, who are unable to afford the loss. We know the tendency which gambling has had in the past. Clerks investing money week by week and month by month in connexion with this institution have been led in many instances to resort to larceny and embezzlement, and it has produced as much misery as many other vices. Some honorable members say that, do what we will, people will gamble; the vice is inherent, and people will indulge it, and the only thing we can do is to regulate it. I say we must not begin to think that if the vice inherently exists we are bound to regulate it, and that that will alter its character * in any way. We might regulate the crime of burglary in some useful ways, but it would be the crime of burglary all the same. I think that it would be found if we proposed to regulate this tiling in any way, the effect of the regulation would be only to make it easier to indulge in the vice, and men would accept, as it were, the State guarantee at the back of it, and gamble on that account, when if it were left open to competition with the fear of being "sold," they would not do so. I hope that as this is the principal item of discussion in the Bill, the House will consider very seriously before it commits itself to countenance an institution which has done nothing but harm in our midst. We have to consider, further, that this is a great monopoly, and it is utterly opposed to our principles of democracy that a man should hold this monopoly. Although, as I have said before, the individual carrying on this institution as Tattersall is an upright man, the day will come when Tattersall will die, and the institution will be carried on by others who may not be so honest. The question sooner or later will arise of why we should prevent or prohibit others from having the same right to make hundreds of thousands of pounds as Tattersall has had. Then we shall have to look to consider whether gambling is to be a part of our daily transactions or not. The arguments used in favour of this institution, if carried out logically, would force us into adopting a State lottery system, under which the State would take the whole of the profits, and would properly regulate the gambling spirit of the people. I repeat that I have sufficient confidence in the intelligence and moral character of this community, to believe that the time is a very long way off when we shall adopt any system of State "ambling.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- This Bill, like the Inter-State Commission Bill, exhibits a strong tendency to interfere with the private rights of the people, and in this particular instance, it interferes with those rights in the most objectionable manner possible, that is by the violation of that which we all hold sacred - the right to our private letters being considered our property and not liable to be opened at the sweet will of the Postmaster-General or anybody else. The policy, which under this Bill it is sought to introduce, finds no parallel whatever in the mother country. In England all that we find in the way of law relating to the Post-office, is that anybody who opens a letter in transit through the Post-office shall be guilty of a misdemeanour,, and next that the Government may, in the search for -contraband articles, pursue their inquiries even to the extent of opening letters. Otherwise, for any purpose whatever, it is held to be a violation of private rights inexcusable except in very grievous circumstances when letters are opened not by force of law but as a matter of State. Those who have read English political history must remember how Sir James Graham, a

prominent statesman of his day, absolutely ruined his career by opening letters when it was shown that such opening was not justified.

Sir Philip Fysh

- By receiving letters to Mazzini at his house - that is what ruined him.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- He was ruined by opening letters passing through the Post-office. I shall expect the Minister in charge of this Bill very shortly to stand up and support me as strenuously as he possibly can in the action I shall take in respect to the principal portion of this Bill.

Sir Philip Fysh

- The right honorable member cannot expect me to do anything of the kind.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- I can expect the honorable gentleman at any rate to support in this Bill the principle of the State Act of Parliament to which he was a party, and to which, as my colleague of the day, he gave all the support he possibly could.

Mr Page

- The honorable gentleman has seen the error of his ways since then.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- The honor-

I able gentleman has seen so many errors in I so many ways that it is always difficult to [deal with him in that respect. At the same time, I look to the honorable gentleman to say that what we did when we introduced j and passed that Bill was well and justly done.

Mr Mauger

- Circumstances alter cases.

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Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- I have heard that before. I do not propose at this juncture to go at length into the question of Tattersalls, which somehow or other seems to be the one great question which honorable members see in the clauses to which I and many others take exception. I can say at once that I hold no brief for Mr. Adams or anybody else, but I do hold a brief for Tasmania, and I shall support by both voice and vote the purpose of the Bill by which, wisely, I think, and well, we legalized Tattersall in that State. When the honorable member for South Sydney - a Tasmanian, though I regard him as a degenerate one - said that Tasmania is gradually becoming the Monte Carlo of Australia, he surprised me beyond expression. What is there in the Tasmanian Act to justify the statement that it is the policy of that State to become the gambling place of Australia ? That Act, while it legalized Tattersalls under stringent conditions, has stamped out other forms of gambling which were dangerous to the community, so that at the present moment Tasmania is a shining light to the rest of Australia. We have suppressed what was dangerous, and have left only a wholesome outlet for the spirit of speculation which exists in all of us, whether it leads us to the card table, or to the Stock Exchange in search of mining scrip. However, I shall not go into the subject at length now, because I purpose dealing with it fully when the Bill is in committee. Whatever exception may be taken to the petitions against clauses 55 and 56 which were signed by residents of Victoria and New South Wales, I can guarantee that the petition which I presented, and which was signed by 24,000 persons in Tasmania, was got up in a genuine way, and expressed the true views of a large number of the electors of that State. I can corroborate, too, what has been said by another honorable member - that all the clergy are not against us, because I have received letters from clergymen who hold that Tattersall's is an innocent outlet for the spirit of speculation, which, for the sake of the people, we should retain.

Mr Mauger

- Will the right honorable member let us know the names of those clergymen ? Surely, if they have any influence, they will not object.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- The honorable member ought to know better than to ask me for the names of correspondents who have not authorized me to give them

Mr MAUGER

- Then why quote them?

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- Because I am justified in doing so in corroboration of the statement I have mentioned.

Mr Harper

- Is it true that the Tasmanian Act was passed because the Government expected to make £20,000 a year out of it?

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

-No doubt we expected to make something out of it, and that did not hinder us from moving in the matter.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- The Tasmanian Government also get revenue from the liquor traffic of the State ?

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- Yes ; and although I am not a friend of intemperance, I shall always support the collection of revenue in that way. I presume, too, that the demonstration in Sydney, at which Sir James Graham and Mr. John Want were present, was a genuine one.

Mr Mauger

- That meeting has not affected the honorable member for South Sydney yet.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- It will presently. Legislation of the espionage and eavesdropping kind, such as we are now asked to pass, is only to be found in Russia.

Mr G B EDWARDS

- And in the United States.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- In the United States for one limited purpose.

