

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

THURSDAY, 18th OCTOBER, 1917.

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OFFICIAL REPORT.



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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, 18th October, 1917.

[OFFICIAL REPORT.]

The House met at a Quarter before Three of the clock, Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair.

NEW WRIT.

For the County of Hants (Northern or Basingstoke Division), in the room of Arthur Clavell Salter, Esquire, K.C., one of the Justices of His Majesty's High Court of Justice.

NATIONAL EXPENDITURE.

Ordered, "That the Select Committee on National Expenditure have leave to report from time to time."—[*Mr. Herbert Samuel.*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

WAR.

WAR AIMS.

1. Major CHAPPLE asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the war aims of the Allies with regard to Turkey, Constantinople, and the Dardanelles have varied materially since the commencement of the War; and, if so, will he, jointly with the Allies, make an announcement on the subject, in order to encourage Turkey in her desire for a separate peace?

The MINISTER of BLOCKADE (Lord Robert Cecil): There is nothing I can usefully add at present to the public statements which have been made by responsible statesmen in the various Allied countries with regard to war aims.

CONQUERED GERMAN COLONIES
(SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT).

2. Mr. MACMASTER asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs under

what authority and system of government the conquered German colonies in Africa, the Pacific Ocean, and China are now administered?

The UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES (Mr. Hewins): I would refer the hon. Member to the replies given by the Prime Minister and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the hon. Member for Bethnal Green on 10th June, 1916, and 17th July, 1916, respectively.

CHINA (BRITISH CONCESSION AT
SHAMEEN).

3. Colonel YATE asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the German Consulate, post offices, banks, and commercial firms have yet been cleared out of the British concession at Shameen, in China, or not?

Lord R. CECIL: All official enemy institutions, such as Consulates, post offices, etc., have been closed throughout China and I presume, therefore, in the Shameen, though I have not heard definitely. With regard to banks and commercial houses established on the Shameen, the position is not clear, and inquiry will be made of His Majesty's Minister at Peking.

POPE'S PEACE NOTE (UNITED
STATES' REPLY).

4. Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the United States' reply to the Pope's Note, published on 29th August, was due to consultation with the Allies or whether it was the individual reply of the United States' Government; and, if the latter is the case, whether the policy towards Germany expressed by the United States' reply is also the policy of His Majesty's Government?

Lord R. CECIL: The clear and powerful reply of President Wilson to the Pope's Note was not the result of any consultation with the Allies. I do not propose to comment on it in answer to a question.

Mr. KING: Will the Allies send their own independent answer to the Pope or is no answer to the Pope intended?

Lord R. CECIL: If the hon. Member desires any further information, he had better put down a question.

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, GRANADA (PASSPORTS).

5. Mr. RAMSAY MACDONALD asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if passports were issued for British delegates to attend a Catholic Conference at Granada; whether he is aware that delegates from enemy countries attended the Conference, and that amongst other business a resolution on the Pope's peace message was discussed and carried; and whether any conditions were attached to passports issued to British subjects?

Lord R. CECIL: The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. An invitation was issued by the Archbishop of Granada to the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster for Roman Catholic representatives to attend a Congress at Granada held to commemorate the tercentenary of the Spanish divine Suarez.

I have no information as to the other delegates who attended the Congress beyond the fact that I have been informed that one German missionary and two German professors from Madrid were present. When the passports were granted we were informed that the subjects for discussion at the Congress would all relate to the life and character of Suarez, but I understand that there was a discussion on the Pope's recent Note to the belligerent Powers. The delegates from this country absented themselves from the discussion. The answer to the last part of the question is in the negative.

HOLLAND AND DENMARK.

6. Colonel GRETTON asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he is aware that quantities of malt have been exported from the United Kingdom to Holland in the present year and that some quantity has also been exported to Denmark; if these exports have been sent with the sanction of the Foreign Office; and if it is intended to continue to licence malt to be exported to neutral countries adjacent to Germany?

46. Colonel FABER asked the Prime Minister whether 8,000 tons of malt have lately been exported to Holland; whether malting here for Holland has gone on during the summer whilst it was stopped for this country; and why the dairy farmers of England have thus been deprived of 420,000 bushels of wet grains for their cattle?

Lord R. CECIL: The reply is that no malt has been exported this year from the British Empire to Holland, Denmark, Norway, or Sweden.

Colonel GRETTON: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the last part of my question?

Lord R. CECIL: No, Sir; as far as I know, there is no intention to licence any malt.

7. Mr. KING asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what action has recently been taken by this country and by the Allies to prevent imports going into Holland; and for what reason are Dutch commercial cable messages prohibited?

Lord R. CECIL: In reply to the first part of this question, I would refer the hon. Member to the Order in Council of 29th September regarding the prohibition of exports to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands, and to the recent embargoes imposed by the United States Government on exports to those countries. In reply to the last part of the question, as already announced in the Press, facilities for the transmission of Dutch commercial messages by British cables have for the present been withdrawn, pending the settlement of certain questions at issue between the two Governments.

EGYPT (LEGAL REFORMS).

8. Mr. RICHARD LAMBERT asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether his attention has been drawn to a Memorandum, dated 14th July, 1917, submitted to the Foreign Office by the British lawyers in Egypt on the subject of the legal reforms to be introduced into Egypt consequent upon the proposed abolition of the capitulations, and the further Memorandum submitted by one of the signatories now in England on the same subject, and his request to be heard by the Advisory Committee appointed by the Foreign Office to deal with this matter; whether it is proposed to allow the signatory in question to appear before the Advisory Committee; and what steps it is proposed to take in the matter?

Lord R. CECIL: A copy of the memorial by the British lawyers in Egypt which was addressed to the President of the Capitulations Commission has been received by the

Foreign Office and is being studied. Individual communications have also been received from several British lawyers who are practising, or have practised, their professions in Egypt. The hon. Member may rest assured that His Majesty's Government are fully alive to the importance of the considerations which these gentlemen have set forth and that no decision will be arrived at without thorough investigation. The question as to the scope of the work of the Advisory Committee, and in particular the point whether the Committee shall be asked to hear witnesses, has not yet been determined.

SEIZURE OF ARMS (IRELAND).

9. Mr. KELLY asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether he is aware that, in executing the recent order of the military authority to seize arms, the Donegal county inspector picketed the palace of the Lord Bishop of Raphoe and the residence of his administrator at 11 p.m. on Tuesday, the 14th August, and demanded from the latter the keys of the building where he, the inspector, thought arms were stored; that although he was informed who had the keys of the building the inspector would not wait till this man had brought the keys, but gave orders to break into the building, which was parochial property vested in the Lord Bishop, and to break two doors and locks; that ultimately no arms of any kind were discovered; that the inspector had been assured by Mr. Mahony, J.P., a responsible citizen of Letterkenny, that there were no arms in this building; and whether he proposes to take any action in the matter, in view of the county inspector's actions on the night of the 14th August being marked by a want of common sense and tact?

The CHIEF SECRETARY for IRELAND (Mr. Duke): This question was addressed to me in August, and I replied on 31st August by letter to the hon. Member in the following terms:

"Police were not picketed at the residence of the Bishop of Raphoe and of his Administrator as stated in the question. The county inspector called on the Administrator who gave the names of some persons who he thought might have the keys of the institute. One of these, Mr. Mahony, when interviewed by the county inspector, refused to come to the institute, but stated the arms were not there. The caretaker, who was then approached, denied that he had the keys, and the police entered the institute by raising an unfastened ground floor window. The caretaker thereupon produced the key and opened the front door. The doors of an inner room had to be forced, but little damage was done. There were stands for arms in the room, but they were found

to be empty, the arms evidently having been removed. The Chief Secretary would greatly regret that any discourtesy should be shown by any servant of the Crown in the performance of his duty, but he is informed and believes that the county inspector acted with consideration, and he sees no ground in the above facts for the statement that the action of the county inspector was marked by a want of common sense and tact."

LABOURERS' COTTAGES (IRELAND).

15. Mr. PATRICK MEEHAN asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland (1) whether, in view of the fact that many applicants for labourers' cottages under pending schemes in Ireland are still residing in hovels condemned as unsanitary and unfit for human habitation, steps will be immediately taken to enable district councils to proceed with that part of the various schemes providing houses for the applicants living in condemned habitations; (2) whether, having regard to the necessity of increased food production, steps will be taken to enable the rural district councils in Ireland to acquire the lands comprised in the pending labourers' schemes and allot the same amongst the various applicants for tillage?

Mr. DUKE: I cannot add anything to the answers given to questions on these subjects by the hon. Member for East Limerick on the 26th July and the 9th August.

MAJOR PRICE.

16. Mr. P. MEEHAN asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether Major Price is still drawing his salary as county inspector of Carlow; what time Major Price spent in Carlow in discharge of his duties as county inspector; the total amount of salary paid Major Price as county inspector since his appointment; and whether, in addition to his salary, Major Price has been paid the usual allowances made to county inspectors for servants and upkeep of horses or vehicles?

Mr. DUKE: Major Price draws pay as a Royal Irish Constabulary officer, but receives no pay from the military authorities. The pay drawn since he became a county inspector amounts to £870 19s. 4d. He draws allowances for lodging and a servant, which are recouped from Army funds, but he receives no allowance for horse or vehicle. He has not performed any police duty as county inspector of county Carlow.

Mr. P. MEEHAN: Does he receive an allowance for his servant?

Mr. DUKE: Yes, I said so.

Mr. P. MEEHAN: Is it not a fact that he has no servant at all?

Mr. DUKE: I have not the least idea.

HONG KONG (MILITARY SERVICE).

28. **Colonel YATE** asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether compulsory military service has now been brought into force in Hong Kong; whether it is limited to any particular period; and, if so, for what reason?

Mr. HEWINS: I learnt from the Governor by telegraph on the 21st of August that a Bill imposing compulsory military service had been introduced in the Legislative Council. I have not yet heard whether the Bill has been passed into law, nor to what period compulsory service under it is limited.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN (STATUE IN WESTMINSTER).

30. **Mr. KING** asked the First Commissioner of Works whether a site was recently granted in Palace Yard for the erection of a statue of President Lincoln; whether he has received a protest from America against the proposed monumental statue; whether before granting the site any artistic authorities were consulted; and what action he proposes to take?

The **FIRST COMMISSIONER of WORKS** (Sir Alfred Mond): My predecessor in office, Lord Beauchamp, offered a site in the Canning Enclosure for a statue of President Lincoln, which His Majesty's Government have consented to accept from the American Centenary Committee. Having accepted the offer and provided a site, it is not the duty of the Government to question the artistic selection of the donors. No protest from America has been received by me. I need hardly add that His Majesty's Government and the country will warmly welcome a representation worthy of this illustrious American statesman in the capital of the Empire.

Colonel C. LOWTHER: What is the procedure before the erection of a statue takes place; is this House consulted?

Sir A. MOND: No.

Mr. KING: Are we to understand that this proposal, which has had a great deal of opposition and criticism both in this country and in America, is proceeding without any delay or without any reconsideration?

Sir A. MOND: I think my answer shows that, having accepted the offer from America, and having granted the site, it is not the duty of myself or the Government to criticise or to act as arbiters of what statue worthily represents President Lincoln.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE: Has any definite statue been accepted yet?

Sir A. MOND: I am not aware what statue is definitely going to be put up.

Colonel C. LOWTHER: Why should not this House be consulted?

Sir A. MOND: It has been the practice, I understand, in the past in any question of the erection of a statue, that the selection of the site has been with the office of the Chief Commissioner of Works.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE: Is that the reason why they are all of high artistic merit?

Mr. H. SAMUEL: Do we understand that if the First Commissioner grants the site for a statue, no one has any control over the particular statue to be erected for all time in the Metropolis?

Sir A. MOND: The right hon. Gentleman should give notice of that question.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

MILK.

23. **Mr. BYRNE** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland if he will take steps to prohibit the export of milk from Ireland?

Mr. DUKE: The Food Controller has power to take such action as the hon. Member suggests, and I have communicated the suggestion to him.

Mr. BYRNE: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is a milk famine in Ireland at the present moment, and that it is almost impossible for the poor people in the towns and cities of Ireland to get milk?

Mr. DUKE: That is an exaggerated view of the matter so far as my knowledge goes. I have taken a good deal of pains to ascertain the facts, and I do not think that that represents the state of the case at all accurately. Prices are high undoubtedly, and there is difficulty on the part of the poorer classes in Dublin in obtaining supplies. In respect of that difficulty, I am in communication with the local authorities and others with a view to avoiding the difficulty.

Mr. BYRNE: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Public Health Committee of the Dublin Corporation have advertised for milk and cannot obtain any, because it is coming to this country at very fancy prices?

Mr. DUKE: No, Sir; I do not think the condition of the milk supply in Dublin is affected substantially by any export of milk to this country. It arises from a totally different cause.

81. **Captain WRIGHT** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food, why, in view of the expressed policy of the Ministry and of the Board of Agriculture to secure adequate supplies of whole milk during the coming winter for the large centres of population rather than for condenseries, the proposed additional $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon for the producers and sellers of milk for that purpose was not embodied in the final Milk Order lately issued; and what were the representations, and by whom were they made, which led to the abandonment of the above proposal?

Mr. PARKER (Lord of the Treasury): A proposal of the nature described in the first part of the question was considered in framing the Milk Prices Order with a view to preventing the diversion of an undue amount of milk to factories. It appears, however, not to be the most satisfactory means of securing the object in view, and it might have involved risk of interfering with necessary supplies of condensed milk for the Army and Navy. The Food Controller will take other steps to secure the object in view.

Captain WRIGHT: Can the hon. Gentleman answer the last part of the question?

Mr. PARKER: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will put a question down. I am not connected with the Department, and I have answered the question on behalf of my hon. Friend.

SUGAR.

80. **Captain WRIGHT** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food if, in view of the present shortage of sugar and the impending shortage of milk during the coming winter, he will state what is the average weekly tonnage of sugar and milk, respectively, used by the foreign company, the Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company at their factories in the United Kingdom in the production of condensed milk, etc.; and what proportion of these products are exported by the company for purposes other than those of the Navy, Army, and populations of Allied countries?

Mr. PARKER: I am making inquiries with reference to the points raised in the question, and will convey the information to the hon. Member so soon as I have received it.

POTATOES.

82. **Mr. DUNCAN MILLAR** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food, whether his attention has been drawn to the appeal recently issued by the Director of Food Economy to the public to make as much use of potatoes as possible in order to conserve breadstuffs; if he can state the market price of potatoes at the date when the Potatoes Order, 1917, was issued; whether under the Order potatoes can only be sold at £6 per ton, which represents nearly double the price of potatoes on 16th September when the Order was issued; and whether the Food Controller will take immediate steps to see that potatoes are sold at their market value in order to encourage their consumption instead of penalising consumers by charging them nearly twice the market price, thereby reducing the demand for them as a wholesome substitute for bread?

Mr. PARKER: The appeal referred to in the first part of the question was issued at the Food Controller's request. The market price of potatoes at the date when the Potatoes Order, 1917, was issued naturally varied in different parts of the United Kingdom, but was as a rule between £5 10s. and £6 per ton—that is to say, approximately the price fixed by the Order. This Order was made to carry out the guarantee given by the Prime Minister in this House on the 23rd February last. There are other ways of encouraging the consumption of potatoes with the object of saving bread and other

[Mr. Parker.]

foodstuffs than by allowing market prices to drop to a level which would not yield a reasonable return to the producer, and the Food Controller does not propose to repudiate the guarantee given by the Prime Minister, the object of which was to stimulate production by securing a price to the grower which would adequately cover the unusually heavy cost of growing potatoes this year.

Mr. J. M. HENDERSON: May I ask my hon. Friend whether he is aware that the farmers in the North of Scotland are keenly desirous of selling their potatoes at £3 10s. a ton, and that if they cannot do so the potatoes will be thrown into the North Sea?

Mr. PARKER: I am not aware of that fact, but I will convey the information given by the hon. Member to the Food Controller.

Mr. GULLAND: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the artificially high price of potatoes is decreasing the consumption of potatoes and increasing the consumption of bread?

Mr. PARKER: That may very well be true. I have read the answer supplied to me, and I will convey the information to the Food Controller.

Mr. HENDERSON: Will the hon. Gentleman also suggest, as a way of getting rid of this difficulty, that each farmer should be allowed to sell at any price he likes?

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the hon. Member convey his suggestions to the Department by letter?

AGRICULTURAL WAGES BOARDS (QUEEN'S COUNTY).

24. **Mr. FITZPATRICK** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland when the county wage boards under the Corn Production Act will hold their first sitting in Queen's County?

Mr. DUKE: The Agricultural Wages Board for Ireland is taking the necessary steps for the establishment of district wages boards, but I cannot name a date with regard to any county. Meantime and pending the establishment of the district boards steps have been taken for bringing rates of minimum wages into general operation.

Mr. P. MEEHAN: Can the right hon. Gentleman say by whom the chairmen of these boards will be appointed?

Mr. DUKE: I cannot remember at the moment. If the hon. Member will put down a question I shall be able to give him an accurate reply.

ARMY BEEF PURCHASES (IRELAND).

26. **Mr. CULLINAN** asked the Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture (Ireland) the average price paid for beef by Army buyers during the month of September; whether the price has been equal to that fixed by the Food Controller, and, if not, will he say why; and the number and names of the Army buyers for each county, and the numbers of cattle purchased and prices paid in the several counties?

Mr. DUKE: This information is not in my possession, the purchases in question being purchases on behalf of the military authorities.

WINE IMPORTS.

29. **Major HUNT** asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether licences for the importation of Australian wines are being withheld whilst the wines of foreign countries are being freely admitted?

The **PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY** to the **BOARD OF TRADE** (Mr. Wardle): My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this question. Licences for Australian wines are being freely granted to importers to the extent of one-half of the quantity imported on the average during the years 1911, 1912 and 1913. This basis is more favourable to Australia than any other country, with one or two exceptions, in which very special conditions prevail.

Mr. HOGGE: Would it not be better to import Australian wheat rather than Australian wines?

Major HUNT: What countries are the exception and are more favourably treated than our own Colonies and Dominions?

Mr. WARDLE: There are special conditions in regard to France and Portugal, who are our allies, and in consequence of that special conditions prevail,

Brigadier-General P. CROFT: Are there any great wine-producing countries which really could be differentiated in favour of us, against the Dominions?

Mr. WARDLE: Yes, but they are enemies at present.

Mr. CHANCELLOR: Could not the space given to wines be better used for food?

Mr. WARDLE: I am sorry I did not hear the hon. Member's question.

MR. LASZLO (INTERNMENT).

36. Colonel FABER asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, seeing that Mr. Laszlo is a British subject, why he was interned instead of being put upon his trial for whatever offence he may have committed?

40. Mr. KING asked the Home Secretary whether Mr. Philip Alexius Laszlo de Lombos, member of the Victorian Order, has been interned; whether Mr. de Lombos is a British subject; what is the reason for the internment; and whether he has been allowed to lay his case before the Advisory Committee?

The SECRETARY of STATE for the HOME DEPARTMENT (Sir George Cave): There was no legal evidence on which Mr. Laszlo could have been convicted of any criminal offence. If there had been such evidence, he would have been prosecuted. But there was, in my opinion, grave reason for suspecting that he was engaged in activities which might prove dangerous to the public safety, and as he is a person of hostile origin, I made an Order for his internment under Regulation 14B of the Defence of the Realm Regulations. His case is at present under consideration by the Advisory Committee, in accordance with that Regulation.

Colonel FABER: Who is the neutral Minister who forwarded the letter from Mr. Laszlo?

Sir G. CAVE: I had better make no statement till I see the Report.

Mr. KING: Has Mr. Laszlo been allowed to be represented by counsel before the Advisory Committee, whereas as a rule no counsel is allowed to appear there?

Sir G. CAVE: No; I understand the Committee followed its usual procedure, and has not heard counsel for Mr. Laszlo, although counsel were in an adjoining room and could be consulted by him.

Mr. HOGGE: Who were the eminent people who gave evidence on this gentleman's behalf and which members of the War Cabinet?

Sir G. CAVE: I have not a list of all the witnesses yet.

Mr. G. D. FABER: Will the Report of the Advisory Committee be published in due course?

Sir G. CAVE: No; that is not the practice.

Mr. G. D. FABER: In view of the fact that this person enjoyed consideration, and is well known in high social circles, is it not very unfortunate that the public should not be made aware of the nature of the case against him?

Mr. SPEAKER: That is a question of opinion.

PACIFIST CAMPAIGN.

37. Colonel FABER asked the Home Secretary if, in view of the Bolo disclosures in Paris, he has any official information showing whether the Pacifist campaign in this country is being conducted from tainted sources?

Sir G. CAVE: I have no official information on this subject to communicate to the House.

ENEMY ALIENS.

38. Colonel Sir J. NORTON GRIFITHS asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that a Mr. R. J. Reuter, who registered as a Finn and who before the War was an importer of German eau de Cologne, who is married to a German wife said to be in sympathy with the King's enemies, and who has a brother in the German Navy, resides within half a mile of Brooklands Aerodrome; and what steps the Government proposes to take in the matter?

Sir G. CAVE: The person in question is a native of Finland and possessed Russian nationality when he became naturalised as a British subject in 1904. The facts as to his residence are, I understand, as

[Sir G. Cave.]

stated, and the case has engaged the attention of the proper authorities, but no facts calling for action have come to knowledge. If my hon. and gallant Friend has any evidence in support of the other statements in the question, I shall be glad to have it for investigation.

39. Colonel Sir J. GRIFFITHS asked the Home Secretary whether Herr Max von Rapp, an Austrian subject and late manager of the Deutsche Bank London Agency, is still residing in close proximity to Brooklands Aerodrome; if he can state whether the duties of this gentleman, whose services it is understood were retained in connection with the winding up of the affairs of the Deutsche Bank, are approaching completion; and whether it is the intention of the Government to allow this alien enemy to remain at large or to intern him?

Sir G. CAVE: This man is living at Weybridge, where he has resided for twenty-four out of the twenty-eight years that he has been in this country. He is sixty-one years of age and was exempted from repatriation on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee. I am informed by the official supervisor of the Deutsche Bank that his services are still essential for the winding up of the affairs of the bank.

LONDON EMERY WORKS.

77. Colonel FABER asked the President of the Local Government Board whether Henry Randall, of the London Emery Works, is connected with Heinrich Buchholz, who opened up trade with British firms as the London Emery Company?

Mr. WARDLE: My right hon. Friend has asked me to answer this question. I am informed that Mr. Henry Randall, who agreed to purchase the business of the London Emery Works, married an English lady, whose sister is the wife of Heinrich Buchholz. I am also informed that Heinrich Buchholz was employed in a subordinate position by the London Emery Works during some part of the years 1906 and 1907.