Mr Higgins

- For this very purpose.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- When the people of the United States found that we were outdoing them, they went in for that special legislation ; but it is in Russia - where the public censor strikes out of every newspaper all that any one in authority takes the slightest exception to - that you will find examples of legislation of this kind, which we ought to regard as mean and improper. I should like honorable members to recognise that the provisions of the Bill are not confined to Tattersall's, but have so wide a range that, to be properly administered, the Postmaster-General should have at his back a high court to direct him. I presume that it will not be seriously contended that the Commonwealth Parliament has power to pass laws dealing with the domestic affairs of the States. The honorable member for South Sydney, with the logic of topsy-turvydom, said that Tasmania was interfering with the rights of the other States ; but it is quite the other way about. The Commonwealth is seeking to interfere with the State rights of Tasmania in many directions. Are we to put a stop to horseracing ?

An Honorable Member. - Yes.

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Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- All who desire to see the breed of our horses maintained will support horse-racing. Paragraph (a) of this clause makes it impracticable to a certain extent to forward by post to a race-club secretary the entrance or acceptance money for any horse entered in a race. That is a nice thing to have done by a National Parliament, seeking, even in this manner, to do the eavesdropping business, to the prejudice of the people of the different States. In paragraph (d) we find that the Postmaster-General - this Admirable Crichton, this complete lawyer - is to open these letters when they are sent in connexion with any fraudulent transaction. There is a splendid field for inquiry by this omnipotent and omniscient Postmaster-General ! What is " a fraudulent undertaking " ? A good many people have invested in mines, and have found, after all, that these mines might very well be ranked as fraudulent undertakings. The Postmaster-General charged with this enormous and tyrannical power, is to be permitted to open these letters and to prevent them reaching their proper destination. I hope that honorable members, when the Bill is in committee, will reject the clauses that give this highly objectionable power, and that we shall see our legislation proceed on sound and sober lines, protective of the interests, the prejudices, and the feelings of the people, and always without interference with State rights in any particular. There is in this

Bill an interference with some rights in connexion with electric lighting.

As to those matters, I have placed on the notice-paper certain amendments, which I hope will be considered favorably when we are in committee. I have also asked for a return showing what will be the probable loss by this or that course pursued in regard to the despatch of newspapers through the post. That return is not ready, so that I am unable now to quote it, but I hope I shall be able to lay it before honorable members when we are in committee. I trust that the House will take a generous view as to the despatch of newspapers through the post, and, to the utmost limit possible, allow newspapers to pass free.

Mr MAHON

- No fear.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- I do not know that I have any special reason to love newspapers generally ; I have been too much abused by them. But I do see, and I have always seen, that to a large mass of the people the daily or weekly newspaper is the one means by which they are brought into line with day to day history, and the one means also by which they may derive a certain amount of instruction and amusement. It is to a very large class of the country people-- the agriculturist, the miner, and others - pretty well all the literature that they are likely to have within their reach, and I say let the utmost generosity be shown to these people in the matter of providing them with a healthy amount of newspapers - if newspapers can be called healthy.

Mr G B EDWARDS

- Why not deal with general literature in the same way ?

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- What amount of general literature passes into the hands of the commonalty throughout Australia ? Do they get the latest works on philosophy, the latest books of history and biography and travel ? I am thinking of people who are cut off very largely from libraries and other means of improving themselves by means of literature of any sort, and who therefore are almost dependent upon what they get through the newspapers.

Mr Higgins

- Would not the right honorable member enable them to obtain their books through the lending libraries by means of cheap postage ? Why should not people in remote parts have cheap postage for literature?

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- That is only proceeding on the lines which I have been advocating, namely, that we should allow literature of the best available class to reach those people who are cut off from libraries and the sources of improvement open to the great bulk of us who sit here. Whatever is proposed in that direction I shall certainly be found supporting, and supporting in no half-hearted way.

Mr Higgins

- We should carry books and reviews as cheaply as possible through the post.

Mr O'Malley

- We should carry all passengers free.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- That is quite a different matter, and I think we might draw the line there. I shall occupy the attention of honorable members for some time when the Bill reaches committee, and I shall not, therefore, detain the House further at the present stage.

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Monaro

Mr CHAPMAN

- It is not my intention to prolong the debate on the second reading of this Bill, because it appears to me that we shall be able to discuss the details in committee. To a very large extent most of the impassioned addresses which we have heard have been on the details of the measure. After listening to the right honorable member who has just sat down, and to one or two others who have preceded him, one would think that the only principle in the Bill is contained in the clause that gives the Postmaster-General a power to do certain things, which he already possesses, so far as the greater part of the Commonwealth is concerned. I do not intend to deal with that phase of the question at present, because I believe it will be fought out, and fought out bitterly. when we come to that clause in committee. It seems to me, however,

that there are 'One or two other matters in the Bill which are worthy of the attention of honorable members. When federation was accepted by the people of this country there was a prevailing opinion, in the State from which I come, at any rate, that it would mean uniform postage. I hope that when this Bill becomes law the wishes of the people will be realized ; because it does strike me as an anomaly that the people of Victoria and some other States may enjoy a cheap rate of postage, whilst people in other parts of the Commonwealth are charged double rates. It was said to-night by the honorable member for Echuca, that the Postal department should be worked on commercial lines.

If the honorable member represented a back-blocks constituency, or knew what a mail or a post-office means at times to people away back from the centres of civilization, he would hesitate about saying that before a mail service was extended the department should make sure that it would pay. If we follow out that principle how are we going to construct our roads or carry out any progressive work in this country? I ask those who represent large centres of population, where all the conveniences of civilization have been built up, to some extent out of the taxes paid by people who are living in the back blocks, to consider what a mail service and a post-office mean to those less fortunately situated people, and to hesitate before they come to the conclusion that the Post-office should be run on commercial lines, it must strike you, Mr. Speaker, as being strange that some of the honorable members who advocate running the Post-office on commercial lines should make such frenzied appeals to this House not to interfere with certain contracts, and should even advocate that newspapers should be carried free. It seems to me that there was a good deal of reason in the contention of the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. O'Malley, that if the Government is going to carry newspapers free it should carry even passengers free. The honorable and learned member for Werriwa said that newspapers are distributed free in order that they may educate the people. Well, I know some newspaper proprietors and shareholders, but I do not know one of them who has a very strong desire to educate the people. The trouble some of these monopolists have is that the public have been too well educated. The people have recognised that newspapers should pay for the conveniences afforded to them by the Government of the country. Are newspapers run by these gentlemen for the purpose of educating the people, or for swelling their banking accounts ?

Mr O'Malley

- They are run for reasons of philanthropy.

Mr CHAPMAN

- I have never discovered any philanthropists among them yet. If we are going, to subsidize the railways of New South Wales to carry the Sydney Daily Telegraph and the Sydney Morning Herald free, why should we not carry free the butter which my constituents make, and have to send to market ? There is as much reason for carrying butter free as there is for carrying newspapers free for the benefit of newspaper proprietors. No doubt some honorable members are not too much disposed to tackle a big newspaper in this country. It has been said here to-night that some States are almost run at the dictation of one or other of the big newspapers. Reference was made to the influence the Age has in Victoria. Honorable members on the opposition side of the House sneered at the influence of that paper. They forget all they owe to the Daily Telegraph in New South Wales. They forget the domination of the Daily Telegraph, and that although there was a strong desire on the part of the people of New South Wales to the contrary, the Government of that State kept on running what was called a newspaper train - a heavy goods train in the morning, carrying goods as a blind - so that newspapers might be taken wet from the printing machines and distributed, without any cost to the newspaper proprietors whatever. So far as I am concerned, I believe we ought to make these papers pay for the privileges we give them. If it is a fact, as has been stated by a Minister in New South Wales, that the Federal Government are to be charged by the New South Wales Railway department for carrying these papers-

Mr Watkins

- About £70,000 a year altogether.

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Mr CHAPMAN

- I would ask honorable members like the honorable member for Tasmania (Sir Edward Braddon) and the honorable and learned member for Werriwa who have spoken in favour of carrying these newspapers free, whether they are prepared to ask the electors of the Commonwealth to pay £70,000 for the purpose, or whether they think the electors will be content to pay that sum to the State of New South Wales in

order that the newspapers of Sydney may be carried, free ? At any rate I am not prepared to do it. I hope the day is not far distant when we shall have a penny post throughout the Commonwealth, It has been said that this will entail a considerable loss of revenue. The Canadian example disproves that. Canada suffered a small loss at the commencement, but it was gradually reduced. In New Zealand when penny postage was instituted there was a profit from the start. The people in one part of the Commonwealth should have the same rights as the people in another part in connexion with a department run by the Commonwealth to which all have to contribute alike ; and we should as soon as possible have a uniform postage rate throughout the country. If there is a loss I hope that Parliament will see its way clear to make it up by imposing a tax, or a charge of some kind upon the carriage of newspapers j for the time has gone by when we should carry them free.

Mr Cameron

- Do away with Ilansard.

Mr CHAPMAN

- The probabilities are that the honorable member would be the first to complain if that were done.

Something has been said in regard to the mistake made in taking over the Postal department. I have a distinct recollection of the honorable member who now leads the Opposition, when he was advocating federation, pointing out in an impassioned oration, that one of the savings that would be effected by federation was that there would be one Postmaster-General, and one postal system, inasmuch as the Postal department would be taken over¹ at once.

Mr Reid

- No, it was "the noble son " who said that.

Mr CHAPMAN

- The light honorable and learned member says so many things that probably his recollection does not serve him very well sometimes. I heard it from more than one honorable member on that side, and I certainly said it myself, but I was always in favour of federation. The complaint is that this department should not have been taken over, and that other important matters should have been settled before any time was taken up with this measure. This is an important measure which . should have been dealt with at the earliest opportunity, and the more quickly we set the department in order the better. I hope that the Bill will be proceeded with, rapidly, so that we may have the uniform system to which we are entitled and which will bring about a saving. I hope the statements which have been made as to a reduction in the rate of telegrams will be given due attention to. It is a hardship on persons living in distant parts of the Commonwealth to have to pay the present heavy charges for telegrams. The honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, an ex-Postmaster-General, stated that his experience led him to believe that if the rates were considerably reduced it would certainly involve no loss to the revenue. I trust that a reduction will be made and that no parsimonious spirit will be displayed in dealing with the department. Many charges have been levelled against its administration and the delays which occur. I hope it will be recognised that we are not dealing with a small State, but with the whole of the Commonwealth, and that applications made through honorable members for extra mails and for better treatment in different parts, especially in the back blocks, will receive the attention which they merit.

Mr Conroy

- - And extra pay to country postmasters.

Mr CHAPMAN

- The honorable and learned member sneers at the country postmasters.

Mr Conroy

- No.

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Mr CHAPMAN

- The honorable and. learned member sneers at the payment of country postmasters. It would be more equitable to make some of the big newspapers contribute something towards the postal revenue, even if the money derived from that source should be expended in increasing the salaries of some of these unfortunate postal officials. I do not speak for my own electorate solely, because, as a rule in country electorates, postal officials are no better paid than they are in big centres of population. It would be a good thing if we provided in this Bill - it is provided in another way - that some of these postal officials who

fill most responsible positions, and have to handle large sums of money, were to be paid a better wage. In big centres like Sydney, and probably Melbourne, persons join the postal department at an early age, and we find them coming to manhood and marrying on a salary of £60 or £70 a year. That is not as it should be. We had a great commotion in the House not very long ago when it was proposed that a certain minimum wage should be established, and it was pointed out that the Postal department could not afford the expenditure. Any department ought to be able to afford to pay, at any rate, a living wage. The only way we can accomplish that object is by not being too strict in our ideas that the Postal department should be run as a commercial concern, that it should be self-supporting. But we certainly should not allow some of those who receive the greatest services from the department to escape scot free while others have to pay, and pay heavily too, for every convenience which is afforded to them.

Mr Conroy

- The honorable member for Eden-Monaro, when I interjected about country postmasters, said I sneered at them. If he had been present during the debate to-day, he would have learned that some of them received as little as £10 a year. When he was speaking of them, I thought that he would not object to such a low salary being raised. But I am sorry to learn, from the way in which he treated my interjection, that he thinks they are sufficiently well paid, and ought not to have their salaries increased.

Mr. Chapman(in explanation). - The honorable and learned member for Werriwa rose, I understood, to make a personal explanation. His personal explanation consisted of a statement that he regretted that I was not present during the debate, and that if I had been present I would have learned--

Mr Reid

- Is this a personal explanation 1

Mr SPEAKER

- The honorable and learned member for Werriwa explained that he had not sneered, as he had been charged with doing, and if the honorable member for Eden-Monaro has been misrepresented he has a right to explain, but not to go into other matters.

Mr Chapman

- The honorable and learned member for Werriwa in his personal explanation, stated that had I been present during the debate I would have learned that many of the country postmasters are being paid only £10 per annum. I was present during the debate all the evening, and I know that they receive low salaries, and it was owing to that knowledge that I said, when he interjected, that I was surprised to find him sneer at any reference I made in favour of raising their salaries

Mr Conroy

- I only recalled it to the honorable member's recollection.