Colonel FABER: Was he a German or was he not?

Mr. WARDLE: I assume that he was.

Colonel FABER: Then why was this man employed?

ENEMY AIR RAIDS.

PUBLIC WARNING.

41. Mr. GILBERT asked the Home Secretary whether he is now prepared, in view of the recent number of night air raids, to issue instructions that some form of warning shall be given in London and adjoining districts on air raids after dark, similar to the warnings which are now given for daylight raids?

Sir G. CAVE: I recognise the necessity of giving warning in London when a night air raid is impending. I am informed that on the occasion of the recent raids, thanks to the warnings given by the police and to the sound of the anti-aircraft artillery (which was heard some time before the arrival of the raiders), London as a whole received effective warning; but the system of police warnings is being daily improved and extended, and every effort will be made to secure that the warning shall be as effective as possible.

I am advised that the sound bombs, which were instituted for the purpose of giving warning by day, are not suitable for use at night; but if it should prove impossible to give an effective warning without the use of these bombs, they will be used.

Mr. GILBERT: Has the right hon. Gentleman's attention been drawn to the action of the Bermondsey Borough Council, which is exhibiting blue and red lights on its public buildings to show whether raids are coming or not, whether that has the approval of the Home Secretary, and, if so, will he advise other local authorities in London to do the same thing?

Sir G. CAVE: If any local authority thinks supplemental warnings of that kind are useful there is not the least objection to their using them, but I hope they will not use these warnings until the "Take cover" notice is given, so as to avoid needless alarms.

Mr. GILBERT: If the right hon. Gentleman approves of local authorities doing this kind of thing by coloured lights, would it not be very much better if he issued an order so that the whole thing is under the control of the local authority?

Mr. W. THORNE: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at West Ham, as soon as raid warnings are given, green

lights are displayed in various parts of the borough, and within ten minutes every street is cleared?

Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE: Has there been any change in the "All clear" signal?

Sir G. CAVE: I understand that the "All clear" signal is going to be given by bugle.

MUNITIONS.

MANUFACTURING FIRMS (POST-WAR INDUSTRIES.)

31. Major **CHAPPLE** asked the Minister of Munitions whether he will set up a Committee charged with the duty of keeping a record of all money, machinery, buildings, land, and concessions made to firms engaged in the manufacture of war material, considering the possibility of adapting machinery, plant, and other contributions made by Government to the post-war industries of the firms concerned, estimating the value of such adaptation, and taking this value in shares in the firms on behalf of a trust for the endowment of education, of scientific research in the interest of industry, and of schemes for the betterment of industrial workers?

Mr. KELLAWAY (Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions): A record of the nature indicated in the first part of my hon. and gallant Friend's question is kept. As regards the second part of the question, a strong Committee was set up within the Ministry by my right hon. Friend's predecessor to consider, among other post-war problems the extent to which munitions factories and plants could be adapted to commercial purposes. The last part of the question does not concern the Ministry of Munitions, and should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Reconstruction.

32. Major **CHAPPLE** asked the Minister of Munitions whether he has any evidence that the direct and indirect aid given by Government for the erection, repair, and adaptation of factories is being used by the firms concerned with an eye to post-war manufacturing activities; and, if so, whether delay and unnecessary cost are resulting, to the prejudice of the immediate requirements of the War?

Mr. KELLAWAY: There is no evidence that Government aid is being improperly

used. The possibility of any factory being eventually utilised for peace purposes has not been, and cannot be, overlooked; it is taken into account in the adjustment of the contribution, if any, which the State may make towards the capital cost. But in no case are considerations of the post-war use of the factory and plant allowed to interfere with the immediate war requirements.

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE BUILDERS.

33. Major **DAVID DAVIES** asked the Minister of Munitions whether builders of locomotive engines in this country have not been allowed to undertake contracts for the manufacture of locomotives?

Mr. KELLAWAY: Orders for locomotives have been placed with locomotive builders wherever it has been found possible to do so without interfering with the supply of other essential war material. I shall be glad to investigate any particular case which my hon. and gallant Friend may have in mind, if he will be good enough to communicate with me on the subject.

34. Major **DAVIES** asked the Minister of Munitions whether his attention has been called to the fact that the completed material for 45 engines has been lying idle on the premises of Messrs. Beyer, Peacock, and Company, Limited, Gorton Foundry, Manchester, since 1914; whether the Ministry of Munitions has issued instructions preventing the firm from completing the erection of these locomotives; and, in view of the shortage of engines, what steps he proposes to take in the matter?

122. Major **DAVIES** asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether, in view of the shortage of locomotives, his attention has been called to the fact that the complete material of 45 engines has been lying on the premises of Messrs. Beyer, Peacock, and Company, Limited, Gorton Foundry, Manchester, since 1914; whether he is aware that some of these locomotives are partially built; and whether any representations have been made to the Minister of Munitions with regard to the prohibition which his Department has issued against the erection and completion of these locomotives?

Mr. KELLAWAY: Owing to the urgent need for guns and other munitions of war, in the production of which the firm referred to in my hon. and gallant Friend's

[Mr. Kellaway.]
question are fully occupied, it has not been found possible to allow them to complete the construction of these engines. Arrangements are now in progress by which the material for twenty of these engines will be taken over by one of the railway companies for completion, and proposals for dealing with the remaining twenty-five other engines are under consideration.

ARMY RESERVE WORKERS (RAILWAY FACILITIES).

35. Mr. ELLIS DAVIES asked the Minister of Munitions whether he is now in a position to state what arrangements have been made for granting railway facilities at reduced rates to Army reserve munition workers to visit their families?

Mr. KELLAWAY: My right hon. Friend has arranged that Army reserve munition workers who are working away from their homes in accordance with the terms of their enrolment, will in the future receive free railway warrants to and from their homes at any general trade holiday.

TAXI-CAB CHARGES (LONDON).

STATEMENT BY HOME SECRETARY.

42. Mr. GILBERT asked the Home Secretary why he has refused the application of the taxi-cab owners of London for increased charges on the present mileage fares, and why he has offered an increase only on the first mile run by the car, which will be very unfair to the short distance passenger; and whether, in view of the inconvenience to London if taxi-cabs are withdrawn from the streets, he can see his way to have the dispute settled by arbitration or any other method?

Sir G. CAVE: The taxi-cab owners some time since alleged that they were losing money on their cabs, and asked for an addition to the fares of 4d. for each hiring. This application was opposed by the drivers, who did not consider that any increase of fares was necessary, and urged that they would in many cases be deprived of their customary tip of 4d. upon an 8d. fare.

I had several interviews with representatives of both parties, and, as no agreement could be reached, I suggested a reference to a Board of Conciliation, who would hear both sides and advise me.

This proposal was accepted by the owners, but was rejected by the drivers. It, therefore, became necessary for me to ascertain the trading position of the proprietors under existing conditions; and, for this purpose, I requested Sir William Plender to inspect the books of the company owning the largest number of cabs upon the streets. Upon receiving his report, I decided that a case had been made out for the proposed increase of 4d. upon each hiring, and on the 21st September I informed the proprietors and drivers that I was prepared to make an Order to that effect.

Up to that date no mention had been made of an increase of 50 per cent. in fares, but shortly afterwards both proprietors and drivers shifted their ground and came to me with a demand that all fares should be raised 50 per cent. They added, that if this increase were conceded, the proprietors had agreed, in addition to allowing the drivers a share of the increase, to supply them with free petrol.

I have very carefully considered this demand, and I can find no justification for imposing upon the cab-using public a burden of some £300,000 or £400,000 per annum beyond the amount necessary to cover the increased cost of working. It is my duty to protect the public from anything in the nature of profiteering, and I cannot regard this proposal in any other light.

I am inclined to think that a war bonus of 6d. per hiring would more than cover the increased cost of working of which the proprietors complain, and I have offered to sanction that charge. It is true that the bonus would be felt more by the short-distance passenger, but, on the other hand, persons who frequently take cabs for short rides are generally well able to shoulder the extra burden. The offer has been refused, and has been met by a threat to withdraw the cabs from the streets unless the full increase of 50 per cent. is conceded. I am not disposed to yield to such a threat, or to renew an offer of arbitration which has already been declined, and I am confident that the House will support me in my action, which is taken for the protection of the public.

MILITARY SERVICE.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS (DARTMOOR).

43. Mr. E. DAVIES asked the Home Secretary whether he has any informa-

tion showing that letters come and go to the conscientious objectors at Dartmoor conveying instructions for plans of bloodshed; and, if so, what steps he proposes to take?

Sir G. CAVE: No, Sir. I have no such information.

Mr. DAVIES: Did the right hon. Gentleman see the statement in the "Times" from the Bishop of Exeter, and are we to understand that so far as the Home Office is concerned there is no information on the point?

Sir G. CAVE: I do not think the question on the Paper reflects any statement contained in the letter of the Bishop of Exeter.

Colonel MILDMAY: Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether the Government is likely to recognise the inadvisability of concentrating at Princetown those who amongst conscientious objectors are disposed to plot against the true interests of the nation?

Sir G. CAVE: That very point is being considered to-day.

44. **Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE** asked the Home Secretary whether his attention has been drawn to the laxity of the Regulations governing the detention of the conscientious objectors at Princetown; whether he is aware that these men are given considerable licence with respect to opportunities for spreading pacific and restricting doctrines; that every advantage is taken of these opportunities; and will he say what steps, if any, he proposes to take in the matter?

Sir G. CAVE: I do not think the Regulations as recently revised can be described as lax. They forbid all public propaganda and all attendance at public meetings, and I believe that the Committee having charge of the matter do all that is possible to enforce the rules.

Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that these men at Princetown edit and publish a journal or news-sheet for the publication of their views? Is that with the authority of the Government?

Sir G. CAVE: I will inquire. I have not seen the publication.

EMPIRE HONOURS.

45. **Mr. MACMASTER** asked the Prime Minister why the first list of Empire Honours was confined to persons in the United Kingdom who had rendered special war services, and those who had rendered equally meritorious services to the Empire in the Dominions and India were left over for a deferred list; and whether, in the interests of Imperial unity, he proposes to take any action in the matter?

The **CHANCELLOR** of the **EX-CHEQUER** (Mr. Bonar Law): The consultation with the Dominions and India had not been completed in time to enable a joint list for the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India to appear last August. The question of issuing further lists, in which the names of those who have rendered war service in the Dominions and India will be included, is now receiving consideration.

Mr. MACMASTER: Would it not have been more prudent to delay the announcement of the names honoured until a complete Imperial list was completed, instead of announcing Empire honours in sections?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The matter was carefully considered. As the hon. Member knows, the number is very large, and it was not thought advisable to delay the announcements.

Mr. HOGGE: Will the right hon. Gentleman see that soldiers who are serving at the front get their distinctions before any other people?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I think we are all agreed that they are those who have the greatest claim, but the time at which they are given does not actually arise.

EMPIRE ARMIES (PUBLIC GRATITUDE).

47. **General CROFT** asked the Prime Minister when he will give an opportunity to the House of Commons to place on record its gratitude to the Armies of the Empire for the heroism displayed by them in the successive victories which have been won for the cause of the Allies since the start of the great offensive in July, 1916?

Mr. BONAR LAW: It is intended that a Resolution on this subject should be

[Mr. Bonar Law.]
 moved by the Prime Minister on Monday week. The terms of the Resolution will be placed on the Paper in a day or two.

BRITISH ARMY SUCCESSES (PRISONERS AND GUNS).

48 and 49. **General CROFT** asked (1) the total number of prisoners captured by the British Armies on the Western Front since the beginning of July, 1916; what is the total number of guns captured in the same period; and what are the total prisoners and guns captured on all fronts by the British Armies in the War; (2) the total mileage of the territory recovered from the enemy by British Armies since 1st July, 1916?

Mr. BONAR LAW: A full statement giving information on these and on other points will be made very shortly.

VATICAN PEACE OVERTURES.

50. **Colonel Sir N. GRIFFITHS** asked the Prime Minister whether, in the interests of religion generally, the Government will take the necessary steps, in agreement with our Allies, to disavow any negotiations for terms of peace, either by secret diplomacy, *pourparlers*, or other methods, made by or through the Vatican, its priests or agents, or any other religious denominations; and whether he is aware of the mistrust and anxiety that has arisen throughout the country from the recent action of the Vatican in this connection and the danger that would threaten all forms of religion if it were thought that the Church of Rome was endeavouring to influence this or any other representative Government of the people to enter into negotiations for any premature peace?

Lord R. CECIL: No negotiations of the sort have taken place.

Sir N. GRIFFITHS: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the disquieting rumours that gained currency during the Recess that negotiations of that sort were going on, and is he aware that the object of my question is to make it publicly known that that was not the case?

Lord R. CECIL: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for putting the question, and I am glad to have an opportunity of dispelling any such rumours.

56. **Mr. TREVELYAN** asked whether the British Government has officially announced that it has adopted as its own reply to the Pope's Note the reply sent by the United States?

Lord R. CECIL: The answer is in the negative.

Mr. TREVELYAN: Is the Government intending to send a reply on behalf of the British Government?

Lord R. CECIL: I think the hon. Member had better put down a question.

FOREIGN COMPANIES IN UNITED KINGDOM.

51. **Captain WRIGHT** asked whether the question of the introduction of special legislation to deal with foreign companies trading in the United Kingdom, whose shares are in the form of share warrants to bearer, has now been considered; and whether it is the intention of the Government to introduce such legislation during the present Session?

Mr. WARDLE: The Prime Minister has asked me to answer this question. The point referred to is under consideration, but I am not at present prepared to make any statement as to the expediency of legislation of the nature suggested.

Captain WRIGHT: As the number of these companies trading in the United Kingdom may increase after the War, can the hon. Gentleman say when it is likely that a decision will be come to?

Mr. WARDLE: Very shortly, I think.

LIQUOR TRAFFIC (STATE PURCHASE).

52. **Mr. DUNCAN MILLAR** asked whether the three Liquor Commissions appointed to consider the terms of purchase of the liquor trade have yet completed their inquiries; when it is expected that their Reports will be issued; and whether an opportunity will be given to the House of Commons to consider the Reports of the Commissioners before any action in the matter is taken by the Government?

Sir G. CAVE: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this question. I understand that the English Committee

are now settling their Report, but that the work of the Scottish and Irish Committees is not so far advanced. The answer to the last part of the question is in the affirmative.

JUNIOR MILITARY OFFICERS (PAY).

53. Colonel YATE asked the Prime Minister whether he is aware that owing to the lack of private means many junior officers with families have been forced to incur debts; if he can now state when he will be able to announce the additions to the pay and allowances of junior officers promised by him; whether separation allowances to married officers are in contemplation; and from what retrospective date it is proposed that these concessions shall have effect?

Mr. BONAR LAW: This subject is being considered by a Committee of the Cabinet, and I hope soon to be in a position to make a statement on the subject.

HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP "HAMPSHIRE."

54. Sir RICHARD COOPER asked the Prime Minister if he will lay upon the Table of the House the official Report of the inquiry into the loss of His Majesty's Ship "Hampshire"?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer is in the negative.

Sir R. COOPER: Can the right hon. Gentleman indicate the direction in which the publication of this Report after sixteen months' interval can be of any advantage to the enemy?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The Government—wisely, I think—decided not to publish the report of an inquiry in any such case, and I see no reason for making a distinction in this case.

Sir R. COOPER: I give notice that I shall raise this question on the adjournment on Monday evening.

PETROL AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS.

55. Major D. DAVIES asked what arrangements have been made for the control and production of petrol and petrol-

um products; how many Departments and how many Committees are at present engaged in dealing with this question; and what steps have been taken to build up a reserve of petrol and petroleum products in this country?

The SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES (Mr. Long): The Prime Minister has asked me to answer this question.

In order to co-ordinate the work of the various Government Departments interested in petroleum, a small executive department has been formed which is known as the Petroleum Executive. The detailed control of petrol, in so far as the Services are concerned, is in the hands of each Department, and I have made arrangements for the staff of my Executive to co-ordinate the control. The detailed control of civil supplies is handled by the Petrol Control Department, working under the Board of Trade.

The importation of petroleum products is dealt with by the Pool Board, consisting of members of the importing companies, with a chairman nominated by the Government. The home production of petroleum products is entrusted to the Ministry of Munitions. Besides my Executive Committee and the Pool Board there is only one committee dealing with matters in connection with petroleum.

It would not be in accordance with the national interests to state precisely what steps are being taken to build up a reserve of petroleum products in this country, but I can assure the House that the matter is receiving constant attention.

Mr. G. TERRELL: Can the right hon. Gentleman give the name of the members of the Committees who are dealing with petroleum?

Mr. LONG: I will send the hon. Member a copy of the names.

Captain WRIGHT: In the event of the supply of coal being in question, will the Minister of Munitions or the Coal Controller have authority in the matter?

Mr. LONG: I am dealing with petroleum and not with coal.

ALLIES WAR AIMS.

57. Mr. TREVELYAN asked whether a meeting is going to take place between the Allied Governments for the purpose of

[Mr. Trevelyan.]
defining their War aims, as desired by the Russian Government; who will be the representatives of this country; and whether the decisions of the Conference will be published to the Allied peoples?

Lord R. CECIL: Yes, Sir. Such a meeting will, I believe, take place; but no further statements about it are at the present moment possible or desirable.

BRITISH OPERATIONS (OFFICIAL DISPATCHES).

58. Mr. DILLON asked why no dispatch has been published giving details of the battle of Gaza and of the operations which led up to and followed that battle; and why no details are published of military operations in Greece and Macedonia?

60. Mr. G. LAMBERT asked when dispatches will be published recording the operations of the British forces at Salonika and in Palestine?

The UNDER-SECRETARY of STATE for WAR (Mr. Macpherson): A dispatch from General Milne, dated 1st October, dealing with the operations at Salonika has just been received at the War Office and will be published as soon as possible. A dispatch has also been received from General Sir Archibald Murray dealing with the operations on the Palestine frontier up to the date on which he relinquished the command, but this has been temporarily withheld from publication on the advice of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as its publication at the present time might supply the enemy with valuable information. I may remind the House that we are the only nation engaged in the present War which publishes dispatches from commanders in the field. The conditions of present-day warfare, which were not contemplated when the practice of issuing dispatches was established, make it necessary occasionally to delay publication for purely military reasons.

As regards the latter part of question No. 58, I may add that communiqués dealing with the operations in Greece and Macedonia in which British troops are engaged are issued regularly whenever there is anything to report. My hon. Friend may rest assured that no operations have taken place which have not been dealt with in communiqués.

Mr. DILLON: Was not the battle of Gaza announced more than six months ago; and is there any other parallel case for withholding a dispatch for such a long period?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I cannot say off-hand whether there is any other parallel case. I am content to abide by the decision of the Chief of the General Staff.

Mr. LAMBERT: Can the publication of information be made by the Press through news supplied by Press correspondents with these forces at Gaza and Salonika?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I do not think that it would be either right or competent to publish anything beyond the official announcements.

Commander WEDGWOOD: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is being said that the delay in publishing the dispatches in reference to Gaza are due to the fact that the battle was announced as a great victory?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am not aware that such insinuations have been made, but I am convinced that the reason given in the answer which I have read is the true one.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

59. Mr. DILLON asked the Prime Minister whether he proposes to set up a Ministry of Health without further delay; and, if so, why this course is not to be taken?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The proposal of a Ministry of Health is under careful consideration; at present the various difficulties needing to be provided for in the establishment of such a Ministry have not reached any widely agreed solution, and so long as this is so it is not possible to undertake to introduce a Bill for the purpose. Steps are, however, being taken which will, it is hoped, secure substantial agreement amongst those who are actively engaged in the work of national health.

Mr. DILLON: If substantial agreement cannot be arrived at before the end of this Session, will the right hon. Gentleman give the House the opportunity of discussing this most important subject?

Mr. BONAR LAW: Perhaps the hon. Member will put down a question towards the end of the Session, and I shall be glad to answer it.

LAND SETTLEMENT (SOLDIERS AND SAILORS).

61, 62 and 65. **Major HUNT** asked the Prime Minister (1) whether the Government is prepared to co-operate with the Governments of the oversea Dominions in financially assisting the settlement on the lands of the Dominions those British and Irish sailors and soldiers who have served in the War, and including their wives and children, who may desire to migrate and settle on the lands of the oversea Dominions; (2) whether the Government has decided to accept, and at once act on, the recommendations lately made to it by the Empire Settlement Committee of which Lord Tennyson was the chairman; and whether, in view of the undesirability of any delay, he will say why so little has been done up to the present time; (3) whether British and Irish men who have served in the War and who decide to migrate to Australia or any other of the overseas Dominions in order to settle on the land will receive equal privileges and be settled on the land under the same conditions as those service men who came from the Dominions; and whether the settlement of British and Irish service men on the lands of the Commonwealth is subject to the financial co-operation of the Home Government?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The proposals of the Committee, over which Lord Tennyson presided, for the establishment of a Central Emigration Authority, necessarily involve amendment of the existing law. The question of new legislation is under consideration, and His Majesty's Government hope to be in a position to announce their policy within the next few weeks. As regards the Report of the Committee generally, it has been communicated to the Oversea Governments, and their comments on it have been invited.

Major HUNT: In view of the statement of the Prime Minister on 5th March that there was no time to lose in reference to the settlement after the War which would affect the destinies of all classes for some generations to come, would the right hon. Gentleman say why the Government have only begun to provide land for 240 persons?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. Member must give notice of that question.

64. **Major HUNT** asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the fact that British and Irish troops suffering from lung trouble are not at present allowed to settle in the Dominions, and that there are considerable numbers of these troops suffering from lung trouble caused by service during the War from gas attacks, and in view of the fact that the Ministry of Pensions have stated their inability to do anything to enable these men to go to and reside in a dry climate, as declared to be necessary by medical officers to prevent the development of tuberculosis, he can say whether the Government will apply to the Dominion Governments for areas of land in their countries to be set apart for the purpose of settling these men in a dry climate and so saving their lives for the Empire?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The points suggested in my hon. Friend's question are being considered.

PEACE PROPAGANDA (LITERATURE).

63. **Major HUNT** asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the fact that speeches in favour of an inconclusive peace are still being made in many parts of the country, and anti-patriotic literature against the strenuous prosecution of the War is still being distributed to soldiers and others, and in view of the fact that America, France, and Italy have decided to stop similar proceedings in their countries, he can now give an assurance that the police will have instructions to confiscate all literature against the prosecution of the War, and to prosecute all speakers advocating an inconclusive premature peace as being a discouragement to our fighting men and disastrous to the future prosperity and security of our own people and of our Allies?