Mr Chapman

- I accept his explanation, and I acquit him of having sneered at country postmasters, but he led me to believe at the moment, by his interjection, that that was what he intended. As regards his statement that I am not in favour of raising their salaries, I refer honorable members to Hansard to see what I did say.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee :

Clause 2 (Acts repealed).

Mr. HIGGINS(Northern Melbourne).I would like to ask the Minister in charge of the Bill whether the Government have considered the difficulty with regard to the repeal of State Acts. When the Customs Bill was under consideration I was informed by the Minister for Trade and Customs that there was no power, as he thought, to repeal State Acts by passing a Federal Act, but although we were very careful to exclude the expression " Acts repealed "" from the Customs and Public Service Bills, I find it is used here. I would like to know what power there is to repeal.

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- The Postmaster-General has assured me that there is full power of repeal with regard to Acts relating to those services which have been taken over by the Commonwealth. The matter has been considered.

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Mr REID

- I do not know what consideration may have been given to this subject, but all the consideration in the

world will not give the Parliament power to do what this clause proposes, because we cannot repeal the statutes of any State. It is only the authority which legislates that can repeal. There is a provision in the Constitution Act giving the Commonwealth Parliament power to legislate in respect to post-offices and telegraphs within the Commonwealth, this power being concurrent with the power of legislation in the States ; but there is no provision that when the Commonwealth legislation comes into force the State Acts shall cease to have effect. There is a provision that when the Acts of the Commonwealth and the State on the same subject conflict or are inconsistent, the laws of the Commonwealth shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency. There was a wise object in making that provision, because it might well, happen that in the laws of the State there might be some useful legislation which might be omitted from the Commonwealth law, and which at the same time might prove very useful as a part of the Commonwealth law. Section 109 of the Constitution provides -

When a law of a State is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid.

That section repeals the State legislation as far as it may be inconsistent with the Commonwealth legislation, but the Commonwealth Parliament has no power to repeal State Acts irrespective of whether they are inconsistent with the Commonwealth law or not - at least, I am afraid not, but I would not like to speak too positively. If there are any provisions in the State laws which are not inconsistent with this Bill, such provisions will remain in force whether we put in this repeal clause or not, and I do not think there is any authority for what is proposed here. Section 108 of the Constitution provides -

Every law in force in a colony which has become or becomes a State, and relating to any matter within the powers of the Parliament of the Commonwealth, shall, subject to this Constitution, continue in force in the State.

Our power is the power of legislation, and our legislation to the extent to which it is inconsistent with the State law becomes the State law ; but it does not destroy any part of the State law with which it is not inconsistent. We ought to proceed carefully in this matter, as we do not wish to assert powers that we do not properly possess, and I would suggest that the clause might be postponed for the present.

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - So far as our consideration has gone we think there is the power to do what is proposed in this clause. The matter is not one that has been sprung upon us suddenly ; we have given some consideration to it. Following on the portion of section 108 of the Constitution Act which has been read by my right honorable friend, the section provides -

And until provision is made in that behalf by the Parliament of the Commonwealth, the Parliament of the State shall have such powers of alteration and of repeal in respect of any such law as the Parliament of the colony had until the colony became a State.

The next section provides that when the law of the State is inconsistent with the law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail, and so on. Now the form in which this clause has been put in is that it asserts the repeal of the State laws, but the substance lies underneath the form. The question is really whether the Commonwealth, when it makes a new law covering the whole orbit of a certain class of laws within the various States, enacting in some respects similar provisions which in themselves would have a substituted effect for the provisions formerly existing, except that they would become "federal and not local, and also making other provisions - which are in their essence necessarily inconsistent - whether, when such a law covers the whole ground, it is not proper to insert a repeal clause as to existing enactments. Because, if that were not the method adopted, another method would have to be followed, which would be equally effectual, no doubt - namely, that of leaving out any reference to repeal, and letting it rest with the public who read the Acts to come to their own conclusions as to the inconsistencies that prevail.

Mr. Higgins. - I think we all admit the inconvenience.

Mr BARTON

- Yes, the public inconvenience is admitted, and therefore this seems to us a right and proper course from the point of view of the public convenience, and it only remains to consider its validity. As far as the provisions are substituted provisions for those already in existence they are inconsistent with those already in existence, because the latter apply only to the respective States, whereas those which are

substituted apply to the whole- Commonwealth. But there is the further case of those provisions which are not found in the laws of the States, and which are entirely new, and the whole of the ground is therefore covered to meet both these cases. This may not be necessary perhaps in part, but it is not illegal to enact the repeal as to the whole of those provisions whose ground is covered, whether in respect of some of them there is or is not new ground -entered upon. I should not like to have any trouble about this very important point, and I do not propose that it should be settled at this stage. I think the proposal of the, right honorable the leader of the Opposition is a reasonable one, and if honorable members would like to further consider this matter, which involves a somewhat important constitutional point, I think it will be my duty to advise my honorable colleague to postpone the clause.

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Sir JOHN QUICK

- There can be no doubt that the point raised is a very important one, and involves the interpretation of the Constitution to some extent. I would like to direct attention to two particular sections of the Constitution which confer express power of repeal or annulment on this Parliament. One is section 112. There, power is given to the Federal Parliament to annul inspection laws. Honorable members will observe that there is an express power of annulment. Section 90 of the Constitution Act provides that on the imposition of uniform duties of customs, all State laws relating thereto shall cease to have effect. These are the only two sections in the Constitution which confer in so many words an express power of repeal, or which have the effect of expressly, directly, and absolutely repealing State laws. That being so, the question of whether this Parliament can repeal State laws by a wholesale clause of a drag-net character, such as this is, without proceeding to replace them by actual positive legislation, is a very important one. The view which I have entertained up to the present time is that it cannot do so. That view was also entertained by the draftsman of the Defence Bill, because in that measure he suggested in a very adroit fashion that certain Bills which were enumerated in the schedule should not apply. That was a sort of finger-post indicating that in the opinion of the draftsman the Bills enumerated in the schedule might be disregarded. Now the draftsman has gone further, and has scheduled a host of Bills which he says "shall be hereby repealed." It seems to be rather an unsafe way of proceeding in a matter of this sort. If it is proposed to displace any particular State law, it seems to me that we shall have to replace it by something else, because section 109 of the Constitution provides that all State laws are preserved to the extent that they are not inconsistent with or repugnant to federal legislation. Therefore, actual express federal legislation is required to displace existing State laws, and it will be for the federal courts afterwards to determine, if necessary, what State laws are inconsistent with or repugnant to federal legislation. No doubt it would be convenient if we had the power to schedule a list of repeals, but it seems to me that, in face of sections 112 and 90 of the Constitution, which define two express cases of repeal, it would be very unsafe indeed to adopt at this stage, when the matter is open to very serious argument, this method of proceeding by way of express repeal.

Mr. HIGGINS (Northern Melbourne). His view of the offer of the Prime Minister, the committee might well pass on to the consideration of the next clause. May I point out that the language used in the Defence Bill is eminently apt to this case. Clause 5 of that Bill says : - " The State Acts specified in the 1st schedule of this Act shall not apply to the defence force." If we inserted in this Bill a similar provision it would answer all purposes.

Mr Barton

- I am inclined to think so too. If the honorable and learned member will refer to section 52 of the Constitution he will see that it might be argued from that that there is power to deal drastically with any law for which we provide a substitute.

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Mr G H REID

- I recollect now that this matter was very seriously considered in the Convention. It was suggested as a very convenient proposition that the laws of the States with relation to the subjects upon which the Commonwealth had power to legislate, and did legislate, should cease. But it was seen that it would be most inconvenient to take that course, and that it would be safer to allow the laws of the States to stand to the extent to which they did not conflict with the legislation of the Commonwealth. Section 51 of the Constitution, which enumerates the subjects upon which the Commonwealth can legislate, does not take

exclusive power of legislation. That provision .was deliberately framed so as to preserve the powers of the States. Section 52 did take exclusive power over certain subjects. Then, under "the heading of " the States," the power of the States not only to maintain the laws which they have passed, but to pass fresh laws with reference to the subjects included in section 51 was preserved. We always recognised it as inconvenient that it should be necessary to sift the Commonwealth and State laws in order to ascertain the precise degree of their consistency or inconsistency, but upon the whole it was felt that it would be in the interests of the Commonwealth that the State laws should be kept up until they were displaced by federal legislation. I would direct attention to the words "subject to this Constitution " which appear in section 107. The two legislative powers being concurrent, the State powers -were expressly kept alive by section 109 even after legislation by the Commonwealth. It is there expressly provided that when the State law is inconsistent with the law of the Commonwealth, the former shall be held to be repealed to the extent to which it is so inconsistent. That, however, is a different matter from holding that the State law should be altogether repealed, which is the effect of this clause. It seems to me that there is a very important constitutional question involved here, and I agree with the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne that the form adopted in the Defence Bill is one to which no objection could be taken.

Mr ISAACS

- The Prime Minister has taken a wise course in agreeing to defer the fuller consideration of this clause, because we ought to know where we stand in regard to these matters, and be careful as to what precedents we make. Section 52 sets forth that this Parliament has exclusive power to legislate in respect of the departments taken over, and according to section 69 "posts, telegraphs, and telephones " are transferred to the Commonwealth. It is very doubtful, to say the least -I rather think there is no power - whether the States can repeal their postal laws now. The exclusive legislative power, it seems to me, is in the Commonwealth, and it might be well to consider whether we should or should not assert our right to repeal those laws. This section is, in any case, of a different character to section 112. The annulment of inspection laws does not repeal ; it is merely a paramount power given to the Commonwealth to see that the constitutional right preserved to a State to guard its territory from disease and noxious importations shall not be used for a purpose never intended. This annulment is for a totally different purpose, and the Prime Minister is doing well to see that we do not forego or do not exceed any right we may have.

Clause postponed.

Clause 6 -

There shall be a principal secretary to the Postmaster-General, who, under the Postmaster-General, shall have the chief control of the department throughout the Commonwealth.

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- This clause was in print long before the Public Service Bill was passed, and a definition in regard to the chief officer found a place in the schedule of the latter measure. The words " principal secretary " are not apt ; and in order to bring this Bill into conformity with the Public Service Bill, and to have the chief officer under the Postmaster-General classed with the secretaries under the latter Bill, I move-
That the word "principal" be omitted.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- This officer will be over the Deputy PostmastersGeneral, and would it not be an anomaly to put him on the level of an ordinary secretary, when in reality he is the principal officer next to the Postmaster-General? There are secretaries now in all the State departments.

Mr Barton

- The Postmaster-General is about to take steps to make such alterations in the titles of those heretofore called secretaries as will prevent any confusion.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Would it not be better to have one Deputy Postmaster-General, and call the principal officers in each State "secretaries"?

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - The schedule to the Public Service Bill calls each permanent head of a department " secretary." What is contemplated by the Postmaster-General is this : Mr. Scott, who will be the permanent head, has been appointed by Executive minute as secretary. It was pointed out to the Government that for the heads of

the other departments to be called simply " secretary," and the head of one department to be called " principal secretary," would create an anomalous distinction scarcely fair to the heads of those other departments. The first step to prevent that is taken in this case by appointing and gazetting this gentleman as secretary. That conforms with the Public Service Bill, and, to bring the matter further into conformity with that measure, it is proposed to omit the word "principal." There are secretaries in all the States, but my colleague intends to make alterations in those titles in order that there may be no confusion between the secretary to the central department and the secretary in a State. As to the titles of the Deputy Postmasters-General, which have been so long enjoyed, he proposes to leave them in existence, because they do not create any confusion.

Amendment agreed to.

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Mr REID

- I should like some information as to whether any effort has been made to secure, in the central office, officers who have some knowledge of the working of the postal and telegraph system in the several States. It is to be observed that the secretary to the Postmaster-General has been brought by the Postmaster-General - who is a Queenslander - down to the chief office of the Postal department. That gentleman may be the most able officer in the Commonwealth. I have no personal knowledge of him, and we will make the charitable assumption that he is absolutely the best man in the postal service of Australia, although he happens to have been in Brisbane. The next thing is that the theory of chances has been upset in a remarkable way. In a great department the officer next the Under-Secretary is practically an Under-Secretary in the absence, for instance, of the latter ; and it has also been the good fortune of the Queensland Minister, who is ignorant of all the other postal services in Australia, to have discovered that a junior officer in the Brisbane office is the best man in Australia to take second place in the chief office. I admit that the appointments cannot be altered now, but I want to proceed from this preamble to a matter of practical importance. I want to ascertain whether arrangements have been made by the Government to secure in the head office the presence of some officers, no doubt very properly in subordinate positions, who know something about the great post and telegraph services of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. It is impossible for a Minister, however able, accomplished, "and quick he may be, even if he work on the lines of inspiration, to have, or for his Brisbane officers to have, all this knowledge by intuition. It is of great importance to the satisfactory "working of this department, which touches the business interests of the people in a most intimate way, that the Government should see that they have a thoroughly good officer from each of the States of Australia to advise the Postmaster-General.