Sir G. CAVE: This matter receives continuous attention, and when the law is broken proceedings are at once taken. I cannot give the hon. and gallant Member the general assurance for which he asks, but he may be assured that I am as anxious as he himself is to prevent any discouragement to our troops being caused by mischievous or unpatriotic speeches or literature.

Major HUNT: The right hon. Gentleman is perfectly aware that this has been and is going on. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I sent him a letter showing how very bad it was?

Sir G. CAVE: I can only enforce the law, and I always do so.

Major HUNT: Is it not a fact that these people can do just as they like? There was the meeting the other day at the Brotherhood Church. [HON. MEMBERS: "Order!"]

Mr. LEES SMITH: Would it not be better to take these administrative measures against journals like the "National Review" and the "Morning Post," extracts from which are distributed in Germany to stiffen the resistance of the people, and to show that they are fighting for their existence?

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS (INSIGNIA OF HONOUR).

The following question stood on the Paper in the name of **Sir BERTRAM FALLE:**

66. To ask the Prime Minister if he is aware that a special chevron and ribbon are to be granted to all officers and men who entered a war area in 1914; if these insignias of honour are also to be given to the Royal Navy; and if he will consider the granting of these insignias to all men who were under arms in 1914, inasmuch as to grant these to the professional soldier and not to the civilian who volunteered for a profession not his choice, and gave up his own profession, trade, home, wife, and child for king and country at the call of duty, is invidious?

Sir B. FALLE: Before this question is answered may I ask why a question which was addressed to the Prime Minister has been relegated to the non-oral list?

Mr. SPEAKER: I have not the remotest idea, except that I suppose it has not got a star before it.

Sir B. FALLE: It was on the Paper yesterday as a starred question.

Mr. SPEAKER: I know nothing whatever about it.

Mr. MACPHERSON: As far as the War Office is concerned, the object of granting such decorations and badges is to mark

distinctions between different kinds of service. The Army Council consider that the proper lines of distinction for the badge and chevron recently announced are those which have been made public. I understand that the Admiralty are considering the matter.

Colonel FABER: What about the thousands of men who volunteered in Lord Kitchener's first Army in 1914, and only went to the front in the beginning of 1915?

Mr. MACPHERSON: They will be entitled.

COURTS (EMERGENCY POWERS) ACT.

67. **Mr. T. WILSON** asked the Prime Minister whether he is aware that the protection afforded by the Courts (Emergency Powers) Act in regard to tenancy of houses does not extend to the occupiers of small plots of land with houses attached; and whether the Government will introduce a small Bill to amend the Act accordingly?

Mr. BONAR LAW: I do not think that the course suggested by the hon. Member is necessary or desirable.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM ACT PRISONERS (IRELAND).

68. **Mr. BYRNE** asked the Prime Minister whether the War Cabinet still adheres to its decision to transfer a number of Defence of the Realm Act prisoners from Irish to English gaols; and, if so, whether full consideration has been given to the political consequences of such transportation?

Mr. DUKE: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply. The question is founded on a mistaken assumption of fact. Whether men convicted of offences under the Defence of the Realm Act should be imprisoned in one district or another is an administrative matter which must be decided in each case upon the facts of the case.

Mr. BYRNE: Will the right hon. Gentleman state now whether it is the intention of the War Cabinet to remove these prisoners from Dublin to England?

Mr. DUKE: I have nothing to add to the very full answer which I have given to the hon. Member.

Mr. J. O'CONNOR: Having regard to the very bitter memories that still remain in Ireland with regard to the imprisonment of men in England, and the torture to which they were subjected—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—I am perfectly justified in what I say—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. Member had better put the question on the Paper.

Mr. O'CONNOR: May I say that they are irritated by—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. Member must give notice of his question, so that I may see the terms of it.

Mr. BYRNE: Can I have a reply as to whether these men are going to be removed or not? It is rumoured in Dublin that they are, and this is causing great anxiety. On several occasions I wired and wrote to the Prime Minister—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. Member cannot make a statement. Question No. 69.

Mr. BYRNE: The murder of Thomas Ashe—[HON. MEMBERS: "Order!"]

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. Member should sit down when I rise. I have already told him that he cannot make a statement. I have already called on the next question.

Mr. BYRNE: On a point of Order. I put down a question to which I would like an answer. The murder of Thomas Ashe has caused great trouble.

Mr. SPEAKER: I caution the hon. Member, who persists standing in his place after I have risen. He has been long enough here to know that it is a disorderly action, and if it is repeated I shall have to put the Standing Order in force.

Mr. BYRNE: I have no intention of defying the ruling of the Chair, but the Chief Secretary is continually evading giving answers.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. Member is now making a statement, which is also out of order.

ADMIRALTY REORGANISATION.

69. **Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT** asked the Prime Minister when it is intended that the First Lord of the Admiralty shall make his promised statement on Admiralty reorganisation; and whether he can give

assurance of continued diminishing damage from the action of hostile submarines?

Mr. BONAR LAW: My right hon. Friend proposes to make his statement in connection with the Vote of Credit, and the matter referred to in the last part of the question will be dealt with by the First Lord when he makes his statement.

RESTRICTED IMPORTS.

PAPER.

70. **Mr. MACMASTER** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken by the Government to conserve paper, ordinarily used for printing and wrapping purposes, and now ordinarily burned or otherwise wasted; whether there is some known process by which such paper may be, in combination with other materials, used for the purposes of fuel, or otherwise advantageously repulped; and what processes, if any, exist therefore under Government or other efficient supervision?

Mr. WARDLE: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply to this question. The collection of waste paper of all descriptions is organised and controlled by the Royal Commission on Paper. The whole of the material so collected is distributed to paper mills in the United Kingdom.

REGISTRATION OF PUBLIC STOCKS.

71. **Mr. CURRIE** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Regulations consequent upon the provisions of the Finance Act, 1917, concerning the registration and management by the Bank of England of public stocks will be published?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The preparation of the Regulations, which, as my hon. Friend is aware, is a matter of no little difficulty, is well advanced, but I am not yet in a position to say when they can be published.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES (ASSESSMENTS).

72. **Mr. CURRIE** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Regulations consequent upon the provisions of the

[Mr. Currie.]

Finance Act, 1917, concerning co-operative societies' Inland Revenue assessments, will be published?

Mr. BONAR LAW: These Regulations are in course of preparation and it is hoped to publish them within a short time.

CONSCRIPTION OF WEALTH.

73. **Mr. KING** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he stated at an interview with the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Conference that a decision had been arrived at not to conscript the wealth of the country; and whether the War Cabinet has considered and rejected the proposal to make a levy on capital?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The answer to both parts of the question is in the negative.

INCOME TAX (CONSOLIDATION OF ACTS).

74. **Sir CHARLES HENRY** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now take into consideration the necessity to set up the Commission or Committee which was promised before the War to investigate the present conditions under which Income Tax is levied, to regularise its incidence, and to make recommendations by which the existing anomalies may be removed?

Mr. BONAR LAW: For the reasons which I explained to the House in the course of the Debates upon the recent Finance Act, I fear that it is not possible during the War to conduct an inquiry into so large and intricate a subject as the Income Tax.

I may, however, mention that it is hoped shortly to introduce in the House of Lords a Bill for the consolidation of the existing Income Tax law, and, as my hon. Friend will appreciate, the labours of the post-War Committee of Inquiry will be greatly facilitated by the existence of a Consolidation Act.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

75. **Mr. DILLON** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to

pass the Criminal Law Amendment Bill this Session; and, if so, when it will be taken?

Mr. BONAR LAW: It is proposed to proceed with the Bill if time permits, but I cannot yet say when it will be taken.

GOVERNMENT STOCK HOLDERS (COUPONS).

78. **Mr. CURRIE** asked the Secretary to the Treasury what steps have recently been taken to facilitate solicitors, bankers, and agents generally in Scotland and Ireland who, acting for Government stock holders resident abroad, have been at a disadvantage hitherto when endeavouring to encash coupons owing to certain requirements of the Inland Revenue Department?

The **FINANCIAL SECRETARY to the TREASURY (Mr. Baldwin):** This matter is receiving my attention, and I hope to be able to arrange for an extension of the existing facilities in the direction desired by my hon. Friend.

LIQUOR TRADE (IRELAND).

79. **Mr. O'DONNELL** asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food whether in Ireland small licensed traders who dealt with local wholesale traders for their stout are still not being supplied with their proportion; whether he is aware that in this way small traders throughout the country have suffered loss; and if he will say what steps it is proposed to take to recoup them in the future for this trading loss?

Mr. PARKER: When the increased barrelage was granted to Irish brewers in August an undertaking was given by them that such cases as that described in the question would be met. I have no reason to doubt that this undertaking has been generally carried out, and no further action appears to be necessary. If specific cases are brought to my notice, inquiries will be made.

Small Holdings and Allotments (Ireland).

10. **Mr. PATRICK WHITE** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether his attention has been called to the quantity

of grass land that is advertised for sale in the county of Meath; whether it is the intention of the Government to avail of the opportunity to acquire those lands for distribution among small holders or landless men; and, if a general desire is expressed for legislation similar in principle to that of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act in operation in England, whether the Government will introduce it?

Mr. DUKE: I have no information as to the suggestion in the earlier part of the question. The provision of small holdings in the rural districts of Ireland is already the subject of legislative enactment which, as I am advised, is sufficient for present needs and possibilities.

14. **Mr. FIELD** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether, in view of the fact that he has received many resolutions from urban and rural district councils, St. Patrick's Branch, and other plot holders' introduction of an Allotments Bill for Ireland on the same lines as the English and Scottish Acts, he will not introduce a measure giving security of tenure and a sufficiency of land with such modifications as may be expedient in Ireland?

Mr. DUKE: At present the need for allotments is being met by action taken under the Defence of the Realm Regulations and under an Allotments Act passed last Session. The whole subject is engaging the attention of the Irish Executive.

Prison Warders (Ireland).

13. **Mr. FIELD** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland what measures have been taken to meet the complaints made by Irish prison warders; and whether representations have been made for a long time and that dissatisfaction exists in the service?

Mr. DUKE: I must refer the hon. Member to the answers which I gave to the hon. Members for East Mayo and South Kerry and the hon. Member for the Leix Division of Queen's County, on the 28th June and 12th July, which deal at considerable length with this subject. I have not since these answers had any representations of grievances such as the hon. Member mentions.

Mr. FIELD: Am I to understand that nothing is being done to see that the promises made will be carried out?

Mr. DUKE: I am not aware that anything further is required to be done to perform all promises.

Royal Irish Constabulary.

18 and 19. **Mr. P. MEEHAN** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland (1) the present amount of the assets and liabilities of the Royal Irish Constabulary Force Fund (Benefit Branch), as ascertained from the last actuarial investigation; when the last actuarial investigation took place; (2) the number of present subscribers to the Royal Irish Constabulary Force Fund (Benefit Branch); and how many of these subscribers are still serving in the force?

Mr. DUKE: The National Debt Commissioners hold securities in respect of the benefit branch of the Constabulary Force Fund, which amounted on the 31st March, 1917, to £278,854 8s. 7d. The liabilities cannot be stated, as they depend on the numbers of widows and children who are or may become chargeable on the fund within the conditions of benefit laid down in the rules. The last investigation as to the state of the fund was in 1913-14. There are at present about 4,930 subscribers to the fund, and about 580 of them are still serving in the force.

20. **Mr. P. MEEHAN** asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland the amount paid in gratuities to subscribers and their families out of the Irish Constabulary Force Fund in the years 1915-16 and 1916-17; how much of that amount was paid to the families of pensioned subscribers, and how much to the families of serving subscribers; and the amount paid out of the fund as reward for good police work in the years 1915-16 and 1916-17?

Mr. DUKE: The amounts paid from the benefit branch of the Constabulary Force Fund in gratuities to widows and children of subscribers in the years mentioned were: In 1915-16, £19,536 5s. 8d., of which £17,001 7s. 8d. was paid to families of pensioned subscribers, and £2,534 18s. to families of serving subscribers. In 1916-17 the amounts were £17,079 18s. 9d., £15,580 7s. 9d. and £1,499 11s., respectively. In 1915-16, £418 0s. 4d. was paid in respect of rewards for good police duty, and £341 10s. to retiring members of the force in respect of rewards for the absence of unfavourable records during their service. The figures for 1916-17 are rewards for good police duty £1,051 16s. 6d., and for absence

[Mr. Duke.]
of unfavourable records £294. The reward branch of the fund is quite distinct from the benefit branch.

Mr. MEEHAN: Has the county inspector of Donegal received any grant for his meritorious services?

Mr. DUKE: That does not arise out of this question. If the hon. Member puts it down I will ascertain.

Intermediate Education (Ireland).

21. Mr. DILLON asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland when it is proposed to introduce the Supplementary Estimate for Intermediate Education in Ireland; whether any communications have passed between the Irish Government, the Treasury, and Irish educational authorities as to the conditions on which this grant is to be given; and, if so, what bodies have been consulted?

Mr. DUKE: I expect to be ready to deal with this matter in the course of a few days. I have had consultations during the Recess with the Public Departments concerned and also with numerous representatives of the managers and teachers of the schools.

National Teachers (Ireland).

22. Mr. DILLON asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether he will lay upon the Table a Paper containing a statement of the present Regulations under which the salaries and promotions of national teachers in Ireland are fixed, the new Regulations as stated in the speech of the Chief Secretary in introducing the vote for National Education, or, if modified since that statement was made, then in the new form as so modified, and a calculation of the financial effect of the changes made, showing, as far as possible, the cost of each change?

Mr. DUKE: Some minor points are outstanding upon representations made to me from various quarters. They are being disposed of and the new Regulations will then be finally settled and issued. I hope also to present a Paper showing the effect of the proposed changes.

Mr. DILLON: Will the right hon. Gentleman kindly take into consideration whether he will present the Papers in the

form I have indicated in the question, so that we may be in a position to compare the old Regulations with the new ones?

Mr. DUKE: I will see what I can do in that respect.

Swine Fever (Ireland).

25. Mr. FIELD asked the Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture (Ireland), whether the serum treatment of swine fever in Great Britain has had most satisfactory results, but that the Department of Agriculture in Ireland have been prevented from adopting this system owing to the Treasury refusal of granting the necessary funds; and whether he can state the present attitude of the Treasury respecting this subject?

Mr. DUKE: No decision of the Treasury has been given in regard to the application for funds for the purpose referred to in the question.

Mr. FIELD: Is there any hope of the decision being given by the Treasury within a reasonable period, because on this matter I have been asking questions for the last eighteen months?

Mr. DUKE: I am afraid I cannot go beyond the answer I have given.

BILLS PRESENTED.

BILLS OF EXCHANGE (TIME OF NOTING) BILL,—"to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, 1882, with respect to the time for noting bills," presented by Mr. BALDWIN; to be read a second time To-morrow, and to be printed. [Bill 93.]

NAVAL AND MILITARY WAR PENSIONS, ETC. (LOCAL COMMITTEES) BILL,—"to provide for the inclusion on local committees constituted under the Naval and Military War Pensions, etc., Act, 1915, of representatives of disabled men discharged from the Naval and Military Services of His Majesty," presented by Mr. HODGE; supported by Mr. Barnes, Mr. Duke, Mr. Munro, the Solicitor-General, and Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen; to be read a second time To-morrow, and to be printed. [Bill 94.]

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WRITTEN ANSWERS.

WAR.

INCOME TAX (ABATEMENT).

Mr. CROOKS asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a person in receipt of an income of £190 a year, inclusive of a State pension of £30, is not entitled to the abatement of £120 but only to an abatement of £90; and, if so, upon what ground is this reduction in the abatement made?

Mr. BONAR LAW: The right hon. Member is under a misapprehension. The total income of £190 carries the full abatement allowance of £120, and the net income taxable is £70 only. The pension is assessable equally with other income, and if £20 of the abatement is allowed against the pension the balance of abatement available for deduction from the other income is, of course, £90 only.

MUNITIONS.

BONDED SPIRITS.

Mr. G. TERRELL asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he can state the quantity of whisky in bond; and whether there is any probability of such quantity being required for munitions of war?

Mr. KELLAWAY: I have been asked to reply to this question. The term "whisky" is not recognised in official records for revenue purposes, and particulars of whisky in bond cannot be stated. The quantity of home-made spirits in the bonded warehouses of the United Kingdom (or entered to be warehoused therein) on 30th September, 1917, was 129,603,000 proof gallons. The question whether any of this spirit will be required for munition purposes is still under consideration.

REQUISITIONED VESSELS.

Mr. FIELD asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether he has received a resolution from the Port and Docks Board, Dublin, respecting the commandeering of ships; and, if so, whether he will consider the advisability of restoring vessels to the companies unless they are most urgently required by the Government?

Sir L. CHIOZZA MONEY: The representations received with regard to the requisitioning of certain vessels in the Irish Channel trade have received the most careful consideration. Unfortunately, however, the vessels in question are most urgently required for a military service and cannot be spared.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

GRAIN PURCHASES.

Colonel GRETTON asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food for what reason merchants' charges for buying grain were fixed by the Ministry of Food at 2s. per quarter; and if he is aware that in the English corn trade this charge is much higher than has been usual previous to the War?

Mr. PARKER: The charge referred to in the question is not a fixed charge, but a maximum for certain classes of transactions, and other maxima are provided for other cases. It is not anticipated that the charges actually made by merchants throughout the season will exceed those which were usual before the War.

Colonel GRETTON asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food if he is aware that in some districts corn merchants and dealers are endeavouring to make a ring in purchasing certain classes of grain, and that in many instances they are buying grain in the stack before it is threshed or comes to market; and if these proceedings have the sanction of the Ministry of Food?

Mr. PARKER: I am not aware of any such action being taken by corn merchants and dealers as is suggested in the first part of the question. There is nothing in the Orders of the Food Controller to prohibit the purchase of grain in stacks, but such purchase could, under existing Regulations, only be carried out with the consent of the Army Council, since it involves the purchase of straw. Moreover, since the Grain (Prices) Order applies equally whether grain is sold before or after threshing, it is difficult to see how purchases of this nature would be of any special advantage to the dealer.

TEA AND SUGAR.

Mr. P. MEEHAN asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food if he is aware that the workers on the Athy

Wolfhill Railway have been furnished with sugar tickets entitling them to a certain amount of sugar per week; if he is aware that no steps have been taken to supply the local traders with sugar to meet the amount allotted to the workers on the tickets, and that consequently the workers cannot procure sugar on their tickets; and whether immediate steps will be taken to have a sufficient supply of sugar made available for the men?

Mr. PARKER: The Ministry of Food have no knowledge of the matter referred to in the question, but inquiries are being made and I will communicate the result to the hon. Member.

Mr. W. THORNE asked the President of the Board of Trade if he can state the amount of tea in bonded warehouses on 30th September, 1916, and the amount in bonded warehouses in September, 1917; and if he can state the amount of unrefined sugar in bond at the end of September, 1916, and the amount in bond in September, 1917?

Mr. WARDLE: The approximate quantities of tea and unrefined sugar, respectively, remaining in bonded warehouses in the United Kingdom on the dates specified were as follows:

Tea—118,663,000 lb. on 30th September, 1916, and 36,416,000 lb. on 30th September, 1917.

Unrefined sugar—2,112,000 cwts. on 30th September, 1916, and 3,914,000 cwts. on 30th September, 1917.

POTATOES.

Mr. ELLIS DAVIES asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food with what object he prohibited the sale of ware potatoes at less than £6 a ton in lots of one hundredweight or more, particularly in view of the fact that the farmers would readily sell them at £5 per ton, and so reduce the price to the poorer classes?

Mr. PARKER: The object of prohibiting the sale of sound ware potatoes in lots of one hundredweight or more by the grower at less than £6 per ton was to secure to every grower the benefit of the guarantee given by the Prime Minister on the 23rd February. I am aware that some growers would be willing to forego the benefit of the guarantee and sell at a lower figure than £6, but the effect of permitting this would be to give these growers an unfair

advantage over others in the marketing of their produce and would tend to deprive these others of the guaranteed price.

FIXED PRICES.

Mr. DENMAN asked how long it is proposed to persevere in the policy of artificially cheapening a commodity of which the consumption has to be lessened and of artificially raising the price of a commodity which they are urging people to consume in increased quantities as a substitute for other foods?

Mr. PARKER: I presume that the hon. Member refers to bread and potatoes. The reduction in the price of bread was effected in deference to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest. A reasonable degree of voluntary effort will obviate the danger of increased consumption which this reduction has involved. The price of potatoes was fixed in pursuance of the guarantee given by the Prime Minister in this House on 23rd February. As a result of this guarantee the acreage under potatoes has been considerably increased, and there is an abundant crop. The Government do not contemplate any departure from their present policy in respect of these foodstuffs.

MALT

Mr. G. FABER asked whether any and, if so, how much malt has been sent from this country to Holland during the present year, and on what dates?

Mr. PARKER: I must refer the hon. Member to the answer already given on this subject to the hon. Member for West Hants.

WHEAT, ETC. (RESTRICTION) ORDER, 1917.

Captain BLAIR asked if beer comes within the category of human food under the Wheat, Rye, and Rice (Restriction) Order, 1917, No. 376?

Mr. PARKER: No, Sir.

Captain BLAIR asked if under the Wheat, Rye, and Rice (Restriction) Order, 1917, No. 376, rice may be used in the manufacture of beer?

Mr. PARKER: No, Sir.

FLOUR SUBSTITUTE.

Mr. PRINGLE asked whether arrangements have been made to use potatoes as

a substitute for flour in the making of bread; and, if so, to what extent these arrangements are being carried out?

Mr. PARKER: The Bread (Use of Potatoes) Order renders the use of potatoes in the making of bread optional to the extent of approximately 12½ per cent. The question of the extent to which these arrangements can be made compulsory is under consideration, but there are mechanical difficulties in the way.

FEEDING STUFFS.

Mr. G. LAMBERT asked by what amount have cattle-feeding cakes and foods been reduced in price as promised by the Food Controller?

Mr. PARKER: Arrangements for the control of the price of feeding stuffs are not yet complete. Some reduction has already taken place in the price of certain classes of feeding stuffs, and maximum prices will shortly be announced which will effect a further reduction.

HOME-GROWN MEAT.

Mr. G. LAMBERT asked the President of the Board of Agriculture whether he is aware that considerable stocks of half-fat animals have been rushed to the market through the fixing of meat prices by the Government; and what steps are being taken to ensure a uniform supply of home-grown meat in the coming year?