Mr Barton

- The men you ask for are "there already.

Mr REID

- That is what I wish to know. I quite admit that a good man in the course of time will be able to get a very good knowledge of the business in all the States, but it will take him some time, and I trust Ministers will be alive to the necessity of having in this department gentlemen possessing a knowledge of the post and telegraph systems in each of the States.

Mr. JOSEPHCOOK (Parramatta).- Before the Minister replies, I wish to say a word. One does not like to make invidious distinctions or comparisons, but it is a pity that we could not have had one of the superior officers of the Postal department selected from one of the larger States. I do not object at all to the qualifications of the gentlemen from Queensland. I believe they are both able men and good officers, but Queensland has always had a way of her own of administering her postal and telegraph systems. It became quite a proverb in our postal conferences, " Queensland dissents." If honorable members will look through the reports of those conferences they will find that Queensland nearly always pursued a line of policy of her own in regard to the important matters discussed. For these reasons I think it is very unfortunate that the sole control of the central administration should be given over to Queensland officers, and it is greatly to be regretted that some of the very able men from the two larger States should not be associated with the Postmaster-General in the central administration. I cannot help feeling that other officers, with even better claims than the officers from Queensland, have been passed over. However, it is too late to talk about that now that the appointments have been made ; but in my judgment we ought to

get, as far as possible, a reflex of the postal opinions and methods of administration of the whole continent in the central administration. I therefore most cordially support the view propounded by my chief.

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Sir PHILIP FYSH

- I was about to say, when the leader of the Opposition rose, that the Postmaster-General has been actuated by the very desire indicated by the right honorable gentleman, and has sought, from each of the States, officers who may be useful to him in his department. He has been for some time associated with the heads of the department in the various States, and by personal intercourse has been able to learn something of their calibre. Two officers from Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales, one from South Australia, and one from Tasmania, have already been engaged. The Postmaster-General finds himself in an awkward predicament now in having arranged with certain officers temporarily to reside in Victoria, because of what has taken place in the House in regard to allowances. This may interfere with the purpose he had in view of bringing from each State some officer having a knowledge of the practice existing in each State, which would make his services useful to the Commonwealth. However, the persons to whom the right honorable the leader of the Opposition has referred have already been appointed.

Mr. REID(East Sydney). - I feel perfectly satisfied now with the explanation the Minister has made. The object I had in view has been attained. Now that I learn that the two chief appointments have been made by the Postmaster-General after exhausting his opportunities of ascertaining the calibre of all the postal heads of the different States, of course I can only congratulate the Postmaster-General and Queensland, that Queensland has been found to possess, amongst all the postal officers of the Commonwealth, the two gentlemen who are pointed out both by nature and experience, for the two chief positions under himself. With reference to the question of allowances to which the Minister has referred," I would like to point out that so far as I know the House has done nothing with reference to them. I hope my honorable friend is not to be embarrassed by the nightmare of votes and decisions which have never been arrived at. I understand that nothing occurred, except the expressions of one or two opinions from different parts of the House. Surely if the Minister has entered into a contract with these officers to give them certain remuneration and certain allowances, the mere fact that one or two members have made some offensive observations in the House with reference to these allowances will not be held to register the sense of Parliament about them % That ought to be ascertained in a more liberal way. So far as I am concerned, if any contract has been entered into by the Government with any of these officers, I think that contract ought to be respected, whatever strong opinions may be held on the subject of allowances.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7 (Deputy Postmaster-General).

Mr CONROY

- I do not think that it is necessary to provide by enactment for a Deputy Postmaster-General in each State. In my opinion, the matter is wholly one to be dealt with by regulation, and the clause should be omitted.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 8 (Postmaster - General may delegate).

Mr McCAY

- I can find in the interpretation clause no definition of the word " district " which occurs in this clause. Is it contemplated to subdivide the States ?

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- There is no definition of the word in the interpretation clause, but the Postmaster-General thinks that it should be retained, because the subdivision of the States for the purposes, of postal business may be carried out later on.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 9 (Declarations to be taken by officers, &c).

Mr CROUCH

- -This clause provides that every officer- shall take and subscribe a declaration before a justice of the peace; but in this State justices of the peace are not always available.

Sir Philip Fysh

- They are as numerous as blackberries.

Mr. CONROY(Werriwa).- I think that the suggestion of the honorable and learned member for Corio is a good one ; and that the declaration should be allowed to be made by a commissioner of affidavits or any one else.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 10 -

Every person appointed as a telegraph messenger after the commencement of this Act shall retire from the service of the department immediately on attaining the age of eighteen years unless in the meantime he has been transferred or promoted to some other position in such service.

Mr. BATCHELOR(South Australia).I do not like this clause. I can see that the object of it is to prevent the employment of men as messengers ; but at eighteen, the age at which the boy messengers are to be dismissed, they will be too old to learn a trade. I think that what is necessary is that care should be taken that more boys are not employed than can be absorbed. I understand that in Victoria in the past they have had men, and sometimes married men, running messages ; and they, have had to be paid more than would be paid to boy messengers. If we do not overload the department at the bottom there will be no occasion for this clause at all. No department should take on more boys than it can absorb.

Mr Page

- If the honorable member had a shop he would not observe that practice in its management.

Mr BATCHELOR

- It is already the practice in some of the States, and it works exceedingly .well. In the department in South Australia, we never send away a youth when he reaches the age of 21. Some scores of boys are absorbed by the department every year. The practice of dismissing boys when they reach the age of eighteen years, and are too old to learn any trade, is certainly wrong.

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Mr HARPER

- The provision contained in this clause is an exceedingly wise one. Experience has shown in Victoria, at any rate, that in a large city, where an enormous number of telegraph messages have to be delivered, it is necessary to have boys for the- work. In Victoria, owing to the want of system, boys are taken on for this work and grow into manhood, but still retain their position as telegraph messengers, and are always waiting an opportunity for getting into the service in some surreptitious way. It seems to me that the honorable member for South Australia fell into an error in comparing the state of things which exist in Adelaide with that which prevails in larger cities. We must employ lads as messengers, and it is cruel to keep them on after they have reached the age of seventeen or eighteen. I should prefer to see the retiring age fixed at seventeen. We should then have smart boys going into the service of the department as messengers at thirteen years of age, and retiring at the end of three years. That period would lie quite long enough. It would enable the boys to obtain a certain amount of experience before it is too late for them to get into some other walk in life. At the same time the department would no doubt mark out the best of them, and gradually absorb them into the service. The honorable member for South Australia says the service should be so regulated that we would not take on more boys than we could absorb. That cannot be done.

Mr MAUGER

- I quite agree that we should not fix the retiring age at eighteen years. I know a number of instances in Victoria where young men have been rendered useless for any other occupation by this system. The time has gone by for them to learn other trades, or to gain other opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of commercial life. They are really hangers-on in the public service, waiting for an opportunity to gain admission to the permanent -service, and spoiling themselves by remaining as messengers, and not being properly paid. I would urge that the retiring age be sixteen instead of eighteen. That would enable the lads to leave the service in time to acquire knowledge in commercial or manufacturing pursuits. I move -

That the word. " eighteen " be omitted with a view to insert in lieu thereof " sixteen."

Mr PAGE

- When the Public Service Bill was before the House the Victorian representatives informed us that there

were a number of telegraph messengers going about Melbourne with long whiskers, who had wives and families. If that is the state of things which exists in this State, then the sooner it is altered the better, and I shall have very much pleasure in supporting the amendment". If the department is going to get rid of these boys it should do so before they reach the age of eighteen years, and thus give them a chance to learn a trade before it is too late. If, as the honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, states, the service is so regulated in South Australia that they are able to take on 60 or 70 boys a year, and to absorb them into the service, there must be a great many deaths in Adelaide that are never recorded. I should like the honorable member to give me some statistics on the point. Even the Age could not show that to be the case, although that newspaper is considered to be particularly good at statistics. I shall be only too pleased to see the retiring age reduced to sixteen.

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- It may save the time of the committee if we adopt the suggested reduction of the retiring age from eighteen to sixteen. The Postmaster-General sees no difficulty in making that alteration, and I shall therefore be prepared to accept the amendment.

Mr McCAY

- I do not know whether the Public Service Bill is going to pass through Parliament in its present form, but if it is, it will produce a remarkable result so far as this clause is concerned, because it provides that no one under sixteen years of age shall be appointed to the service.

Mr Batchelor

- Except telegraph messengers.

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Mr McCAY

- The proviso is that nothing in the sub-clause shall be taken to prevent the employment of boys above the age of thirteen years to be message boys or junior messengers. I recollect the provisions of the clause because it was at my suggestion that "appointment " was altered to "employment." If a boy is only " employed " there is no need for this clause, because the department can retire him at any age it thinks fit. I suggest that the age of sixteen is unwise, both in the interests of the messengers themselves and of the department. I recollect that the idea of the amending Victorian Postal Act was that lads employed as telegraph messengers should have priority as to promotion to the grades immediately above them when vacancies arose. If the vacancies did not arise they had to retire at seventeen. I do not see any provision in the

Public Service Bill that -will give these lads the right to priority of appointment between the ages of sixteen and seventeen. It seems to me that at present there is an impasse beyond which we cannot get. Though I am not prepared to move an amendment, I think some alteration ought to be made. There are two difficulties, one as to the age, and the other that if the age is raised to seventeen I do not see how the two Bills can be worked together so as to give the priority which should be given to the telegraph messengers. Either this Bill or the Public Service Bill should be so amended as to enable that priority to be given. The age should not be reduced below seventeen.

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

- I entirely agree that under the clause as it stands a manifest injustice may be done to a lad who, at the age of eighteen, still finds himself unpromoted, and who, because he has attained that age, must retire from the service. At first sight the best course to adopt would seem to be to allow the system -of appointments and promotions with regard to telegraph messengers to be left entirely to administration under regulations, not under a hide-bound clause in this Bill, which might work very unjustly. No doubt a very hard case might occur of a young fellow of eighteen, who had been employed as a messenger, being turned out on the world unfit to commence a new career by reason of his having sacrificed the earlier years of his life, when he might have been apprenticed to some trade. I hope we shall not allow that to be done, but that we shall consider the case of those persons who are very much at our mercy, and who should not be wronged by a clause in any Act of Parliament. '

Mr. JOSEPHCOOK (Parramatta).The age fixed in the Bill is the better one to adopt. If we say that when a lad has attained the age of sixteen he shall be discharged, a messenger must be taken on very young, or the department will not get very much service out of him. I think that fourteen or fifteen is quite early enough to employ a boy. If at the age of eighteen he fails to pass the necessary examination for entrance

to the public service, the effort to do so will certainly help him in his search for work elsewhere.

Mr G B EDWARDS

- The best course would be to strike the clause out. If a lad has to be discharged at the age of eighteen he is turned out unfit to take to any other employment in life : but if the age is reduced to sixteen the boys employed at the age of fourteen would have only two years at messenger duty, which would be of no benefit to the boys and none to the State. Seeing that we have spent so much time on the Public Service Bill, where this matter ought properly to have been dealt with, the best course seems to be to strike out the clause. We are leaving to the Postmaster-General very large powers indeed, involving much more serious considerations than are here concerned. We might safely leave this matter also to the discretion of the Minister.

Mr McCOLL

- I trust that the committee will not listen to the proposition to omit the clause. Our experience in Victoria leads -us to believe that it is absolutely necessary. In Victoria messengers stayed on until they reached the age of manhood, and although receiving a salary of only £60 per year, many of them married. Matters got to such a pitch that there was a surplus of 300 assistant telegraph operators. In 1897 it was found absolutely necessary to devise some means of preventing the department from being flooded with young fellows. I do not think that thirteen is too early an age to fix, and that age was fixed in the Victorian Act, because it is the statutory age at which a boy can leave school. Whether he has a certificate or not, he has to leave at that age, and to adopt a higher age would simply close an avenue of employment, which absorbs a great many youngsters who otherwise would have for a time to run about idle. The provision has worked extremely well. Very often the sons of widows have been put on. The department is extremely kind in that respect. We might accept the proposition to fix the age at 17, but we must certainly guard against overmanning the department, while insuring the employment of a sufficient number of lads to deliver the messages.