Mr. PARKER: I have been asked to reply. Lord Rhondda is not aware that considerable stocks of cattle which ought not to be slaughtered have been rushed upon the market. He has, however, as recently announced, fixed a uniform price for the next eight months which should ensure a steady supply of home-grown meat in the coming year.

CONDENSED MILK (GOVERNMENT CONTRACT).

Captain WRIGHT asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether, in view of the charges of profiteering made against native producers of food in the United Kingdom, and current statements that the foreign company, the Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company, sells under contracts with his Department products costing 4½d. at prices ranging from 1s. to 1s. 3d., he will now state the terms of those contracts?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The statements to which my hon. and gallant Friend refers are quite inaccurate as regards the prices under Messrs. Nestlé's contract with the War Office. The figure named as cost is apparently the bare cost of fluid milk without any allowance for cost of preparation, tins, cases, delivery and profit.

Captain WRIGHT asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether, in view of the charges of profiteering made against native producers of food in the United Kingdom, and current statements that the foreign company, the Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company, sells under contracts with his Department products costing 4½d. at prices ranging from 1s. to 1s. 3d., he will now state the terms of those contracts?

Dr. MACNAMARA: I am glad to be able to assure my hon. and gallant Friend that, so far as the Admiralty is concerned, the statements to which he refers are totally devoid of truth. In point of fact, the prices per tin which are now being paid by the Admiralty to the firm in question are less than half those named in the question, a favourable contract having been made before the most recent rises in cost took place.

POTATOES PLANTED BY GERMAN PRISONERS.

Mr. MACMASTER asked the President of the Board of Agriculture whether German prisoners in this country engaged in the planting of potatoes have removed therefrom the eyes and thus destroyed the production of the farmers' proposed crop?

Sir R. WINFREY: Rumours to the effect referred to reached the Department and inquiry was made by the county executive committees concerned, who reported that they found no evidence existing to justify them.

MILITARY SERVICE.

DENTAL TREATMENT.

Mr. PENNEFATHER asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what steps are taken in this country before sending a soldier on foreign service to ascertain whether his teeth are in proper condition and, if defective, to remedy the defects?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Men are examined to see if they require dental treatment,

such treatment when necessary being carried out by specially appointed dental officers.

Mr. PENNEFATHER asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what is the number of dental surgeons attached as such to the British military forces per 10,000 men, also the number per 10,000 in the Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, and United States forces?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him on 10th May last year by my right hon. Friend the late Under-Secretary of State for War. I am sorry that I can add nothing to it.

Mr. PENNEFATHER asked (1) how many dental surgeons with experience in the treatment of jaw injuries have been sent to the various fronts and are available for special first-aid treatment of such injuries; and (2) what percentage of dental surgeons now in the Army are employed in connection with dental surgery; and what percentage are engaged in combatant and other duties in which their dental-surgical training is of no value?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am sorry that the detailed information asked for in these two questions is not available, but I may state that the total number of commissioned dental officers is 517.

TRANSFERS.

Mr. FIELD asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that in many cases delays, and sometimes refusals, have been complained of respecting the applications of soldiers being transferred into Irish regiments; and whether he can arrange that when such applications are put forward they will be dealt with favourably as soon as may be convenient?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am not aware of the complaints to which my hon. Friend refers; perhaps he will give me further details. Action such as he indicates would be a departure from the instructions on the subject. The suggestion in the last part of the question represents the War Office policy, which is already in force.

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

Captain WRIGHT asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he is now in

a position to state what number of the 30,000 skilled agricultural labourers agreed to be taken from agriculture have now been called to the Colours; and if he will give a definition of the term "whole-time employed on a farm" used in the above agreement?

Mr. MACPHERSON: My hon. and gallant Friend is referring to two separate agreements. The first agreement under which 30,000 men were to be recruited from agriculture was terminated in June last, when only about 22,000 men had been recruited towards the 30,000. The new agreement made in June provided that no man was to be recruited from agriculture if given a voucher, in England and Wales by the Agricultural Executive Committee, or in Scotland by the Board of Agriculture for Scotland, certifying that he was whole-time employed on a farm on farm work on work of national importance and so employed on 1st June, 1917. The expression cannot be completely defined, but, in addition to the obvious meaning, the following guide was given in an Army Council Instruction on the subject issued to the Recruiting Staff:

The expression "whole-time employed on a farm on farm work" is to be taken to include men whole-time employed in market gardens exclusively in production of food of a character and quantity of national importance, and also men engaged in agriculture as thatchers or as drivers of steam engines or motor tractors (including tractor ploughmen), provided that they are whole-time employed on a farm or farms on work of national importance, and were so employed on 1st June, 1917. It does not include men employed on poultry farms or market gardens devoted to production of flowers or of fruit.

A subsequent Instruction pointed out that the word "fruit" in the former Instruction was intended to include only luxury fruit. There has been little practical difficulty in adjusting cases in which the propriety of the issue of a voucher was doubted.

TIME-EXPIRED SOLDIERS.

Mr. JOWETT asked if a time-expired soldier is entitled to claim his discharge if he reaches the age of forty-one whilst he is serving with the Colours?

Mr. MACPHERSON: A man who has completed twelve years' service and has attained the age of forty-one, and who,

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when the time for his discharge occurs, does not fall within the operations of Section 2, Military Service Act, 1916, Session 2, is entitled to his discharge with all convenient speed.

RECRUITS (STANDARDS AND CLASSIFICATION).

Sir WILLIAM COLLINS asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of National Service if he will lay upon the Table of the House the memorandum which has been prepared containing directions as to the standards of physical fitness of recruits and the classification which is to supersede the present A, B, and C categories with their subdivisions?

Mr. BECK: The memorandum asked for by my hon. Friend is at present under the consideration of the Advisory Medical Board of the Ministry and will be presented to the House at an early date.

HAY AND STRAW PRICES (IRELAND).

Mr. FITZPATRICK asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office if he is aware that in many parts of Ireland the military agents are not giving farmers the maximum prices for their hay and straw, and in some cases the prices paid are less than those which obtain in the local market; whether in future the full price will be paid; and whether the cost of labour in baling, delivery, and freight to Dublin will be paid by the Government?

Mr. MACPHERSON: My information is that throughout Ireland the maximum price is being paid for all first quality hay in good condition; qualities other than the best and first qualities not in the best condition have naturally to be graded in price to their relative value to the best. The terms of the Army Council Order are that where hay is bought at the stack the War Department pays the cost of baling and any rail charges to destination, but the vendor bears cost of transport to rail or other agreed destination available for road haulage. These conditions are being adhered to.

OATS (ARMY PURCHASES).

Mr. FITZPATRICK asked from what date the military agents intend purchasing oats in Ireland; and what prices have been fixed for such oats?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Purchasing will commence on 15th November, 1917, and the price will be 38s. 6d. per quarter of 312 lbs.

NAVAL AND MILITARY PENSIONS AND GRANTS.

Captain BLAIR asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office if separation allowances are now paid to wives who have married prisoners of war in Switzerland or other places of internment?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I hope to be in a position to make an announcement on the subject very shortly.

Mr. CROOKS asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether he will reconsider the practice of the Department in refusing the extra London allowance to a soldier's wife who removes from the provinces to the London area, in view of the fact that if a soldier's wife removes from the London area her extra allowance is stopped?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am afraid that I can find no ground for altering the present practice.

Mr. CROOKS asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office whether, in view of the recent increase and improvements made in soldiers' pay, consideration will be given to the case of the soldier placed on family allowance as he is billeted at home; whether he is aware that in the case of a soldier billeted at home the family are in worse financial condition, as the soldier has to be kept in food and has to pay any travelling expenses; whether the recent concession that a soldier's allotment shall not be taken off his pay will operate in any way in the case of a soldier billeted at home; and whether he will revise this scale of family allowance so as to ensure that the family shall be no worse off.

Mr. MACPHERSON: Family allowance is being increased, and the Army Order on the subject will appear shortly.

Mr. MACMASTER asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what separation allowances for the wives of officers are made by Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa; and what separation allowances are made for the wives of officers of the United Kingdom?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am not in a position to give a full answer to the first part of the question without inquiry. At present no separation allowance is given to British officers, but the question is under consideration.

Mr. P. MEEHAN asked the Pensions Minister if he is aware that Mrs. Eliza Price, of Ballylinan, Queen's County, mother of the late Sergeant Price, No. 10,962, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, is only receiving a pension of 2s. 4d. per week; and whether he will take steps to secure immediate payment to Mrs. Price of the full pension to which she is entitled?

Sir A. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN: Mrs. Price was awarded on the 12th instant a pension at the rate of 3s. 6d. a week payable from the 1st September. Further inquiries into the case are being made, and if it is found that Mrs. Price is in pecuniary need through age or infirmity, it may be possible to increase the pension.

ARMY STORES (DUBLIN DEPOT).

Mr. FIELD asked what progress has been made to establish the promised examining and receiving depot in Dublin?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I have written to my hon. Friend explaining fully the present position of this matter.

REMOUNT DEPOT (IRELAND).

Mr. J. O'CONNOR asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether it is intended to establish a large remount depot in Ireland similar to those now at Ormskirk, Swathling, Shirehampton, and Romsey; whether he is aware that it would be an advantage to land horses being brought from America in Ireland and thus escape the dangers from submarines encountered in the English and Irish Channels in approaching English ports; whether he is aware that such horses could be shipped for foreign ports as easily from Irish ports as from English ports; and, seeing that such horses would thereby be saved long journeys by rail, will he state why such a depot should not be established?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The existing depots were located in accordance with transport requirements, and it is not now considered possible or desirable to make any change.

WAR SERVICE CHEVRONS (QUALIFICATION).

Sir BERTRAM FALLE asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he is aware that it has been stated on his authority that only service on full pay will be reckoned as qualifying service for this purpose in regard to the award of chevrons for service in a theatre of war; and if he will say if this means that an honorary brigadier-general serving as a colonel but graded for pay as a staff captain or lieutenant is not eligible for such distinction though he may enter a theatre of war and serve for twelve months?

Mr. MACPHERSON: No, Sir.

General M'CALMONT asked whether the Army Council, in framing regulations for the issue of the recently announced war service chevrons, will endeavour to make them genuine badges for active service by excluding service at bases or on the line of communication or allowing such service to count half-time only?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Such a distinction has been the subject of careful consideration, but has been found to be impracticable.

BRADFORD WAR HOSPITAL (LABOUR DISPUTE).

Mr. JOWETT asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he is aware that the administrator of St. Luke's War Hospital, Bradford, has applied to the Army headquarters at York for Army plumbers to take the place of men on strike at the hospital mentioned; whether men have been supplied as requested for this purpose; and, if so, whether it is in accordance with Army Regulations for men to be sent under military orders to defeat a strike?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The War Office has no information as to the matter, but I am making inquiries, and will inform my hon. Friend of the result.

GALLANTRY IN ACTION (AWARDS).

General M'CALMONT asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether suggestions for making a visible distinction between medals and decorations awarded for gallantry in action and those

awarded for distinguished service have been considered; and whether he can make any announcement on the subject?

Mr. MACPHERSON: This matter is under consideration, but I am afraid that I am not yet in a position to make any statement.

GERMAN PRISONERS (ESCAPES).

Sir CHARLES HENRY asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he will state the number of German military prisoners in this country who have escaped since the commencement of the War; how many have been recaptured, and if any are at large at the present time; and whether any additional safeguards are being enforced to prevent the recurrence of these escapes?

Mr. MACPHERSON: One hundred and thirteen have escaped. Five are at large. Each case of escape from a camp is carefully investigated, and all advisable and practicable steps are taken to frustrate such attempts.

MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION (CENSURED OFFICERS).

Mr. KING asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he can state the present position of those officers censured in the Report of the Mesopotamia Commission; and what action the Army Council proposes to take?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I am afraid I cannot add much to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend's question on this subject on 14th August last. Surgeon-General Sir W. Babbie has submitted his explanation, the Army Council have found it satisfactory, and Surgeon-General Babbie has been recalled from leave and has resumed his official duties. The Council still await the explanations of the other officers concerned.

SOLDIERS ON LEAVE.

Mr. FIELD asked whether an arrangement can be made so that soldiers obtaining leave to cross the Channel or go long distances may be allowed to deposit their kits in some central depot, where they can be called for on their return; and whether the time occupied in travelling long distances on short leave will not in future be counted against them?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Apart from the convenience of the men, there are other considerations connected with questions of defence which necessitates the present rule. When leave is given from France, the fact that a man has long distances to travel is taken into account.

ARMY OFFICERS (PROMOTION).

Colonel GRETTON asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he is aware that a number of medical men joined the Territorial Forces as medical officers *à la suite* with the rank of captain, and that an undertaking was given that such officers should be promoted to the rank of major after eight and a-half years' service; if he is aware that this term expired in the case of a number of medical officers *à la suite* in June last and that no promotions have taken place; and if it is intended to carry out the undertaking which was given at the time these officers joined the Service?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative. Officers appointed to the *à la suite* staffs of general hospitals serve under different conditions to other officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and promotion is not based on any qualifying time period.

Mr. KEATING asked if the recommendations of the Churchill Commission respecting the promotion of officers who had served eighteen months, unless adversely reported on, is being acted upon?

Mr. MACPHERSON: These promotions are being made as rapidly as possible, and approximately 9,000 officers have already been gazetted. Delay is inevitable to some cases, owing to the reports as to officers' efficiency not having been received from their commanding officers.

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE MEDICAL SERVICE.

Colonel GRETTON asked if the Commission recently sent to examine into the medical service of the Expeditionary Force has yet reported; if not, when the Report may be expected; and if it will be laid upon the Table of this House?

Mr. MACPHERSON: No report has been received, nor can I say when one will be in the possession of the Army Council. I am afraid that no promise to make the report public can be given in advance.

2ND KING EDWARD'S HORSE.

Sir J. GRIFFITHS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that, in the process of disbanding the 2nd King Edward's Horse, men who volunteered in answer to the country's first call for overseas men and came over in bodies from the Argentine and elsewhere, paying their own passages, under the promise or belief that they would be allowed to serve together, are now being split up and sent to different units; and whether, in view of the disappointment and feeling there is among these men, an effort will be made that those overseas men who joined the 2nd King Edward's Horse, particularly the Argentine group, shall be permitted to join a combatant regiment where they can remain together as far as the military exigencies of the case permit?

Mr. MACPHERSON: It was necessary to transfer a number of men from other arms to infantry, and among those recently transferred were a certain number of men of the 2nd King Edward's Horse, a regiment which from the very commencement of the War has shown a fine spirit of loyalty and patriotism. Instructions were issued that any of these men of the King Edward's Horse who wish to serve together may be transferred to the Northumberland Fusiliers, and these instructions are being carried out.

IMPERIAL FORCES (CASUALTIES).

Mr. LLEWELYN WILLIAMS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether the recent announcement of the composition of and the proportionate casualties in the Imperial Forces was official; if so, whether 70 per cent. of the men under arms are English, 8 per cent. Scottish, and 6 per cent. Irish; why no statement was made as to the proportion of Welshmen at the Colours; whether the Welsh troops were included among the English; what is the proportion of Welsh troops, and of their casualties, to the whole; and if he will give instructions

that in future Welsh troops shall be treated on an equality with Scottish and Irish troops and shall not be confused with English troops?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The announcement referred to was an incomplete extract made by a Press agency from a statement issued for circulation in the American Press with the object of refuting enemy calumnies as to the small part played by English troops as compared with Overseas, Scottish, and Irish troops. The proportion of Welsh troops engaged in the Battle of Flanders since 31st July amounts to 4 per cent. of the whole. Their casualties also amount to 4 per cent. of the total. It must be understood that in the case of the United Kingdom all figures are approximæ only, since there are many Scottish, Irish, and Welsh in English regiments, and *vice versa*, whilst the numbers vary according to whether residence or parentage is taken as the determining factor.

Mr. WILLIAMS asked what were the casualties in killed, wounded, and captured among the British, Colonial, and Indian forces on the various fronts up to the end of September last?

Mr. MACPHERSON: These figures cannot be stated in public, but if any Member of the House cares to go to the War Office he will be shown the figures.

BATTLE OF YPRES, 1914.

Mr. LLEWELYN WILLIAMS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he will consider the advisability of issuing a detailed and authoritative account of the first battle of Ypres in 1914, especially having regard to the desire to celebrate the anniversary of the victory on 31st October?

Mr. MACPHERSON: The suggestion will be considered, but I fear that, in any case, it will not be possible to have an account such as is suggested ready for publication by the date mentioned.

ALLIED SUBJECTS AND NATURALISATION.

Sir C. HENRY asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he is aware of the dissatisfaction that is prevailing that,

whereas subjects of allied countries who are now being enlisted can obtain naturalisation under conditions that have been provided for, those subjects of allied countries who enlisted before the present provisions were enacted cannot obtain naturalisation under these provisions; and whether he will take any action in the matter?

Sir G. CAVE: My hon. Friend has asked me to answer this question. I am not aware of, and know no ground for any such dissatisfaction as is mentioned. It is open to any friendly alien, at whatever time he enlisted, to apply for naturalisation if he can fulfil the statutory conditions.

LIGHTING REGULATIONS.

Mr. M'LAREN asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether the regulations as to lights in buildings apply universally to all districts or whether Army officers have power to alter them at their discretion; and, in the latter event, if he will give a list of those places where regulations are in force that differ from the standard regulations?

Mr. MACPHERSON: Orders are made by the Home Office and the Scottish Office. The same orders apply to the different parts of the country, but the time varies. Exemptions can only be granted by the competent naval and military authorities in the case of naval and military establishments or by the chief officer of police in the case of industrial establishments or works of public utility. This exemption is subject to compliance with orders issued by the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, Home Forces, or the local competent military authority on emergency. The information requested in the last part of the question cannot be given, as it would convey information to the enemy.

ARMY OFFICERS (MEALS IN LICENSED PREMISES).

Mr. M'LAREN asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he is aware of the inconvenience caused to officers by the regulation that no food shall be supplied to them at any hotel after 10 p.m.; and whether this rule can be relaxed in the case of officers who are travelling?

Mr. MACPHERSON: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley on 24th April last, of which I will send him a copy.

POLITICAL AGITATION, INDIA (MRS. BESANT).

Colonel YATE asked the Secretary of State for India whether the Order for the release of Mrs. Besant and her two colleagues was issued by him in accordance with the wish and advice of the Government of Madras or against it?

Mr. MONTAGU: I stated quite clearly to the House on Tuesday that I issued no Order on the subject, and I must refer my hon. Friend to my full statement on the discussion on the Motion for Adjournment.

OIL PALM FORESTS (WEST AFRICA).

Sir J. D. REES asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies what steps are being taken to acquire or control the oil palm forests of West Africa, in view of the fact that British imports of margarine from Holland increased by upwards of 55,000 tons between 1911 and 1915, and of the fact that the sale of nuts, kernels, oils, and fats is now prohibited except under licence and at fixed prices?

Mr. LONG: No steps are being taken to acquire oil palm forests in British West Africa, and the control exercised by the Colonial Governments is confined to the ordinary regulations for preventing the destruction of the trees or the unwise alienation by the natives of the palm-bearing areas. The supply of palm kernels and palm oil brought forward and sold to the exporting firms by the natives during the War is considerably greater than the amounts for which it has hitherto been possible to provide freight, and the destination of the exports is strictly controlled. The production of margarine in the United Kingdom has largely increased since the War began.

PATENTS.

Mr. RENDALL asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he has taken or promised to take some time ago any, and what, action to protect the owners of

patents from having to pay patent dues on patents which cannot be worked owing to the War, and to extend the duration of patents for the same reason?

Mr. WARDLE: This matter has received the most careful attention of the Board, and it will be dealt with in the Bill which the President of the Board of Trade hopes shortly to introduce to amend the law relating to patents.

COAL MINERS (WAGES).

Mr. G. LAMBERT asked the President of the Board of Trade what were the average weekly earnings of the coal miners the addition to whose wages has caused a rise of 2s. 6d. per ton in the price of coal to household and industrial consumers?

Mr. WARDLE: Owing to the divergencies between the earnings of coal miners in the different districts and in the different grades of employment, it is not possible to give any really representative figure of the weekly earnings of coal miners. The wage rates of hewers have been increased since the outbreak of war by percentages varying from 27.2 to 46.7 before the recent war wage was granted.

PRISONERS OF WAR.

Mr. HUME-WILLIAMS asked the Postmaster-General whether his attention has been called to the fact that while letters addressed to English prisoners of war interned in Switzerland take about four or five days to arrive letters from such prisoners to England are not as a rule delivered for about a fortnight; whether the delay occurs in the Censor's office; and whether he will take steps to obviate it?

Mr. ILLINGWORTH: The inquiries which have been made indicate that no avoidable delay occurs in the censorship or delivery of letters which reach this country from prisoners of war in Switzerland. If the hon. Member will furnish me with particulars of any letters from prisoners of war in Switzerland which appear to have suffered undue delay, I shall be happy to have further inquiry made and to communicate the result to him.

Mr. HUME-WILLIAMS asked the hon. Member for Sheffield (Central Division)

whether there is any amelioration in the lot of English prisoners in Turkish hands since August; and, if not, what steps are being taken to induce Turkey to treat the prisoners, especially the privates, with humanity?

Mr. J. HOPE: His Majesty's Government have continually pressed the Turkish Government to improve the lot of the British prisoners of war, but, unfortunately, it cannot be said that any improvement has resulted. A large number of the able-bodied prisoners have, however, been transferred to working camps on the Bagdad Railway east of Aleppo, to work under the Railway Construction Company, with whom the Netherlands Minister at Constantinople has been able to make arrangements for their better feeding and clothing. As it will be to the interest of the company to maintain the prisoners in health, it is to be hoped that this change may be to their benefit.

Mr. HUME-WILLIAMS asked whether any English officers or non-commissioned officers, being prisoners of war in Germany, have been sent to Holland for internment under The Hague Agreement; and, if not, what is the cause of the delay and how soon will it be at an end?

Mr. HOPE: No prisoners have yet been interned in Holland; the delay has been due to the difficulties raised by the German Government with regard to the port of embarkation, and it was only on Friday last that their assent to the use of Boston was received. Points have now arisen with regard to the charter parties of the necessary vessels, but as soon as these have been adjusted we hope that the exchanges will begin. I may add that over 800 combatant prisoners have already been repatriated from Switzerland as the result of The Hague Agreement.

Mr. HUME-WILLIAMS asked whether any representative of the Netherlands Minister in Constantinople or of the Geneva Red Cross has been allowed since this House adjourned to visit English prisoners of war in Turkish hands; and, if so, what camps were visited and what reports were made on the subject?

Mr. HOPE: No permission has been given for visits by the Geneva Red Cross Society, but the Netherlands Minister has obtained leave to send a member of his staff to visit camps, not, indeed, to report

on the condition of the prisoners, but to ascertain the amount of winter clothing which they require.

Mr. HUME-WILLIAMS asked whether officers and men prisoners in Germany, whose condition fits them for internment in Switzerland under the arrangement by which such internment was originally, and is still, allowed, have yet been sent to replace those recently repatriated in this country; and, if not, what steps are being taken to provide as far as possible that they should be sent before winter sets in?

Mr. HOPE: Swiss Medical Commissions are now visiting Germany to select British prisoners of war for transfer to Switzerland. They have not yet, it is believed, completed their inspection, but once this is accomplished there should be no delay in the dispatch of our men to Switzerland.

Sir JAMES AGG-GARDNER asked if, in view of the undesirability of detaining British and German prisoners of War during the coming winter, His Majesty's Government will renew the negotiations for their exchange which were opened at The Hague in the summer of the present year?

Mr. HOPE: The agreements negotiated at The Hague were ratified in August last, and are now in operation. In this connection I would refer my hon. Friend to my reply to Question 100 of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw this afternoon.

SHIPPING (ITALY).

Mr. KING asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping whether, as a result of Baron Sonnino's visit to this country in August, an increased tonnage of British, Allied, or neutral shipping was placed at the disposal of Italy?

Sir L. CHIOZZA MONEY: His Majesty's Government has been in constant communication with representatives of the Italian Government with regard to Italy's shipping requirements, and additional assistance has been given.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR (Mr. ST. J. HEATH).

Captain BLAIR asked the Minister of Labour if he will state the date of the appointment at the Ministry of Labour of

Mr. St. J. Heath, the warden of Toynbee Hall, who is a declared pacifist and a conscientious objector of military age; upon what work he is engaged and the reasons that led the Minister of Labour to inform the Discharged Soldiers' and Sailors' Club, Poplar, that Mr. Heath's services were indispensable; and on whose recommendation Mr. Heath was engaged?

Mr. BRIDGEMAN: Mr. St. J. George Heath, who had previously been devoting part of his time to other Government employment, entered the service of the Labour Section of the Board of Trade on the 27th November, 1916, as a temporary officer. This section was taken over by the Ministry of Labour on its formation in December, 1916. He was then in possession of a temporary exemption given by the tribunal, which was further extended for three months in February 1917. The Minister of Labour has no knowledge as to Mr. Heath's personal attitude towards military service. Mr. Heath's work consists of setting up and administering a large number of Central Trade Advisory Committees. After careful consideration, the Minister is fully satisfied that his services in this connection have been, and still are, indispensable. In this opinion the late Ministry of Pensions, with which his work is closely connected, concurred. Mr. Heath did not seek employment in the Department, but was invited to join the staff on account of the exceptional qualifications which he appeared to possess for the work that had to be done, and my right hon. Friend is satisfied of the great and growing importance of the work on which he is engaged.

INDUSTRIAL UNREST (INSURANCE AGENTS).

Mr. BYRNE asked the Minister of Labour what steps have been taken to carry out the recommendations of the Industrial Unrest Committee so far as they apply to insurance agents of Great Britain and Ireland; and when the agents are likely to receive a living wage?

Mr. BRIDGEMAN: The Department have been in communication with one of the principal companies concerned. The company have hitherto declined to agree to arbitration and the Department possess no compulsory powers to enforce it.

ALLOTMENTS (RENTS).

Mr. T. WILSON asked the President of the Board of Agriculture whether he is aware of the rents being charged for allotments; and whether he will seek powers to fix maximum rents, protect tenants in their tenancy unless good cause is shown for ejection, and bring small holdings of ten acres or more near to towns within the compulsory Clauses of the Small Holdings and Allotments Acts, in order to encourage production?

Sir R. WINFREY: The Department do not think that the rents charged for allotments throughout the country are unreasonable, or that additional powers are required on the lines suggested by the hon. Member, though they will be glad to consider any evidence he can furnish as to the need for them. As he may be aware, owners of land let as allotments under the Cultivation of Lands Orders cannot raise rents at any rate before the 1st January, 1919, and, where other allotments are concerned, the Board or the Agricultural Executive Committee may take them over and give instructions for their cultivation in any cases where such a course would seem desirable. Without legislation, it would not be possible to reduce the limit of fifty acres for compulsory acquisition under Section 41 (3) of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, to ten acres.

Secondary Education (Ireland).

Mr. O'DONNELL asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether, seeing the necessity for improved secondary education in Ireland, he proposes to take steps to bring Irish secondary education up to modern requirements?

Mr. DUKE: During the Recess I have had an opportunity of consulting with the authorities who administer Irish second-

ary education and of receiving representations from various bodies connected with the schools. An additional Grant will be provided, and I hope to be able shortly to state particulars of the conditions on which it will be distributed.

Mr. O'DONNELL asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether he will give the names of the Irish secondary schools with State Grants paid to each that did not employ any lay teachers during the year 1917?

Mr. DUKE: I would refer the hon. Member to the Report of the Intermediate Education Board under the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1914 (Cd. 8724). The Grants paid to the schools are shown in this Report and the annual Reports of the Intermediate Education Board (Cd. 8630) and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Cd. 8574).

Trawling (Dublin Bay).

Mr. FIELD asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether he is aware that the Dunleary Line Fishermen's Society have forwarded a communication stating that owing to motor and other trawlers night-trawling within the limits of Dublin Bay the supply of fish is being diminished owing to the destruction of immature fish and continuous disturbance of fish-breeding places; and whether he will provide a patrol boat as suggested by the society?

Dr. MACNAMARA: The communication has been received, and inquiry is being made through the local naval authorities. The Admiralty allocate patrol vessels in accordance with naval requirements. In so far as trawling within areas prohibited by the Admiralty is in question, such steps as are requisite will be taken. It should, however, be understood that it is outside the province of the Admiralty to undertake to enforce by-laws, which are made on purely economic grounds.

ORDERS OF THE DAY.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL: Can the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

Mr. BONAR LAW: On Monday, we will take the Representation of the People Bill.

On Tuesday, the Debate on the Motion relating to Ireland.

On Wednesday, the Representation of the People Bill.

I would rather delay until Monday next stating the business for Thursday and Friday.

Mr. DUNDAS WHITE: Can the right hon. Gentleman make any statement as to when the Petroleum (Production) Bill will be taken?

Mr. BONAR LAW: We intend to take that also on Wednesday—possibly as the first Order.

Mr. G. LAMBERT: Can the right hon. Gentleman state when the Vote of Credit will be taken?

Mr. BONAR LAW: Not yet; probably Tuesday in the week after next.

Resolved, "That this House do sit To-morrow."—[*Mr. Bonar Law.*]

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL.

Considered in Committee.—[Progress, 17th October.]

[*Mr. WHITLEY* in the Chair.]

CLAUSE 30.—(*Application to Scotland.*)

This Act shall apply to Scotland subject to the following modifications:—

(1) Unless the context otherwise requires—

(a) The expression "borough" means "burgh";

(b) The expression "Parliamentary borough" means a burgh having the right of returning or contributing to return a member or members to Parliament;

(c) The expression "county borough" means a royal or Parliamentary burgh;

(d) The expression "Parliamentary county" means a county or a division of a county, or a combination of counties, having the right of returning a member or members to Parliament;

(e) The expression "administrative county" means a county as defined in the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1889;

(f) The expression "local government area" means the area for which any county council, town council, parish council, school board, or any other body elected by local government electors is elected;

(g) The expression "the Local Government Board" means the Secretary for Scotland;

(h) The expression "Valuation Acts" means the Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act, 1854, and any Acts amending the same.

(i) A reference to the Supreme Court shall be construed as a reference to the Court of Session.

(j) A reference to the Court of Appeal shall be construed as a reference to the Court of three judges of the Court of Session constituted by the twenty-third Section of the Representation of the People (Scotland) Act, 1868.

(k) A reference to the County Court shall be construed as a reference to the Sheriff Court.

(2) The yearly value of premises shall be taken to be the value appearing in the valuation roll where those premises are separately valued in that roll, and in any other case shall be deemed to be the value which would in the opinion of the registration officer be entered therein if they were so valued:

(3) The Section of this Act relating to registration officers and areas shall not apply, and in lieu thereof—

The registration area shall be the area (whether a county, a burgh, or some particular portion or district thereof) for which under the Valuation Acts an assessor is appointed and the assessor so appointed shall act as the registration officer for that area:

(4) The provisions regarding the appointment of an assistant judge in the Section of this Act relating to appeals shall not apply:

- (5) The first Sub-section of the Section of this Act relating to expenses of registration shall not apply, and in lieu thereof—

The expenses of registration so far as not paid out of moneys provided by Parliament shall be paid out of a rate assessed, levied, and collected in the like manner and subject to the like provisions as the assessment leviable for the purposes of the Valuation Acts:

- (6) The Sections of this Act relating to returning officers and to the discharge of returning officers' duties by an acting returning officer shall not apply, and in lieu thereof—

The returning officer at Parliamentary elections (other than a university election) shall as heretofore be the sheriff.

Amendment proposed [17th October]. At the end of paragraph (2), to insert the following new paragraphs:

“(3) Without prejudice to the right of a woman in Scotland to be registered as a local government elector for any local government electoral area where she would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man, a woman in Scotland shall only be entitled to be registered as a Parliamentary elector for a constituency (other than a university constituency) on the like conditions as in England, and Section three of this Act shall accordingly apply without modifications so far as it constitutes a basis for the Parliamentary franchise as provided in Sub-section (1) of Section four of this Act.

(4) For the purpose of the local government franchise the following provisos shall be substituted for the first proviso enacted in Section three of this Act, that is to say:

Provided that for the purposes of this Section the word “tenant” shall include—

(a) a man occupying in virtue of any office, service, or employment any dwelling-house which is not inhabited by the person under whom he serves; and

(b) a man occupying as a lodger any room, or rooms, of the yearly value (if let unfurnished) of not less than ten pounds who claims to be registered in respect of such occupation, or, where not more than two men

are in the joint occupation of lodgings and the yearly value thereof (if let unfurnished) is not less than twenty pounds, each of such men who claims to be registered in respect of such occupation.

And provided further that where any land or premises are of the yearly value of not less than ten pounds it shall not be necessary in order to entitle the owner thereof to be registered as a local government elector in respect of such land or premises that he should at any time during the qualifying period have occupied the same.”—[*Mr. Munro.*]

Amendment moved to the proposed Amendment: In paragraph (b), to leave out the words, “who claims to be registered in respect of such occupation.”—[*Mr. Dundas White.*]

Question again proposed, “That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the proposed Amendment.”

The **SECRETARY for SCOTLAND** (*Mr. Munro*): With the permission of the Committee, may I make an appeal to my hon. Friends not to press this Amendment to-day. As those members who were present last night are aware, we had an extremely full discussion upon it, and I gave the quite definite undertaking that before the Report stage I should consider the propriety of accepting the Amendment, and on that footing I would ask my hon. Friends not to press the Amendment further now. It is a question of machinery pure and simple, and I thought it my duty this morning to communicate with the Convention of Royal Burghs in Scotland, with the Association of Town Councils, and the Society of Assessors, all of whom are concerned in the working of this machinery. I think they have a right to be heard before a definite decision is reached on the matter. Under those circumstances, having regard to the full discussion and the undertaking I have given, I would ask my hon. Friends not to press the matter further now, and let us get on with the business.

Mr. D. WHITE: In view of the course which the Secretary for Scotland has taken and of the statement that he has just made, I think that I am justified in not pressing my Amendment now. At the same time I would like to point out that this is a very important matter, and it will be interesting to hear what those various bodies with which he has com-

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municated have to say on the subject. For himself I am very pleased to find that he is well inclined towards the Amendment, assuming that it will be carried out. I hope he will not close his vision against the larger scheme that was proposed by my hon. Friend, the Member for North-West Lanark (Mr. Pringle), namely, that instead of having these various fancy franchises in Scotland for local government purposes, it might be well worth while considering whether we should not attempt to deal with the question on broader lines and endeavour to assimilate the local government franchise in Scotland more closely to the Parliamentary franchise proposed.

Amendment to the proposed Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. WHITE: I beg to propose, as an Amendment to the proposed Amendment, at the end to insert the words: "For the purpose of this Sub-section 'dwelling-house' means any house or part of a house occupied as a separate dwelling."

I do not propose to press this Amendment now, but I take the opportunity of bringing to the notice of the Secretary for Scotland the question of whether there ought not to be some satisfactory definition of the word "dwelling-house." At present, with the tenement buildings which are so common in our Scottish cities, "dwelling-house" is often a very elastic term. I would suggest therefore that some consideration should be given before the Report stage of the possibility of having some definition.

Mr. MUNRO: I can assure my hon. and learned Friend that the point he has raised has been very carefully considered, and as at present advised, I do not think a definition would be desirable. I shall consider it further between now and Report.

Amendment to the proposed Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Main Amendment agreed to.

Sir JOHN BARRAN: I beg to move, in paragraph (3), to leave out the words "is appointed," and to insert instead thereof the words, "was appointed prior to the passing of this Act."

My object in moving this Amendment is to elicit from the right hon. Gentleman a statement as to what exactly will be the position of certain borough assessors under this Act. My desire is to secure

that the registration officers for boroughs which under this Bill will cease to be Parliamentary boroughs should not lose their status as registration officers. I do not think that the wording of the Sub-section is perfectly clear as it stands. If the right hon. Gentleman can assure me that the words as they stand will secure that those officers will in no case be dispossessed of their functions I shall feel perfectly satisfied. I understand that there will be a certain distinction between assessors in those boroughs which cease to be Parliamentary boroughs, and which will go from the status of Parliamentary boroughs to police boroughs. It is more especially in the case of the latter class that I am concerned. The borough assessors have been properly appointed and are justified in holding their present positions. When this Bill becomes law they will be much more justified, because the number of electors they will have to deal with will be very much larger. Therefore, on the merits, I think there is a great deal to be said for securing that they will not be dispossessed of their functions. I understand that the right hon. Gentleman may have in contemplation some action with regard to making clear and secure the general status of these boroughs which will cease to be Parliamentary boroughs, and that he may prefer to deal with the status of assessors in those boroughs within the larger question which will be raised as to the status of the boroughs themselves. If he informs me that he prefers to do that, I am quite content not to press this Amendment, and to leave him to deal with the matter in a way which I hope will be satisfactory to those interested. I move in order to elicit a statement on the narrow and also on the broader question.

Mr. MUNRO: My hon. Friend has raised an important question of which he was good enough to inform me in advance. He is concerned, as I understand, with the position of Parliamentary boroughs whose status may be affected by the provisions of this Bill. They enjoy

privileges to-day, not only in 4.0 P.M. regard to the matter of appointing assessors, but also other privileges that may be affected by the passing of this Bill. The whole question of whether or not these privileges, in their entirety or otherwise, should be continued to burghs which are

[Mr. Munro.] affected by the passing of this Act has already been very carefully considered by me with my advisers, and the only reason why I am not now putting down an Amendment to give effect to the conclusions at which we have arrived is that it is impossible to do so until the Schedules emerge from Committee, and we see how many burghs are affected in their status by the passing of this Bill. I think, therefore, that it will be much more convenient, not only as to the narrower question, but on the wider question of what other privileges these burghs may continue to possess, that any Amendment dealing with the matter should be put down, not now, but on the Report stage, after it is seen in what form the Schedules emerge from the Committee. I can assure my hon. Friend that we are quite alive to the importance of the question. Merely, however, looking at it as a matter of Parliamentary convenience, I think he will probably agree that the course which I propose to take will be the more satisfactory one. Upon the assurance that we are looking into the appointments, in regard to which he has moved his Amendment, I hope he may see fit to withdraw it.

Sir G. YOUNGER: Before the hon. Member withdraws his Amendment, I should like to tell the Secretary for Scotland that I think one of the best features of this Bill is that it does not in any way interfere with our mode of appointing assessors, or of employing the same class of people who are able to do the work. These officials ought certainly to have the same rights as now. I hope the Secretary for Scotland will see that this very excellent provision is one of the merits of the Bill.

Sir J. BARRAN: I hope it is quite clear that the matter stands as the hon. Baronet has just put it—that the interests of the assessors are left without prejudice. On that understanding I ask leave to withdraw my Amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. MUNRO: I beg to move, in Sub-section (5), to leave out the words “so far as not paid out of moneys provided by Parliament shall be paid out of a rate assessed, levied, and collected in the like manner and subject to the like provisions as the assessment leviable for the pur-

poses of the Valuation Acts,” and to insert instead thereof the words “(including any expense incurred by a registration officer as party to an appeal) shall be assessed and levied in any one of the modes allowed by the Valuation Acts with respect to the costs and expenses of making up the valuation roll.”

The proposal in this Amendment is to make it quite clear that local authorities shall have an option which they now enjoy in relation to registration expenses.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. MUNRO: I beg to move, at the end of Sub-section (6) to add the words, “and the power of appointing deputies conferred by Section eight of the Ballot Act, 1872, on certain sheriffs shall be exercisable by any sheriff who is returning officer for more than one constituency or who, by reason of sickness or unavoidable absence, is incapacitated from performing any of the duties developing upon him as returning officer, and in the event of no such appointment being made by a sheriff so incapacitated, or in the event of any vacancy in the office of sheriff at the time when any of such duties require to be performed the sheriff substitute at the place at which the writ for the election is appointed to be received shall act as returning officer, and shall perform all the duties and have all the powers (including the power of appointing deputies) of such returning officer.”

This Amendment, as the Committee will see, is designed to meet the new situation created by the Bill. At present the power of appointing deputies is conferred only upon the sheriffs. I understand that in certainly more than one county, within their sheriffship, inasmuch as in the future, if this Bill becomes law, the elections will all take place on one day, the duties to be placed upon the sheriffs will be correspondingly greater, and it therefore becomes necessary to confer upon them powers which I propose to do by this Amendment. I think I am correct in saying that the Sheriff of Lanarkshire will have twenty-two elections to manage on the same day. Therefore it is essential that the power of appointing deputies should be extended in the manner which this Amendment proposes. The present provisions upon the matter are scattered and conflicting. I am endeavouring to make the thing plain and simple in the Amendment now before the Committee.

Mr. GULLAND: May I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman a question on a point I do not see anywhere in the Bill, for this seems the appropriate place to raise it? I refer to the question as to the returning burghs. As the right hon. Gentleman knows very well, certain burghs disappear in the counties. There has been anxiety, in view of this, as to what the returning burgh will be in certain of the counties. For instance, in the counties which are merged, like Haddingdonshire and Berwickshire, what is to be the returning burgh? Again, as to Roxburgh, what is to be the returning burgh, and who is it that has to appoint deputies? It does seem to me to come in here under this Amendment, because I think you may in one case come under one sheriff of a returning burgh and another sheriff in another. There is anxiety about this matter in Scotland, and I trust my right hon. Friend will be able to give us some guidance.

Mr. D. WHITE: The Secretary for Scotland will recognise the point which has just been raised by my hon. Friend is really a point of substance, for it will have to be considered in a good many cases. What he has said leads me to make the further observation that I thought of making before. On the substance of the Scottish Secretary's proposition in this Amendment, I am sure we are all agreed, but the form of it raises another question. He has said that the law on the subject dealt with in this Amendment is complicated and somewhat conflicting. It is scattered over various Acts, and this particular Amendment has a reference to the Ballot Act of 1872, which it brings in. It is to be hoped, and I believe it is part of the scheme, that when this Bill becomes law the Ballot Act and the various Acts that bear upon it are to be consolidated. That is a much-needed reform. I venture to suggest that before the Report stage it might be worth while considering whether the provisions of this Amendment might not be made self-contained. I think it could be done without any very great difficulty in order to avoid this legislation by reference, which, for the reasons I have mentioned, ought not, I think, to be brought in unless absolutely necessary.

Sir J. JARDINE: I should like to put a question or two. One contains the suggestion of a case which might occur, particularly where there is a great dis-

tance separating the authorities. Suppose that both the sheriff and the sheriff's substitute are incapacitated from attending to this particular function, what is to be done? My next question has some bearing upon the first. I would ask that the House should be enlightened as to the qualifications required by a deputy?

Mr. MUNRO: I quite recognise that the question which has been addressed to me by my right hon. Friend opposite is important; it so happens it was brought before me in my own Constituency during a recent visit I paid to the North. I am not prepared to give an answer off-hand. It may well be that the returning officer has the decision in his own hands. I promise my right hon. Friend, however, that I shall look into the matter, and see whether any particular provision is desirable to deal with the matter. There has been a great deal of local feeling in the matter, partly, perhaps, sentimental, but nevertheless the question is important. The proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for the Tradeston Division (Mr. D. White) is also a matter for consideration. I promise him in the same way as before that his suggestions shall be considered before the Report stage. In regard to the question of the appointment of deputy, I am not sure I can add anything to the proposal in the Bill. I think the Clause which I propose to add answers the question put to me. I do not think any such confusion as is suggested is likely to occur, but as the hon. Gentleman has raised the point I shall look into it.

Sir J. BARRAN: I am glad to hear what my right hon. Friend has just said. Is he, however, quite satisfied? For example, will it be perfectly clear in all cases who is the returning officer? May I give an instance of what I mean? The counties of Haddington and Berwickshire are to be merged. At present the returning officer for those two counties is not the same person. Which of the two returning officers will be chosen for the combined constituency? Then I also agree that it is very desirable that, before this Bill leaves this House, there should be something laid down which will obviate local conflict of opinion or other undesirable situations in consequence of obscurity in the matter. I hope we may take it that the right hon. Gentleman intends

[Sir J. Barran.]

to regularise and make exactly clear what the position will be before the Report stage?

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

CLAUSE 31.—(*Application to Ireland.*)

This Act shall apply to Ireland subject to the following modifications:

- (1) References to the Lord Chancellor shall be construed as references to the Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

The Lord Chancellor of Ireland shall not sit as a member of the Court of Appeal on the hearing of appeals from the County Court under this Act.

For the purposes of this Act, County Court rules, orders, and scales of fees, costs, and charges may be made under Sections seventy-nine, eighty-three, and eighty-four of the County Officers and Courts (Ireland) Act, 1877; but the provisions of those Sections as to the concurrence of, or certification by, County Court judges or the recorder shall not apply.

- (2) The reference to the Local Government Board in relation to the approval of a deputy for the execution of any of the powers and duties of a registration officer shall be construed as a reference to the Lord Lieutenant, and other references to that Board shall be construed as references to the Local Government Board for Ireland.