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Mr A McLEAN

- I hope that there will be no attempt to strike out the clause. I conducted an investigation into the Victorian Post-office a few years ago, and the condition of things I found there was most deplorable. Several hundreds of young men who had grown up as messengers were receiving small pittances of £70 a year and many of them were married. They were doing work which was not worth £25 or £30 a year. Youngsters of fourteen can run messages better than any man can do. It was only on the report I made that the provision was put in the Victorian Act, and it has worked very- well. It is an intimation to a boy when he enters the service, and also to his parents, that he must not consider that he has any preemptive right to remain there unless there is an opening for him. If we do not adopt this provision it will lead either to largely overmanning the department or to miserably paying adults for doing boys' work. We should avoid both of these contingencies. I prefer to fix the age at seventeen, because it would give a boy an opportunity between the age of sixteen, when he can be appointed under the provisions of the Public Service Act, and the time of compulsory retirement. I know of many cases in Victoria where the elder son of a widow, when he got his certificate at the age of thirteen or fourteen got into the Post-office ,and when he reached the maximum age he retired, and generally his younger brother got his place. In the absence of such a provision there will be complaints of injustice. It will be very properly stated that the boys were led to believe, when they entered the service, that they would not be called on to retire, and that they could work their way up to higher branches. To do that in every case would certainly lead to largely overmanning the department, and failing that we should have adults drawing boys' wages for doing -boys' work. I hope that the clause will be retained, and that the age will be fixed at seventeen years.

Mr. MAUGER(Melbourne Ports).With the permission of the committee I shall alter my amendment so as to fix the age at seventeen years, believing that it will meet the case.

Amendment, by leave, amended accordingly

Mr WILKS

- I hope that honorable members will vote for the amendment in its altered form, because the condition of things which has been pointed out by the honorable member for Gippsland is common not only to Victoria, but to New South Wales. The same sorry spectacle was witnessed in that State a few years ago, when an agitation was got up there on behalf of hundreds of youths. In the iron trade the unions will not

admit apprentices beyond the age of 18. 11 a

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- I am going to take advantage of a suggestion made by the honorable and learned member for Corinella, who points out some difficulty with respect to the term "appointed." The Public Service Bill provides that boys shall not be appointed until they are sixteen. Some question may arise as to the ability of boys employed in the Telegraph office to go into the service hereafter. That question will be looked into in relation to sub-clause (2) of clause 32 of the Public Service Bill; and I may report to the committee hereafter. For the present I propose to substitute the word "employed" for the word "appointed."

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (by Sir Philip Fysh) proposed -

That the word "appointed," line 1, be omitted, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the word " employed."

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Mr WINTER COOKE

- I do not know whether this amendment will not have a greater effect than the mover thinks. If the word " employed " is used instead of the word " appointed," it seems to me that the effect will be that those appointed before the commencement of the Act will come under the operation of the clause, and that is not intended, I think.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment (by Mr. Barton) agreed to -

That the words "retire from the service of the department" be omitted, with a view to insert in lieu thereof the words "cease to be so employed."

Amendment (by Mr. Mauger) proposed -

That the word "eighteen" be omitted, with a view to insert in lieu thereof "seventeen."

Mr. BATCHELOR(South Australia).I still think it would be better to leave out the clause altogether, because it seems to offer a distinct encouragement to the department to employ as many boys as they like, seeing that there will be no necessity to find employment for them in other capacities. I desire to see all the other positions possible thrown open to the boys, who, as they grow older, will be capable of acting as telegraph operators, letter carriers, mail-cart drivers,, and in other capacities in the mechanical and clerical branches. Many of these positions at present are not open to telegraph boys, but it seems to me that the whole question could be dealt with without this clause at all. I think it is better to fix seventeen as the retiring age, because a boy leaving the service at seventeen will have a better chance of fitting himself to follow some other occupation than if he remained for another year.

Amendment agreed to.

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - Now that we have used the word " employed " in the sense in which we have used it in the clause, the final phrase " unless in the meantime he has been transferred or promoted to some other position in such service " will have no definite meaning. I think these words might be struck out altogether, but in order that honorable members may have an opportunity of looking into the matter, I would suggest that further consideration of this clause should be postponed.

Progress reported.

PAPER

Mr. BARTON laid on the table

A report upon some features relating to the cane-sugar industry of Australia, by Walter Maxwell, director of the sugar experimental stations of Queensland.

Ordered to be printed.

DARLING DOWNS (QUEENSLAND) SEAT

Mr. SPEAKER informed the House that he had issued a writ for the election of a member to serve in the House of Representatives for the electoral district of Darling Downs in the place of the late Mr. W. H. Groom. The date of nomination had been fixed for Tuesday, 27th August, the date of polling for Saturday, 14th September, and the writ was returnable not later than Tuesday, 1st October.

ADJOURNMENT

Navigation and Shipping

Motion (by Mr. Barton) proposed -
That this House do now adjourn.

Mr MAUGER

- I wish to direct the attention of the Government to a very remarkable condition of things which has been brought to light in connexion with the ship West Lothian. I do not know what powers this Parliament may have to deal with such a matter, but, if we have any powers, I think that a most searching inquiry should be instituted into the whole of the facts of the case. The ship is described in the Age to-day by one witness as "afloating hell," and by another witness as "a helluponearth." A remarkable incident in connexion with this ship is that the men charged the officers with brutality and ill-treatment. The charge was summarily dismissed by the presiding magistrate without even the faintest approach to an inquiry being made. The men have drawn no pay, and upon the surface it seems tome that they have been treated very badly. This is a British ship, employing a foreign crew at the rate of ?4 per month. The captain as continually disrating the crew, and by that means reducing the wages. Another circumstance which has been brought to light in this connexion is that the second mate holds no certificate. Either he is not competent, or his certificate has been taken from him. The case seems to be one of the most scandalous that has ever been brought to light. There was a coloured man on board who is charged with a most horrible crime, for which he is to be tried in a few days. It seems to me that the matter is one which demands a searching inquiry.

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - With reference to the question which has been raised by the honorable member for Melbourne Ports, I would point out that, notwithstanding the very bad nature of the facts, if they are as stated by him, there are many matters with which we have not yet the power to deal. This may be one of those matters in which honorable members may think that the Commonwealth has not enough power. But we have not yet exercised the right of legislating with regard to navigation and shipping, and until we do so legislate the State laws prevail. The State authorities have jurisdiction, and the State laws have been invoked. It would not do 'for the Commonwealth to intervene after the "State authorities have taken action, especially as we have neither machinery nor court to deal with such a case. 'This is a matter which may be more properly' left to the jurisdiction of the State authorities until subjects of this kind can be taken in 'hand by this Parliament, and legislation has been passed by us.

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22:27:00

House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.