- (3) The clerk of the Crown and peace for an administrative county shall be the registration officer for any registration area which is coterminous with, or the whole or greater part of which is contained in, the administrative county, and the council of that county shall be the council by which the expenses properly incurred by the registration officer in the performance of his duties in relation to registration are to be paid subject in cases where the registration area is not coterminous with or wholly contained in the administrative county to such contribution by the council of any other administrative county as the Local Government Board for Ireland may direct: Provided that the expenses to be paid by a council shall not include any charges for

trouble, care, and attention, in the performance of duties which are performed by the registration officer in person.

All such expenses shall be paid in the case of the council of a county borough, out of the rate or fund out of which the general expenses of the council are paid, and in the case of a council of any other administrative county out of the poor rate as a county at large charge, except in cases to which Section twelve of the Parliamentary Registration (Ireland) Act, 1885, applies.

- (4) For the purposes of appeals from the registration officer, and also for the purpose of the revision of jurors' lists, the powers and jurisdiction of the County Court shall, unless and until the Lord Lieutenant otherwise direct, be exercised, as respects the Parliamentary borough of Dublin, by the persons who are at the time of the passing of this Act Dublin revising barristers, and as respects the Parliamentary county of Dublin by the person who is at the time of the passing of this Act revising barrister for that county; but while those powers are so exercised, the provisions of this Act as to County Courts shall apply to them as they apply to County Courts.

- (5) The expenses of any printing required in connection with registration shall be treated as part of the expenses of the registration officer under this Act, notwithstanding that the printing is arranged for by the county council under Section ninety-six of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898.

- (6) The expression "administrative county" includes a county borough.

- (7) Part IV. of this Act, and the provisions with respect to an urban district which is coterminous with, or wholly contained in, a registration area, or with respect to the persons who are to be returning officers, or with respect to the discharge of returning officers' duties by an acting returning officer, shall not apply.

Sir J. LONSDALE: I beg to move, after the word "shall" ["this Act shall apply to Ireland"], to insert the word "not."

I move this Amendment with very great reluctance, because I can assure the House

that I have no desire, nor have those for whom I speak, to deprive Ireland of the benefits of electoral reform—

Mr. M. HEALY: On a point of Order, Mr. Whitley. When we were considering Clause 27 yesterday the hon. Member for Somerset moved an Amendment, the object being to raise the whole question of university representation. You, Mr. Whitley, ruled that it was not competent to discuss that Amendment, having regard to the fact that a previous Clause of the Bill had been passed in which the subject of university representation was referred to, and in which it was assumed that the universities would have representation. We have already passed that Clause in this Act which assumes that it shall apply to Ireland. I refer you to Clause 22, Sub-section (5), which expressly refers to Ireland, and fixes the tribunal which in certain cases in Ireland has to deal with certain matters under the Act. I submit that if the hon. Member intends to move that this Bill shall not apply to Ireland, having regard to the ruling you gave yesterday, it is not competent for him to do so.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think that point is a good one. Sub-section (5) of Clause 22, it is true, contains a reference to Ireland, but that is entirely a small and remote question about a County Court having jurisdiction. It forms no parallel to the decision I gave yesterday, namely, that in Clause 2 of the Bill we had decided that there was to be a second university vote in certain cases. On that ground I was unable to entertain a subsequent Amendment which was directed against university representation altogether. Certainly I think it cannot be said that the words in Sub-section (5) of Clause 22 have decided the question whether or not the provisions of the Bill are or are not to apply to Ireland.

Mr. M. HEALY: Does not the fact that in Sub-section (5) of Clause 22 provision is made for what is to happen in Ireland assume that Sub-section (5) of Clause 22 does apply to Ireland? Does not an Amendment which seeks now to provide that no part of the Bill shall apply to Ireland reverse the action of the Committee, which has already decided that Sub-section (5) of Clause 22 does apply to Ireland?

The CHAIRMAN: No; I cannot hold that a point like that decided the question of the application to Ireland. The hon. Member is quite right in saying that the reference is evidence that we have proceeded up to this point on the assumption that the Bill so far as franchise was concerned was going to apply to Ireland. That is a matter for argument, but it is not a point of Order justifying me in ruling the present proposal out of order.

Sir J. LONSDALE: As I have already said, I am moving this Amendment with very great regret, because I desire—and those for whom I speak desire—not to deprive Ireland of the benefits of electoral reform; but in view of what took place in the Debate yesterday we feel that it is necessary to submit this proposal to the Committee in order that it may have before it the two alternatives between which we are to make a choice. The Committee will remember that I proposed yesterday to apply redistribution to Ireland. That Amendment could not be carried to a Division, because I was ruled out of order in consequence of a technical objection which was raised by the hon. and learned Member for Cork (Mr. M. Healy). In the course of the discussion the Leader of the Nationalist party objected to redistribution being applied to Ireland, not on the merits of the proposal, but because the whole subject is being considered by the Irish Convention, and Parliament ought not to anticipate any conclusion at which the Convention may arrive. There is no one who wishes more heartily than I do that the Convention may be able to devise some scheme of settlement which will be acceptable to all parties in Ireland, and will be consistent with the interests of the Empire; but, in my opinion, the fact that the Convention is still sitting ought not to prevent Parliament from devising a scheme of electoral reform for the United Kingdom, or from applying that scheme justly and logically all round. As I stated yesterday, franchise reform without redistribution would be an intolerable injustice to the great communities of Belfast and other large centres of population in Ireland. It is impossible to justify a system under which one voter in the South or West of Ireland wields as much electoral power as six voters in Belfast.

The Bill as it stands would also vitiate the compromise upon which it is admittedly based. As I pointed out yesterday, the compromise was that one vote

[Sir J. Lonsdale.]

one value should accompany one man one vote. The fact that the Speaker's Conference made no recommendation with regard to redistribution in Ireland, I submit, does not rule out the question from our consideration. On the contrary, it is an indication that the Government and the Committee are free to take the course which they consider best in the circumstances. We contend, therefore, that unless redistribution is to be applied to Ireland, as it is being applied to England and Scotland, Ireland should be excluded from the Bill altogether. If we are to wait for the issue of the Convention before admitted anomalies in the present representation of Ireland are dealt with, it is just as reasonable to contend that the entire scheme of electoral reform should be left over to be dealt with as part of the Irish settlement. The hon. Member for East Mayo (Mr. Dillon) suggested yesterday that this matter cannot be discussed free from party recriminations. I see no reason whatever why any bitterness should be introduced into this Debate; and, so far as I am concerned, I am most anxious that this question should be kept above all party considerations. I say frankly we should prefer that the scheme of electoral reform should be applied to Ireland in its entirety, so as to include a fair redistribution of seats without any reduction in the number of Irish representatives in this House. We have put down an Amendment to this Clause which will enable a Division to be taken on that question, and by the present Amendment an opportunity is given to the Nationalist party and to the Committee generally to indicate which of the two alternatives they prefer to adopt. I hope that it may be possible to arrive at an agreement which will enable a Boundary Commission to be set up at once in Ireland, so that a scheme may be prepared in the Bill before it leaves this House; but, in default of any understanding on the question, we shall feel bound to press for the exclusion of Ireland from this Bill.

The SECRETARY of STATE for the HOME DEPARTMENT (Sir George Cave): I think I had better state at once the views of the Government on this question. I quite understand, and I believe the Committee quite understand, the reasons for the Amendment, and the spirit in which my hon. Friend moved it. He does not prefer—he stated it quite

frankly—the solution by which Ireland would be wholly excluded from the Bill. He stated that yesterday, and he has repeated the statement to-day. He moves his Amendment, first, because he desires to have an indication of the course to be followed as regards redistribution, and, secondly, if no redistribution is to be made, he feels that this is the only possible solution. I said yesterday—and I think I left no ambiguity on the point—that as regards the exclusion of Ireland from the Bill, we could not recommend that course to the Committee unless that course had the general consent of the Committee. Upon this point the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference cannot be mistaken or disputed, because they recommended, as I understand, that Ireland should be included in the franchise provisions of the Bill, but made no recommendations either way as regards redistribution in Ireland. Throughout the discussions on the Bill I have followed the rule that unless there was a general consent to depart from some provision in the Report of the Speaker's Conference, the Government should not depart from that Report. We only made, I think, one exception from that rule—an exception which was fully explained and laid down before the Bill was introduced. Following that rule in this case, I carefully listened to the Debate yesterday, and I think no one will say that there is anything like a general consent to exclude Ireland from the Bill. That being so, the conclusion is obvious, and therefore, without going into the reasons for or against it, I must, on behalf of the Government, ask the Committee not to accept this Amendment. I think it only right that I should follow up the statement which I made yesterday as regards the new redistribution in Ireland. It is an issue which, of course, we would gladly have avoided in the interests of the Bill and of peace in this House, and we would gladly have left that matter to be dealt with by future legislation. Some complaint was made by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Cleveland (Mr. H. Samuel) yesterday that this point was only raised now. Of course, under the Rules of Order, it could only be raised now or yesterday.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL: It could have been raised on the Instructions to the Boundary Commissioners.

Sir G. CAVE: I think not. It is only fair to say that the opinion of all of us was that there was some hope, before the stage of this Bill was reached at which this matter would have to be discussed, that some conclusion might have been arrived at either by the Convention or in some other way which might have made a discussion of this sort unnecessary. However the point is raised, and we must of course deal with it. We cannot fairly extend the franchise without redistributing the seats. I say frankly that I see no answer on merits to that contention. In Great Britain no one would agree to alter the franchise without redistribution. No one has suggested that course in Great Britain, and I cannot see why arguments which apply to Great Britain should not also apply to Ireland. It is true, of course, that any redistribution that may be made to-day for Ireland might never take effect; it may be that it would only effect one part and that may be the very part in regard to which the proposals which I hope may be made by the Irish Convention would have to be considered by this House. If we took steps for rejecting altogether the suggestion for redistribution, one cannot help feeling that the population of some parts of Ireland would feel that they had suffered an injustice, not only because the existing inequalities would be allowed to remain, but because by the action of Parliament in passing this Bill those inequalities would have been increased.

No one desires and no one from Ireland has suggested that any injustice should be done to any part of Ireland. No one desires that a feeling of injustice or grievance of any kind should be created which may be avoided, and strongly as I feel the practical difficulty of introducing into this Bill at this stage proposals for redistribution, I think those difficulties are far outweighed by the considerations, undoubtedly on merits, to which I have just referred. It is quite true that internal redistribution for Ireland does not cover the whole ground. At all events that question interests all alike, and by giving that measure of redistribution we make a nearer approach to equality than by leaving matters as they are, or as they will be when the franchise has been extended. Therefore, after full consideration of the matter, the Government adhere to the view which I endeavoured to make clear yesterday that if Ireland is to be included in the Bill, as, in my opinion, it must be, it

is right that an attempt should be made to redistribute the seats which are already allotted to that part of the Kingdom.

What course, then, ought the Government to take? It is, of course, probable that within a short time the deliberations of the Convention may have reached such a point that it may be unnecessary to deal with this matter in the Bill. That may happen, and I hope with all my heart that it may happen. If it should, it may, after all, prove unnecessary to deal with the question of redistribution in this House, but, subject to that contingency, we think it is the duty of the Government to take upon themselves the task of preparing a scheme of redistribution and putting that scheme before the House at a later stage of this Bill. Of course, the Government will have to be advised on that matter by some independent body, but it will be our desire that the proposals shall interfere with the existing arrangement only so far as may be absolutely necessary in order to remedy the glaring inequalities which would otherwise exist. We should, therefore, change as little as possible the existing arrangement of constituencies in Ireland. Subject to that condition, we do propose to take the matter in hand in order to be ready under proper advice with a scheme—

Mr. MAURICE HEALY: Why does the right hon. Gentleman say "subject to that condition"? Why not leave the matter open?

Sir G. CAVE: I do not quite understand that interruption, and I thought I had made my meaning clear. Subject to that condition, we ought to take steps to get a scheme prepared, and when it is ready—probably in the Report stage of the Bill—we should, unless matters occur to make it unnecessary, bring that scheme before the House. After making that statement, I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw his Amendment. I go a little further, and having made a statement which I hope will not tempt anyone to engage in acrimony, I hope the House may be willing to postpone the further consideration of this question and await the proposals of the Government which will be made at a later stage of the Bill.

Mr. DILLON: I am extremely glad that the Home Secretary, in the speech to which we have just listened, has removed all doubt as to the possibility of the Government breaking their pledge under the

[Mr. Dillon.]

Speaker's Conference to extend the franchise in Ireland. That no longer is in doubt, and in that respect I think the right hon. Gentleman's speech has been satisfactory. But when I turn to the concluding portion of his speech I must say that it appears to me in the highest degree unsatisfactory. Why was this question of redistribution raised at all? It was not seriously raised at any previous stage of the Bill, and the measure came on to-day without any real idea in the House of Commons that this subject of redistribution in Ireland would be raised.

Captain O'NEILL: It is not correct to say that this question was not raised at any stage of the Bill. Any Ulster Member who spoke on the matter did so, and I spoke upon the general question on the Second Reading of the Bill, and I said that we were supporting the Bill in its main principles, but we entirely dissented from the provision which would mean that redistribution would not apply to Ireland.

Mr. DILLON: I said "not seriously." What I meant was that when the proper stage came, when the question of redistribution was raised upon the Instructions setting up the Commission for England, this question of setting up a commission in Ireland was not raised. Therefore, any body acquainted with our procedure on such Bills was entitled to come to the conclusion that this subject was not going to be raised in the further stages of the Bill. The hon. Baronet (Sir J. Lonsdale) who raised the matter in his speech to-night said that to extend the franchise in Ireland without redistribution would create an intolerable injustice to the great industrial communities in the North. Why would it create a greater injustice there than now exists? It will create no difference whatever except what exists at the present moment, and the effect of extending the franchise to a large body of working men and women in Belfast would not create any fresh injustice. Therefore I say that no urgent case has been made out for raising this question in Ireland at the present moment. The Home Secretary made use, in the course of his speech, of an extraordinary expression. He said that nobody proposed in Great Britain to extend the franchise without dealing with the question of redistribution, and he asked why the same arguments do not apply in Ireland as apply in Great Britain. There you have got in a

sentence the whole source and root of all the troubles we are suffering from in Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman cannot see why the same arguments do not apply in Ireland as in Great Britain. If he had had anything to do with the Government of Ireland at the present moment, he would say that the same arguments did not apply. You are raising deliberately and absolutely without any justifiable cause that burning question in a country which, Heaven knows, has enough troubles of its own already. The Home Secretary went on to use a most sinister expression which I cannot allow to pass. He said that redistribution would only affect one Parliament, in all probability, and that that would be the Parliament which would be called upon to deal with the proposals of the Irish Convention.

Sir G. CAVE: I said that that may probably be the Parliament.

Mr. DILLON: The right hon. Gentleman said it may probably be the Parliament which will be called upon to deal with the proposals of the Irish Convention. Therefore, we are informed that in the opinion of the Home Secretary, even if the Irish Convention should come to a decision, we shall have a General Election on the new rearrangement of the Irish seats before those proposals are dealt with. Hon. Members think that that is a very light matter, and yet they told us yesterday that there is a party in Ireland gaining force day by day against us, the very foundation of whose existence lies in the principle that it is no use sending members to this House at all, and that the representation of Ireland has been so treated in this House that it is of no value to the country at all. They were good enough to warn us yesterday that if the franchise in Ireland is extended our party will be deprived of its existence, and the effect will be that we should have no representation at all in this House in the Parliament which is to decide the future of Ireland. [HON. MEMBERS: "No!"] That is the logical consequence of your arguments. The hon. Baronet said to me yesterday that the revolutionary party was rapidly gaining ground at the expense of our party. I found no fault with that statement. It is quite true.

Sir J. LONSDALE: I said that the revolutionary party, as the hon. and learned Member is pleased to call it, is gaining strength every day at the expense

of the Nationalist party, and that any extension of the franchise without redistribution would add considerably to the strength of this unconstitutional party.

Mr. DILLON: That is precisely what I say. I did not quarrel with the hon. Baronet, but it was he who coined the word "revolutionary"; I did not do so. I am not sure that the party in Ireland would repudiate it. I am not at all sure that they would consider it in the least degree offensive, but it was not I who coined the word.

Sir J. LONSDALE: I did.

Mr. DILLON: I quoted it in no offensive sense, and I do not think that party would regard it as such. The hon. Baronet's point was that the revolutionary party are gaining strength day by day over the party which believes in representation in this House, and by way of aiding the revolutionary party you propose to insist at this stage on a new redistribution in Ireland which will have the effect of shifting a considerable number of Nationalist seats over to North-East Ulster. Have any of you considered what the effect of that will be on the situation in Ireland? It will be used, and used with enormous force, to point out that the revolutionary party, to use the expression of the hon. Baronet, is right, that we cannot expect any decent treatment from this House, and that it is folly and nonsense to send members to this House. They will use this argument with immense force, and will say, "We do not care a straw; we do not care about redistribution once we get the extension of the franchise, because the number of men we send to the House of Commons will not count as we do not intend to vote. We will not go to, and do not believe in this House." I warn hon. Members and this House that Ireland is at present in an extremely critical position. I do not know whether the hon. Baronet would, but I know some hon. Members above the Gangway would be very glad to see the revolutionary party wipe us out of existence. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I do not blame them a bit. [HON. MEMBERS: "No!"]

Mr. BARRIE: If hon. Members will allow me, I will say we entirely repudiate that.

Mr. DILLON: I withdraw it in favour of the hon. Member. But be that as it may, the situation is serious and, believe

me, by this proposal you are considerably strengthening the hands of those men against all men in Ireland, to whatever party they belong, who still believe in the efficacy of constitutional means and representation in this House. This proposal will be used, and used very effectively, as an argument to show that representation in this House has ceased to be of any value at all. That is one consideration I venture to submit to the House and the Government, if they still are willing to listen to anybody from Ireland and to give any weight to them. There is this further consideration: How is it going to be effectively carried out? You are going to bring up—when?—a set of Clauses to set up a Boundary Commission. The Boundary Commission in Ireland could not carry out its operations, which will be very difficult and complicated, in a few weeks. It is a matter of considerable time, and what are you going to do with this Bill in the meantime? Are you going to hang it up? I know there is a very powerful party in this country, and a considerable one in this House, who will wait on these proposals because it will give an excuse for hanging up the Bill, and perhaps give them a chance of killing it. At all events, it will give them a very good excuse for a long delay. I do not know how you are going to have a Boundary Commission. We are now at the middle of October. It is certain to be the end of December before the Commission can report, and then you have to face the whole discussion of the new arrangement of the Irish seats. Do you expect to get that through in one night? I think it is a subject that will take a very considerable amount of discussion, and certainly I am amazed to hear the Home Secretary, who commenced his speech yesterday by saying that his great anxiety was to save the Bill, wantonly and without any real excuse, so far as we have heard from him or any other member of the Government, embark on this sea of trouble and add a fresh set of difficulties to those which already stand in its path. The Bill is not saved yet. Does the right hon. Baronet (Sir F. Banbury) doubt it?

Sir F. BANBURY: I did not say so.

Mr. DILLON: No; the hon. Baronet did not say so, but it has enemies, and powerful enemies. If I am not ill-informed there is a scheme on foot which may yet succeed in killing it, and I think the Home Secretary, by his speech to-night has

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placed a very considerable weapon, as will be seen hereafter, in the hands of those against us in Ireland.

Mr. O'BRIEN: I regard the right-about-face of the Government, and of their Irish supporters, as an act of downright treachery to Ireland. It is quite worthy of the men who first passed a so-called Home Rule Bill, and then were afraid to put it into operation. You are justifying to-night Sinn Fein by making it more and more difficult for Irish Nationalists to continue to take their seats in this House. You are justifying the last words that Michael Davitt ever spoke in this House. I came across them a while ago, and they are these:

"I have for four years tried to appeal to the sense of justice of this House of Commons on behalf of Ireland. I leave it convinced that no cause of right will ever find support from this House of Commons unless backed up by force."

These were the words of a man who spent the best years of his life in struggling to bring peace between these two countries, and the Home Secretary's announcement to-night proves that what he said is just as true now as it was then. However, treacherous as the conduct of the Government is I, for one, will be no party to giving any pretext, one that I am sorry to say is longed for, for the destruction of the Irish Clause in this Bill. I regard the loss of two or three Nationalist seats in this House through redistribution as a matter of comparatively minor electioneering importance when we are called upon, as we are to-night, to make a choice between that and sacrificing the hope of enfranchising half a million of Irish men and Irish women, who will find themselves equal by and by to exacting redress for the perfidy to which Ireland is being subjected. That being so, my Friends and myself will enter, and do enter, our strong protest, and express our indignation and contempt for the conduct of the Government, and we will throw the responsibility for whatever may happen upon them and upon their Irish allies, the party who sit behind them, whose attitude towards this Bill from the start will be held by their countrymen to be primarily responsible for the treatment that has been played upon Ireland to-night.

Mr. BARRIE: The Committee will realise with gratification that it becomes unnecessary to move the Amendment, as explained by the hon. Baronet (Sir J.

Lonsdale) with the very greatest possible clearness. As I ventured to assure the Committee last night, we are profoundly anxious to have agreement in Ireland, but we felt it too high a price to pay for it to pass a proposal without being able to enfranchise the rapidly growing population of Belfast when this measure came into force. I can only promise the Government that we shall give them all possible help in the later stages of this Bill. I venture to prophesy that the difficulties will become less, and I do not at all entertain the view of the hon. and learned Member for Mayo (Mr. Dillon) as to the time that must necessarily elapse before Ireland will be linked up on a redistributed scheme that will give an equal vote value in Ireland, which is what at least Unionists have not enjoyed for the last couple of generations. I frankly confess that I do not understand the senior Member for Cork (Mr. O'Brien) in the rôle that he played yesterday and again to-day. I remember a very striking manifesto of his, published in the days when political controversy was running high, in which he almost alone on those benches was the champion of the Irish Unionist Members. At that time he enlarged upon our inadequate representation in this House, and he even so greatly committed himself as to say that he would gladly be a party to a very substantial addition to our representation in this House.

Mr. O'BRIEN: I stand absolutely by that, on the one condition that the new arrangement should be part of a national settlement in Ireland.

Mr. BARRIE: We do not understand the distinction which the hon. Member makes. The value of the vote has neither been added to nor lessened since the day he made the statement to which I have referred, and if he was sincere in that statement we should have expected him whole-heartedly to have supported the Government in the proposal which they have to-day accepted. I am not here, however, to recriminate, but I am here rather to suggest that the House of Commons is doing a belated act of justice to the only part of Ireland in which there has been a very marked increase of population. I venture to assure the House that in dealing fairly with us, as they now propose to deal, the country and Empire will gain by the admission of the proper representation of a great democracy that

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has played no mean part in the progress of the supreme struggle in which we are engaged. We should have been ashamed to go back to our people and say that this Bill is going through and that Belfast is to continue to be represented by only four Members when we think she is entitled to more than double that number. There are many urban districts throughout the province which have almost doubled in population since the last Franchise Bill. I am not going to forecast what view the Boundary Commissioners may take. I would gladly, now that the matter has been decided, have seen all political parties sit down in a small committee and agree on a scheme under which this redistribution was to take place. There are growing municipalities around the city 5.0 P.M. of Dublin which we should gladly see getting a share of the new representation. I venture here now, subject to the approval of our Chairman, to assure our Friends below the Gangway and the leaders of both parties that we shall be ready to give what help we can towards the end. We wish to expedite the work and to lessen the burden that will fall on the Boundary Commissioners, and I think that if we could have a small round table conference we could soon draft a scheme which would be generally satisfactory.

Mr. M. HEALY: I rise to explain an interruption which was not understood by the right hon. Gentleman above the Gangway when I expressed surprise at the statement that the changes which the Boundary Commissioners would make should be as small as possible. I hope that by that he does not mean that the only changes which they are to make are to be changes acceptable to hon. Gentlemen above the Gangway. [HON. MEMBERS: "No, no!"] If that be so I only rise to say that the work of the Boundary Commissioners is not likely to be so small as has been suggested. I am old enough to remember the discussions on the Redistribution Act of 1885, and I well remember what then occurred. It is notorious that in the course of the proceedings on that Act several constituencies were continued in the form they now have for one purpose alone. It was said by a relative of mine that if that was not a case of gerrymandering, then he could only retort that "Jeremiah Manders had come too late." I am referring particularly to the constituency of South Dublin.

If anyone will look at the way in which South Dublin is carved out on the map he will be unable to refrain from laughter. I do not wish to go into details on the point. South Dublin is only one illustration. Fermanagh is another. South Londonderry ought to be a Nationalist constituency, while North Antrim was deliberately divided in a way which, if there was no political object in view, no sane man would have approved. I want the Home Secretary to realise that when the Boundary Commission is set up it will not merely have to deal with the problem of the representation of Belfast, but it will also have to deal with the problems presented by South Dublin, Fermanagh, Londonderry, East Donegal, and North Antrim. I venture to tell hon. Members above the Gangway that when the Commission is set up, if it is a fair Commission—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, oh!"] Well, we have to see how it will be constituted. Hon. Members above the Gangway have friends in high places, who will have some voice in naming the Commissioners, and we, too, shall have a voice. But I only rose to say that if the hon. and right hon. Gentlemen are under the impression that this scheme of redistribution when it is set on foot will be limited to giving Belfast or county Down one or more members, they are very greatly mistaken. Any Commission which sets about dividing Ireland fairly into divisions will, I am convinced, leave the political distribution of the constituencies in a condition even more favourable to Nationalist Ireland than it is now; at any rate, the position will be quite as favourable.

Mr. JOHN O'CONNOR: I desire on this—which I regard as a most important occasion—to enter my humble protest against the *volte face* of the Government. Since the War broke out there has been peace in this House between the various parties composing it, and since the Coalition Government has been in power that peace has been adhered to, and no question of controversy has been introduced that could possibly create bitterness between the various parties in this House. Yet the Government does not now hesitate when Ireland is concerned to throw a controversial gauntlet on the floor of the House. It cannot be said that the discussion to-day is devoid of bitterness. It is impossible to introduce these vexed questions with regard to Ireland and to discuss them without heat and without

[Mr. J. O'Connor.]
acrimony. Nobody could have listened to the speeches delivered to-day on this subject and assert that the Amendment which has been brought forward is not controversial. But the Government has not hesitated to take this course. Ireland is not to be considered by the Government. The Government fail to bear in mind the irritated state of that country, and they are bringing forward this question at the instance of a party which is opposed to the Nationalist party and in the interests of that party alone. I submit to the Government that that is a very unwise thing to do in the present state of Ireland. It will add to the irritation which is rife in that country, it will add to the difficulties of the right hon. Gentleman the Chief Secretary for that country when the people see that this proposal is made at the instance of the pampered party in Ireland, the petted and pampered party that comes from the North of Ireland. I would ask the Committee to remember that in the suppression of the recent insurrection Irish rebels were taken and, although they were wounded, were put into the chair and shot, while at the same time the arch rebel, the Leader of the party above the Gangway, is put not only into the Government but into the War Ministry. These things must irritate the people of Ireland. They object to this differential treatment, which, coming on the top of what has already happened, must simply aggravate the state of affairs. Thus you go on heaping Pelion upon Ossa. You are bringing forward a proposal which will undoubtedly add to the deplorable irritation existing in Ireland. That is all I have to say. I protest against this departure by the Government from a policy which has had the commendation of the country, the policy of avoiding controversial subjects, and I enter my protest against that departure as Member for a part of Ireland which must necessarily be affected by the proposition now before the Committee.

Sir F. BANBURY: Before the question is put, I should like again to say a word or two from the English point of view. I am extremely sorry to learn from the speech of the Home Secretary that if redistribution is carried out in Ireland it is to be on the basis of Ireland retaining 103 members, as the result of that will be that Ireland will have one member for every 45,000 inhabitants, whereas in Great Britain there will only be one member for every 70,000 inhabitants—that is to say,

in Ireland a voter will have one and a half times the representation that a voter in England will have. I wish to draw the attention of members for Great Britain to this gross anomaly. We are supposed to be going to alter the franchise and to put everything upon a simple basis. One of the reasons advanced for an alteration of the franchise was that one vote should have one value, and that the over-representation of Ireland should be done away with. But while we are going to alter the representation as far as Great Britain is concerned, it is proposed to leave Ireland over-represented in the way she now is. It may be said you cannot change the Act of Union. But that Act has already been altered by the Dis-establishment of the Established Church of Ireland and by Home Rule itself, and if you can alter the Act of Union in those two directions you can certainly alter it in this direction. The Home Secretary alluded to what the Speaker's Conference did with regard to Ireland, but I venture to say that if the Committee will look at the Report of that Conference it will be seen that very little is said about Ireland and that very poor conclusions only can be drawn from what the Report says thereon. If we look at Resolution No. 1 we find it laid down that the qualifying period for registration as a Parliamentary elector is to be reduced to six months, No. 2 says that there shall be a revision of the register every six months, and No. 3 states that the qualifying period shall be six months prior to the 15th January and 15th July in each year; while No. 4 provides that the time between the preparation and coming into force of the register shall be shortened. Then we find the following Resolution:

"Nos. 2, 3, and 4 shall not apply to Ireland, which, owing to different conditions, may require special treatment."

The only other allusion to Ireland is the following:

"As regards Ireland, the Conference desire to place on record that on the subject of redistribution it has carried on its deliberations from the point of view of Great Britain only."

Therefore, so far as the Speaker's Conference is concerned, the Committee are in a position to do anything they like with regard to this question. I sincerely hope the people in Great Britain will take notice that the Government propose that the anomaly which has existed shall be continued and that an Irishman shall have one and a half times the representation of a voter in Great Britain in the new Parliament as in the old.

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Mr. GERSHOM STEWART: I should like to say a word in support of what the right hon. Baronet has said. It seems to me that we are rather deserting him when we leave him to stand up in solitude for the cause of the voter in Great Britain. I hope the Home Secretary will explain why in process of fairness 70,000 inhabitants in Great Britain are only to have one member when 45,000 in Ireland are to be accorded similar power. It is quite clear that the Act of Union was torn up to meet an ecclesiastical difficulty, and I do not see why it should stand in the way when we have a chance of making a fair political distribution of power. Every one must realise that all the trouble between Great Britain and Ireland, or most of it, is due to the over-representation of Ireland in this House. It has induced parties of all kinds to cater for that enormous block of votes which they have had at their disposal, and if the Government were to put Ireland upon her proper and fair representation whereby her membership would become about sixty or sixty-two, probably divided between three parties, Sinn Feiners, Nationalists, and Unionists, a great deal of the trouble would be avoided and the hard rule of the Gentlemen below the Gangway from which we have all suffered would be to some extent obliterated.

Colonel YATE rose in his place—

The CHAIRMAN: The Debate is getting much beyond the Amendment before the Committee. We are on the Amendment whether the franchise should apply to Ireland or not.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. DUKE: I beg to move, in Sub-section (1), after the word "Act" ("appeals from the County Court under this Act") to insert the following words:

"In any county in which the jurisdiction of the County Court is exercised for the time being by two or more County Court judges the appeals from the registration officer shall be dealt with by such one of those judges or his assistant judge as may be directed by the Lord Chancellor, or shall be distributed amongst those judges and their assistant judges according as may be so directed."

This Amendment makes clear a small matter in the administration of the Act. Under the terms of the Bill a party, who is called the registration officer, is set up for each Parliamentary county or borough,

and Clause 12 of the Bill gives an appeal on all registration matters from the registration officer to the County Court. There are certain counties in Ireland in which more than one County Court judge has jurisdiction, and there would be the possibility of future trouble if matters were left in that condition. Therefore, in order to avoid difficulty, I move this Amendment. It is a mere matter of facilitating the administration of the Bill and removing any uncertainty with regard to the appeals which will no doubt arise from time to time from the registration officer to the County Court.

Mr. M. HEALY: I confess that I do not understand this Amendment. I have not heard of any county in Ireland, except county Cork, where there are two County Court judges. [An Hon. Member: "County Antrim."] There are possibly two places. Surely the appeal ought to go to the judge having jurisdiction in that area, but, as I understand this Amendment, in County Cork the Lord Chancellor might order an appeal from the East Riding to go to the County Court judge of the West Riding, and an appeal from the West Riding to go to the County Court judge of the East Riding. Similarly in the case of Belfast. Surely jurisdiction ought to be as it is at present, by territory. There is no such thing as an area in which two County Court judges have jurisdiction in Ireland. There are two counties which are divided. One County Court judge has jurisdiction in one part and another County Court judge in another part; but there is no county in which two County Court judges have jurisdiction in the same part. If there is to be an appeal on revision points from the West Riding of Cork it should go as it does at present to the County Court judge for the West Riding; and if there is to be an appeal from the East Riding it should go to the County Court judge for the East Riding. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will tell me what case he has in mind, but, having some knowledge of County Court practice in Ireland and of the Revision Courts, I confess that the Amendment as it stands is quite unintelligible to me. I do not say that there is the least objection to it, but it is unintelligible.

The CHIEF SECRETARY for IRELAND (Mr. Duke): There is no intention to depart from the principle to which the hon. Member refers, and the words in the

[Mr. Duke.]

Amendment will be found to have a technical meaning incorporating that principle; but I am told there are cases of difficulty, particularly in Ulster as between the city of Belfast, the county of Antrim, and the county of Down. If the hon. Member thinks it desirable to safeguard the principle to which he refers, I shall be quite prepared to consider with him before Report if additional words are necessary; but it is desirable, for the sake of good administration, that some such power as is here provided should be taken.

Mr. HEALY: If there is a district in which two County Court judges exercise jurisdiction concurrently, I quite agree that this Amendment is necessary, but I was not aware that such a case existed. It is certainly not the case in the South of Ireland, and, perhaps, some hon. Gentleman above the Gangway will tell me whether it is the case in Belfast.

Mr. DENIS HENRY: It is a fact which, perhaps, has escaped the attention of my hon. Friend that the Recorder of Belfast exercises jurisdiction in the city of Belfast and a portion of Antrim, and in a portion of the city of Belfast jurisdiction is exercised by the County Court judge of Down. I take it that it is to meet that case that the Amendment is proposed.

Mr. DUKE: That was the specific case which was mentioned to me as raising the kind of difficulty that might have to be safeguarded against, and I am told that there is some question as to another area, the details of which I have not in my mind. As a matter of caution, it is reasonable to take this power.

Mr. HENRY: The only area of which I am aware is the East Riding and West Riding of county Cork, where there are two County Court judges, one for the East Riding and one for the West Riding. It might possibly be used in that case, but I take it that it is not proposed to grant appeals from one riding into another.

Mr. DUKE: Certainly not!

Mr. HEALY: My hon. Friend quite confirms the view that I put forward. There is no part of Ireland in which two County Court judges have jurisdiction. The Recorder of Cork, like the Recorder of Belfast, has jurisdiction in an area outside the city of Cork. The Amendment assumes that there is a county in which jurisdiction is exercised by two judges in

the same place, but there is no county or place in Ireland where jurisdiction is exercised by more than one judge. That being so, what is the difficulty? The appeal goes to the man who has the jurisdiction. The latter part of the Amendment provides that it should be possible for the Lord Chancellor to send appeals from the East Riding into the West Riding of Cork and from a part of county Down into Belfast, and from Belfast into county Down. With great respect, that is quite unnecessary. Jurisdiction in the matter of registration should go exactly as it does at present—by territory. Wherever a judge has jurisdiction in point of geography for one purpose, he should have it for registration. I cannot in the least see the need for putting it into the power of the Lord Chancellor to send registration appeals from one area of jurisdiction into another.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. CLANCY: I beg to move to leave out Sub-section (3).

I am rather surprised that the Chief Secretary has not put down this Amendment himself, or has not put down some Amendment which would cover the point raised by the Amendment which I move. The right hon. Gentleman will recollect that in the summer he was good enough to receive a deputation of Irish Members to discuss this question, and that that deputation comprised representatives of both the Unionist party and the Nationalist party in Ireland—in fact, I believe that the Unionist members of the deputation were more numerous than the Nationalist members. The proposal for England in the Bill is to make the principal officers of the county councils—that is to say, the secretaries—the registration officers. One would expect that the right hon. Gentleman would propose a similar enactment for Ireland. The Sub-section, however, with which I am dealing proposes to transfer the duties of the registration officers from the secretaries to the county councils to the clerks of the Crown and peace.

Mr. M. HEALY: No!

Mr. CLANCY: I understood that to be so. If I am wrong in that statement the Amendment would be useless. The Sub-section says,

“The clerk of the Crown and peace for an administrative county shall be the registration officer for any registration area.”

I do not understand the interruption. Perhaps the hon. Member will be able to explain how he reads into those words something different from what I have said. I know that at the deputation which waited upon the right hon. Gentleman the meaning I have put upon Sub-section (3) was the meaning put upon it by everybody present. I see sitting beside me my hon. Friend the Member for South Derry (Mr. Henry). He is not an incompetent lawyer. [Laughter.] I hope that from that laughter it will not be inferred that I made any reference to the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. M. Healy). I had not the least intention of doing so. I merely referred to the fact that my hon. Friend (Mr. Henry) is himself a competent lawyer, and that if I made the mistake he made it also upon the occasion of the deputation to which I have referred. The first point in favour of the Amendment is that a different rule is to obtain in England. Why should that be the case? Why should not the same officers do this work in Ireland as do it in England? In the first place it may be said that they are not fit to do it. Knowing several of them, I cannot understand how an allegation of that kind can be made. I know several of them to be most competent men. I believe that every county council secretary in Ireland is a competent man, and I should be surprised if he did not know how to do this work, seeing that as a matter of fact the county council secretary, who has inherited the business from the district council officer, as most of them have done, has been doing this work and doing it most satisfactorily. So far as I am able to ascertain—I am speaking as far as my own knowledge goes—I have not heard of any complaint being made on any side or from any quarter as to the impartiality and ability of these county officers.

I am arguing on the assumption that it would be alleged that they are not fit to discharge these duties. Supposing they are not fit, or at least not as fit as members of the Bar would be to discharge these duties, or as fit as clerks of the Crown and the peace, then there may be appeals from their decisions. So far as I can find out, there would be more than one appeal. How on earth it can be supposed that gentlemen who are actually discharging these duties at the present moment, with the exception of the duty of deciding upon legal points reserved for the decision of the revising barristers, can be sup-

posed to be unfit to discharge these duties with appeals open to the revising barristers, and even to the County Court, and possibly to the High Court, I cannot understand. I, for one, object altogether to the charge of this important matter being taken out of the hands of popularly elected county officials and put into the hands of the Executive in Ireland. The county secretaries are elected by the county councils, who are representative to the utmost extent of the opinions of the great mass of the people. The county councils elect those officers as their officers, while, on the other hand, the clerks of the Crown and peace are the nominees of the Executive Government of the day, as to which appointments it may be alleged that a good many of them have been party appointments. Consequently, I should say that if there is any suspicion to be attached to any of these officers, county council secretaries, or district council clerks or clerks of the Crown and peace, that imputation might well be directed more strongly and with greater effect and truth against clerks of the Crown and peace, who are nominees of the Executive Government of the day.

There is a very much more important matter at stake. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman has himself made a study of this matter and has ascertained the way in which the salaries of these local officers have been made up. The county council secretaries, who in a short time will have displaced the district council clerks under the Local Government Act, 1898, for this purpose, have had their salaries calculated in a great many cases by having regard to the fees which they are entitled to earn on the revision of the jurors' and voters' lists. The right hon. Gentleman had brought to his notice last summer, on the occasion of the deputation which waited upon him, to which I have referred, the classic case of the county of West Meath. There the county council secretary was actually appointed at a salary of £10 a year, on the assumption that he would get such a considerable sum from the discharge of his duties under the Jurors Act and the Registration of Voters Act as would bring the salary up to £200 or £300 a year. The figure varies, I dare say, in every county. I am sure that every county pays a different sum, but all the county councils, I do not hesitate to say, except in the case of officers existing when the Local Government Act was passed, fix the salaries of the new officers

[Mr. Clancy.]

having in view the emoluments to which they have become entitled under the Jurors Act and the Registration of Voters Act. I do not know how the right hon. Gentleman proposes to deal with the men who would be seriously affected in regard to their emoluments if this Amendment is not carried. These clerks whose salaries have been fixed in view of the considerations to which I have referred will certainly lose a considerable portion of their emoluments and of the salaries they now enjoy. Is it to be supposed for a moment that they will not expect and ought not to get compensation for the loss of those salaries? I fancy that the right hon. Gentleman himself would be the last to suggest that a man should be deprived of his emoluments or the greater part of his emoluments without being provided with the compensation which is given on all such occasions. Yet there is no provision for compensation in this Bill—at any rate, I do not see any. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to take that into account.

I have striven to find out why this change is proposed to be made. I have suggested that it will be alleged that these men are not fit to perform their duties. I have pointed out that they are quite as fit as the officers to whom the duties are to be transferred, that they have been discharging these duties all along, or practically the same duties, and that if they are unfit in any case to decide a question of law, then the Bill provides for appeals to one authority or another, and the result of those appeals must be to render futile and harmless any mistakes which may be made by these local officers. I strongly protest against the transfer of the duties to which I have referred from popularly elected officials, as they may be so called, to nominees of the Crown. If you want to secure impartiality, and if the suspicion of partiality is to be attached to anybody or any party or any class of officials, surely it ought to attach first to appointments made by Executive Governments, because I am afraid that in the past—I make no charge against the present Chief Secretary, because I do not know anything about him—the appointments have been guided to a certain extent by party motives. Surely it is very undesirable, in the present state of public opinion in Ireland, that this imputation should have the least ground given for it in the action of the Government in regard to this matter?

Mr. M. HEALY: If I share the hon. and learned Gentleman's view as to the effect of this Clause I do not entirely join in the conclusion at which he has arrived. His speech was made on the basis that the Clause transfers from the county officials to the clerk of the peace work which they do at present without giving any compensation. To take away any man's living by statute without compensation is a thing this Parliament has never done and never will do. I do not believe it is intended and if there is the smallest doubt as to its doing it I should certainly join with the hon. and learned Gentleman in asking that the Clause be amended. As will be seen by anyone who reads Mr. Speaker's Report the Conference makes a recommendation about England but it makes none for Ireland. That is so because when the matter was raised before the Speaker's Conference Irish members were asked to say what they desired. I took upon myself to advise the Conference that the work of preparing the voters' lists in Ireland should be left exactly in the hands of those persons who discharge it at present. I saw no reason for making any change. Certainly it is the last thing anyone would think of suggesting that the existing county officials are not perfectly competent to discharge their work. They have been doing it as long as we all remember, and there has never been the smallest complaint, and to take it away from them now would be to cast a slur on their competence. My view is that whether the draughtsman has accomplished his task or not he has done what the Speaker's Conference intended him to do, namely, to leave the work exactly as it is at present. At present there is no such thing as a registration official in Ireland by that name, but if anyone was entitled to the name it would be rather the clerk of the peace than the county officials because it is the clerk of the peace who issues the precept which sets all the other officials in motion. In the counties he issues the precept to the clerk of the union; in boroughs he issues it to the town clerk and, acting on the precept of the clerk of the peace, the clerk of the union and the rate collectors in the counties, and the clerk of the peace and the rate collectors in the cities, set about preparing the lists. When they have been prepared they send them back revised to the clerk of the peace, and as the clerk of the peace is the beginning the clerk of the peace is the end, because

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it is he who gets them printed and has the responsibility of issuing them to the public. I understand that to be the scheme of practice which this Bill sets up. It is quite true that the Clause to which the hon. and learned Gentleman refers says that the clerk of the peace shall be the registration officer. But Sub-section (6) of the Schedule says:

"The registration officer, where he does not himself perform the duties of overseers."

That is the case universally in Ireland. There is no clerk of the peace in Ireland who at present discharges the duties of overseers. Consequently it may be taken that the expression, "the registration officer, where he does not himself perform the duties of overseers," includes every clerk of the peace in Ireland, and accordingly that Sub-section, as I understand it, directs the registration officer to do exactly what he does at present, namely, to issue the precept, or such other procedure as may be set up by rules to get lists prepared as he does at present by exactly the same officers who at present discharge that duty. That is made further plain by the definition of overseer in Sub-section 33:

"The expression 'overseers' includes town clerks, secretaries of county councils, clerks of urban district councils, existing clerks of the union within the meaning of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, and collectors of poor rate."

That includes the whole hierarchy of officials which at present does this work, and if I understand the Clause properly, I think it is the intention that the whole practice of preparing the list so far as the officials are concerned shall be exactly as at present. The only thing which would make me doubt that is the use of the word "may" in Sub-section (6). It says the registration officer, where he does not himself perform the duties of overseers, may require the overseers of any parish to do them. If there is any doubt as to the meaning of that it ought to be made perfectly plain. It would be quite intolerable that any clerk of the peace should even think of saying to himself, "This gives me an option. I may do it or I may not." But as I understand, the word "may" in most Acts of Parliament of this kind has the effect of "shall." The Land Act of 1881 merely says that a Court may fix the rent. It does

not say it shall fix it. The whole rent of the land of Ireland has been fixed on the word "may" and no lawyer ever dreams that in the Land Act the word "may" has not the effect of "shall." I do not know why draftsmen will use words which to persons who are not lawyers do not convey the meaning clearly, but it is the fact that in many, if not all, Acts of Parliament the word "may" is construed as "shall," and when you wish to use the word "may" in its proper sense you add the words "if he thinks fit."

But I do not think any man's living ought to depend upon the construction of this Clause. It ought to be made perfectly clear, and I am not aware of anyone in Ireland who objects to having it made plain. The real fact is that when an Act of this kind is proposed officials very naturally get into a panic and think they are going to lose their living. I should probably feel so myself if my own living depended upon it. No sooner was this Bill issued than you met clerks of the peace who declared that they were ruined by having their work taken away and handed over to clerks of unions, and, on the other hand, clerks of county councils and town clerks who declared that they would be in the workhouse the moment the Bill was passed. I certainly do not think that is the intention, and I would fight quite as strenuously as the hon. and learned Gentleman against any such change as he suggests the Bill may effect. My view is that the existing officers, whether they are clerks of the peace or officers of public boards, have in the past done their work fairly, impartially and skilfully. I say that of all parts of Ireland, and I can speak of officials of all parties in politics. I have never known any case in which it was suggested that an official had abused his position for the purpose of preparing the lists otherwise than as they ought to be prepared. It would be a monstrous outrage if any man's livelihood was taken away from him by this Bill. That certainly was not the intention of the Speaker's Conference and I do not believe it is the intention of the Bill. But if there is any doubt as to what the intention is, I share the view of the hon. and learned Gentleman that the matter should be made perfectly plain. But one thing I will not support: I will not support any class of officials who claim that they shall get the work of other people. I think there has been some agitation in that respect. I was very glad to notice that

[Mr. M. Healy.]

the hon. and learned Gentleman did not support anything of the kind. His sole demand was that things should be left as they are. I join him in that claim, and the only difference between us is that he apparently takes the view that the Act does what I do not think it does. The most I would say is that this word "may" in the Schedule might be changed and a more imperative word used instead.

Mr. COOTE: I rise to make it plain that on this side of the House we are perfectly satisfied with the present arrangement, and wish it to be continued. We wish to protect our county officers in the work they are doing, and we do not wish anything further. This is as far as we go, and so far I wish to support the hon. and learned Gentleman (Mr. Clancy). I endorse all that he has said in reference to the county officials. I want to say for the officials of my own county that I think

we have as intelligent,
6.0 P.M. as tolerant, and as equally
balanced officials as any in
Ireland or out of Ireland. All shades of opinion are prepared to trust our officials. While we wish to preserve their living and emoluments, we do not wish to encroach upon the emoluments of other people. Therefore, if this is to be embodied in the Bill and made perfectly clear, we have nothing further to say.

Mr. CLANCY: Before the right hon. Gentleman gives a decisive reply, I would like to say a few words in defence of my own position on this matter. I thought the hon. Member (Mr. M. Healy) would have made out a stronger case. If what he says is the case, namely, that everything is to be left as it is, then I have nothing more to ask, but I think the hon. Member is wrong, and I suspect that the Chief Secretary shares his error. Clause 11 of the Bill defines the duties of the registration officer:

"It shall be the duty of the registration officer to compile the spring and autumn register, and to place, or cause to be placed, on the register in accordance with the rules set out in the First Schedule to this Act the names of those entitled to vote as Parliamentary electors or local government electors in his registration area."

That is the exact work that has been hitherto performed by the local officers.

The Bill proposes to take that work from them, and all that the Bill does in addition is, in the First Schedule to which the hon. Gentleman refers, to provide that the registration officer, which will henceforth be the clerk of the Crown and Peace, shall be enabled to employ the old officers to do the old work. That is all. Let me point out to the right hon. Gentleman the Amendment which stands in his name on the Paper and which is very indicative of the change of duty. The clerks of the Crown and Peace have a very simple duty at the present time, and it might almost be performed by their office boys. They have a precept to serve upon certain officers connected with the work of registration. That precept is actually in the Schedule of an Act of Parliament, and the clerk of the Crown and Peace has not to make out that precept. He has only to send it to the printer every year and get a certain number of copies and send them out. That is all he is to do, except that when he gets the list back from the local officers he orders them to be printed. Manifestly there must be a change, and there must be more work given to the clerks of the Crown and Peace than is given now, and the right hon. Gentleman cannot urge to the contrary. The right hon. Gentleman's Amendment to Clause 31 reads as follows: "Notwithstanding the limit imposed in Sub-section (2) of Section twenty-seven of the County Officers and Courts (Ireland) Act, 1877, the salaries of clerks of the Crown and Peace may be increased"—at the expense of the rates—"by orders made under that Sub-section to such extent as appears to the Lord Lieutenant and Council with the concurrence of the Treasury to be proper, having regard to the additional duties imposed on those officers by this Act." How can he say there is no change and that everything is to be left as it is? What are these additional duties?

Mr. M. HEALY: Their work is doubled by the increased number of votes.

Mr. DUKE: There are two registrations a year.

Mr. J. O'CONNOR: We only want one, and we only asked for one!

Mr. CLANCY: Different views appear to be entertained about this, but I concur in the view I originally expressed that the work which has been done hitherto by the local officers is now to be done by the registration officers, and that is confirmed

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by the provision in Sub-section 6 of the Schedule to which the hon. Member for Cork referred, which provides that the registration officers may employ the old officers to do the work which they have hitherto performed. I agree with one thing which the hon. Member for Cork said, and that is that if Sub-section (6) is doubtful it ought to be made clear. With regard to the word "may," every lawyer knows that "may" sometimes means "must"; but every lawyer knows also that there have been 1,000, probably 10,000, cases in which the question was whether "may" meant "may" or "must," and it is nonsense to think that there should be a doubt left on this point in anyone's mind. I invite the right hon. Gentleman to take into account his own Amendment and the Clause, and I should like to know how it is that these two things between them do not prove the case that I have set up.

Mr. DUKE: My hon. and learned Friend (Mr. Clancy) seems to persuade himself that these registration officers, as he wishes them to be called, shall not be continued in the employment in which they now exercise their ability. There is no such intention. The position was stated, I think, substantially and accurately by the hon. Member for Cork. In England the old method of doing this thing is continued. The intention of the proposals of the Government is that in Ireland the old method should be continued, and that those who performed the functions and earned incomes by discharging these duties in the past shall perform those functions and earn incomes by discharging them in the future.

Mr. HEALY: Higher incomes.

Mr. DUKE: As to that, the hon. and learned Member for Dublin spoke about the use of the word "may" in two places. He said "may" in regard to the employment of the secretaries of county councils possibly means "must." He knows quite well that it is the commonest thing where a power of this kind is given that it is taken as mandatory. With reference to another "may," he said the clerk of the Crown may get a higher income. He may if he can. There is nothing mandatory about that. What was said by the hon. Member for Cork was quite right in this matter. Their work has been increased. You largely increase the numbers of voters and you

increase the occasions upon which functions are to be exercised. Moreover, you have dispensed with the revising barristers, and there is a greater degree of responsibility and a greater degree of care to be exercised in the preparation of lists which did not fall upon subordinate officers under the old system. I cannot regard it as an argument establishing anything else except a sense of fair play, that when there is a clear proposal to increase the duties which have hitherto been performed by the clerk of the Crown and peace, there should be the possibility, subject to the recommendation of the Executive and the sanction of the Treasury—hon. Members know how easy it is to get the sanction of the Treasury—that the clerk of the Crown and peace may get some additional remuneration. We have had a very interesting discussion, but I must confess it has been about a very small matter. If upon further consideration it is thought that something is necessary to preserve the interest of those who have in the past discharged these duties, I shall be quite ready to consider them. I am advised that the course which has been taken here is that which will secure the object which hon. Members for Ireland, with rare consensus of opinion, have declared is their common desire.

Mr. BARRIE: It is perfectly true that Irish Members are of one mind on this subject, but I do not think it is at all clear that in regard to our secretaries of county councils we are unanimous in believing that this provision is satisfactory.

Mr. DUKE: I have said that if there is any doubt on that count I will look into the matter upon the Report stage, and will introduce any Amendments which are necessary.

Mr. BARRIE: We want to have all those associated with the registration work safeguarded in their duties and emoluments. This is, perhaps, not the proper opportunity for raising the matter touched upon by the Chief Secretary, namely, that the work is going to be duplicated. I think Irish Members are agreed in opposing any such proposal for Ireland. I think I am not going too far in saying that. Certainly many hon. Members hold that view, and it is held by my county council unanimously that one registration would be sufficient for all purposes. What the public bodies in

[Mr. Barrie.]

Ireland are very resentful of it that the setting up of public positions of this kind will greatly increase the demand. We have an idea—it may be right or it may be wrong—that the clerks of the Crown and peace in Ireland have what we may vulgarly term a very soft job at the present time, and an exceedingly well-paid position. We are rather uneasy about the Chief Secretary's proposal that there should be a suggestion of increased remuneration. On the other hand, there can be no question that the secretaries of county councils and the urban secretaries have not been overpaid in times past. They are really the gentlemen who do the work, while the clerks of the Crown and peace draw the salary. That is, broadly speaking, the position, and we shall certainly protest against any proposal which would add to the remuneration of these higher-paid officials or leave it at the discretion of the Local Government Board what the remuneration is going to be. I think we shall have a discussion as to whether we should have two revisions in Ireland. We think that that is totally unnecessary, and will be pure waste of money.

I think that the county council of which I happen to be a member is only one of many which have passed resolutions to that effect. I hope that the Chief Secretary on the part of the Government will not offer any opposition to what is practically the unanimous opinion on this point. We are anxious to keep down expenses. We believe that there will be no loss of efficiency. We do not want to disturb positions which in some parts of Ireland are contested very hotly and raise questions which are not very generally raised on this side of the Channel. I agree with my hon. Friend below the Gangway that we should have the position properly defined now.

Mr. BRADY: It is sometimes undesirable to have matters like this treated on the Report stage, and I should like to know from the right hon. Gentleman whether he would promise that in the First Schedule the words which create this doubt will be altered and that the matter will be made absolutely clear. The importance of that is that it will be much easier to do it in Committee, when we come to the Schedule, than to postpone it to the Report stage.

Mr. DUKE: I will be glad to consider it when opportunity arises.

Sir J. LONSDALE: Will the right hon. Gentleman accept the Amendment safeguarding the position of county secretaries?

Mr. DUKE: I should see the Amendment before I accept it. I have told the hon. Member what the intention of the Government is.

Mr. CLANCY: I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is required to do now is to make clear that the old officers should perform the old duties. If he undertakes to make that clear I think that the answer that he has given must be satisfactory. But it is not. If the work of each of the officers, the old and the new, is defined to this House beyond doubt, then I think that we could not ask for anything more.

Mr. BRADY: And that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to carry this into effect on behalf of the Government.

Mr. J. O'CONNOR: I should like to know if the county councils would be safeguarded against a double impost, in consequence of the change of duties from one official to another?

Mr. DUKE: I do not understand. The object in view will be attained if they perform the duties that they have been performing.

Mr. O'CONNOR: But the Bill provides that the council of the county shall be the council by which the expenses properly incurred by the registration officer are to be paid, subject in cases where the registration area is not co-terminus with or wholly contained in the administrative county to such contribution as the Local Government Board for Ireland may direct. And the next paragraph says that all such expenses shall be paid in the case of the council and county borough out of the rate or fund out of which the general expenses of the council are paid. That really is imposing a new tax upon the county councils, and if the old duties and old remuneration are to remain as they are, according to the promise now made across the floor of the House, there will be the addition that is provided in the paragraphs which I have just read. The county councils will resent any such extra burden. I have in my hand resolutions passed by county councils in the

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North of Ireland and in the South of Ireland. I have a resolution from the county Down and another from the county Cork, though Members from Cork have supported the proposition of the Government. We do not desire the secretaries to the county councils to be deprived of the remuneration and of the duties which they performed with very great satisfaction and without one single complaint year after year. The right hon. Gentleman should see that, as well as securing the position and the work of the clerk of the county councils, the county councils themselves should be preserved and safeguarded from this additional impost.

Mr. BYRNE: I desire to support the Amendment proposed by the hon. Member for North Dublin, because if this Clause is allowed to pass as it stands it transfers duties to Government officials—that is, the Clerks of the Crown—and imposes upon the local taxpayer compensation for remuneration lost by the town clerks and secretaries of county councils. If the Clause is designed to do what the right hon. Gentleman suggests he ought to have no hesitation in accepting this Amendment. The idea seems to be to give Government officials in Ireland more power over the county councils, which is not desirable, as everybody knows, at the present moment in Ireland. I would suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that he should state definitely that he intends to leave things in Ireland exactly as they are, as for the moment we are satisfied. If he does not agree to do so I would like to have a Division on this Amendment.

Mr. NUGENT: The Debate on this point illustrates the necessity for other than lawyers understanding the difference between “may” and “shall.” We have here an Amendment which the Chief Secretary agreed to accept, dealing with this particular Clause. It is not a question of may or shall. It is the deletion of half a dozen words in the First Schedule. The Amendment standing in the name of Irish Members is to delete the words, “where he does not himself perform the duties of overseers, may,” and then insert “shall.” It would then read that “the registration officer shall require the overseers of any parish, or any part of a parish forming a registration unit,” and so on. That will cover the point of difference that exists.

Mr. DUKE: I think it very likely that will do.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. T. WILSON: I beg to move, in paragraph (3), after the word “person” (“officer in person”), to insert the words, “and that all such expenses of the registration officer shall be properly vouched by the production of receipts from all persons to whom payments have been made.”

I move this Amendment because I have received communications from persons who are able to speak with authority on this particular question. My information is that there has been some laxity, not to use a stronger word, in connection with this matter, and I think it in the interests of good book-keeping and of the audits in these matters that the Government should accept the Amendment. The words cannot possibly do any harm, and may probably do a considerable amount of good. If the Government cannot accept these words now I hope that at a later stage they will put in words to effect the object I have in view.

Mr. DUKE: If I thought that the Amendment of the hon. Member would add any security for the vigilant oversight of the accounts I would accept it at once, but it is not necessary to do this. The provision for the payment of expenses is that every payment of proper expenses—they must all be proper expenses—will have to be established first to the satisfaction of the local authority, and then they will have to be sanctioned by the local government auditor. I hope that local government auditors in Ireland do not merely satisfy themselves that the money has been raised. There is also the question of whether the expense has been properly incurred. The Amendment would really limit the operation of the Act. The Local Government Board and Treasury officials have an interest in the matter, and they have fixed a maximum because a contribution is made out of the Exchequer towards these charges. I think, therefore, my hon. Friend will see that there are precautions taken for keeping the expenses within the proper limit.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. ARCHDALE: I beg to move, at the end of paragraph (3), to insert the words, “The duty of deciding upon claims and

[Mr. Archdale.]

objections in connection with the preparation of the register and of correcting electors' lists shall, instead of being discharged by the registration officer, be discharged by a barrister of not less than six years' standing, appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, who shall receive such remuneration as may be fixed by the Lord Chancellor; and the amount thereof shall, for the purposes of this Act, be treated as part of the expenses of the registration officer."

This Amendment proposes to confer the duties of looking into claims upon a barrister instead of being discharged by the registration officer, and I think the barrister would be a much better man to do this work, to which he has been accustomed. In Ireland there will be very critical questions fought between the different parties, and we do not think the clerk of the Crown is well qualified to perform the work. The clerk of the Crown, of course, would get extra pay for duties he had never performed before, and I think that the appointment of a barrister would be a very much more suitable one.

Mr. DUKE: I think that on consideration the hon. Gentleman will see that it is not necessary to press his Amendment, only I am as sensitive as anyone in regard to the interests of the Bar, and in appreciation of the services the Bar has rendered on all occasions to the public. I do not, however, think it is necessary to retain the services of revising barristers in Ireland, seeing that in Great Britain we have been deliberately dispensed with. As the Bill originally stood, there was no appeal from the registration officer except upon a question of law. As the matter stands at present, by Amendments during the progress of the Bill, there is an appeal to the County Court judge from the registration officer from the clerk of the Crown, and, in view of that, I do not think my hon. Friend will think it necessary to press the Amendment.

Mr. ARCHDALE: After what the right hon. Gentleman has said, I beg leave to withdraw the Amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: In paragraph (3), after the word "paid" ["council are paid"], insert the words "or out of any other rate or fund which the Local Government Board may on the application of the council approve."

After the word "applies" ["Parliamentary Registration (Ireland) Act, 1885, applies"], insert the words "and shall be regulated in accordance with a scale fixed by the Local Government Board."

[Mr. Duke.]

Mr. M. HEALY: I beg to move, in paragraph (4), to leave out the words "unless and until the Lord Lieutenant otherwise direct."

This Amendment relates to the city of Dublin, where the County Court judge has in his jurisdiction more work than any official of that kind in Ireland. It is always considered that the County Court judge has too much to do, and accordingly, in Dublin, there are always two permanent revising barristers to assist the County Court judge. In fact, in addition to these two permanent revising barristers, I think I am right in saying that two temporary revising barristers have been appointed. I would point out that the franchise under this Bill is so simple that cases of controversy must be exceedingly few. The points that will be raised will be simple, and the franchise being so simple, questions cannot arise to the same extent as formerly. I think that payments in regard to matters of this kind should be subject to Parliamentary review, and should not be left to the casual occupant of the position of Lord Lieutenant.

Mr. DUKE: The positions are vested at present in two revising barristers, and I do not think they should be displaced from the performance of their duties, which they discharge by the right of a statutory office. I do not anticipate that there should be any interference with them so long as they live to discharge the duties; but if the hon. Member desires that some words should be added so that neither of these learned gentlemen should be displaced without compensation, then I will consider that before the Report stage.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. DUKE: I beg to move, at the end of paragraph (6), to insert the words "(7) Notwithstanding the limit imposed in Sub-section (2) of Section twenty-seven of the County Officers and Courts (Ireland) Act, 1877, the salaries of clerks of the Crown and peace may be increased by Orders made under that Sub-section to such extent as appears to the Lord Lieutenant and Council with the concur-

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ence of the Treasury to be proper, having regard to the additional duties imposed on those officers by this Act."

Sir J. LONSDALE: We should like some explanation of this Amendment. Personally I do not quite understand why the salaries of clerks of the Crown are to be increased. Why should they be increased?

Mr. DUKE: I do not know that there is any reason for increasing the salaries of the clerks of the Crown, but if I should happen to have any little connection with Irish affairs, and if that question arose, and there was no reason why their salaries should be increased they would not be increased. In regard to the Bill, it is pointed out that the result of it would be to considerably increase their duties; it was strongly represented to me that it would largely increase their duties, and, as the law is now, they would be without any possibility of obtaining an increase, even a moderate increase of their salaries. I should like to explain that there is at present a statutory limitation upon the amounts which can be provided out of the Exchequer for the remuneration of these gentlemen. Unless means were taken to allow an increase, if one should become necessary, it could not be done at all without coming to Parliament for an enactment on the subject.

Mr. DILLON: I do not oppose this Amendment, but I want to draw attention to the fact that the words of the Amendment are "additional duty," but in his speech the right hon. Gentleman used the word "increase." In view of the discussions we have had on "additional duties" and "increased duties" I should like to know what the meaning of "increased duties" is, and whether they would be of the same character as are now being performed. I would suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should insert the word "increased" instead of the word "additional," because that would fall in with the statement he has made.

Mr. DUKE: That might have some effect on the claim.

Mr. DILLON: I do not mean to give a larger claim. That would be a serious matter, but if the words "additional duties" give the larger claim, then the word "increased" might be inserted in respect of the same duties.

Mr. M. HEALY: What is the difference between "additional" and "increase"? The clerk of the Crown have now for the first time to perform certain preliminary duties. The Bill will greatly simplify procedure. Under it there will be increased as well as additional duties. The case of all county officials was raised on a previous occasion. They have increased duties and, instead of being injured by the Bill, they will get additional emoluments. They are paid per name on the list, and if the names are doubled those officials will get extra pay for the work they do. I hope that we will always be careful of the public purse in this House, and we should not give away the public money without getting value, but that does not mean that we should treat public officers shabbily or impose duties upon them without paying for them. This Bill will undoubtedly impose considerably increased duties on all the officials connected with it. They will all get increased salaries, to which they certainly are entitled, and there is no reason why among them you should not include the clerk of the Crown and peace, who will have increased duties of a wholly different kind and of a responsible character. In Clause 13, dealing with the English, all these considerations were taken into account, for that Clause reads, "Any expenses properly incurred by any registration officer in the performance of his duties in relation to registration, including all proper and reasonable charges for trouble, care, and attention in the performance of those duties shall be paid." Not a single element of the new work is omitted. Trouble, care, and attention are all to be paid for in England, and not a word about it in the case of Ireland. I think it would be very unjust if this Bill were allowed to leave this House without having done for the Irish officials what has been quite properly done for the English officials, and I thank the right hon. Gentleman for having introduced this Amendment. So far as the salaries of the officers of the Crown and the peace are concerned, the tendency latterly of the Treasury has been to treat those officers in a most shabby way. When a new appointment is to be made to the office a salary is fixed which no solicitor of any standing would dream of accepting as compensation for his professional practice. I have no sympathy with the outcry raised here, because when additional duties are placed

[Mr. M. Healy.]

on public officials they should be not exorbitantly but properly paid, and that is all that this Amendment does.

Mr. FIELD: I think that the Chief Secretary can hardly resist the claim that has been put forward. Surely these officials ought to be put in the same position as the officers in England who perform similar duties? There will be a large accession of work on the part of the men who are engaged in registration, and that being so, they ought to be paid.

Amendment agreed to.

Sir F. BANBURY: I do not propose to move the Amendment of which I had given notice, namely, to leave out Sub-section (7). It raises the point with regard to the exclusion of Ireland, and after the discussion we have had I do not think any useful purpose would be served by discussing the matter again.

Mr. M. HEALY: I beg to move, at the end, to add the following new paragraph:

"(8) Section nine, providing for the preparation of two registers each year, shall not apply and only one register shall be prepared each year. The qualifying period shall end on the thirty-first day of August, and the register shall come into force on the first day of January and shall remain in force until the thirty-first day of December."

This raises a question already adverted to by the hon. Member for Derry, namely, that of two registers in Ireland. I am sorry the Home Secretary is not present, because he has formally pledged himself that if any Member could point out any particular in which the Bill failed to carry out the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference he would have the defect set right. This is a case in which the Bill departs from those recommendations. At that Conference when the question of a double register was raised I advocated the view that while two registers were quite necessary in England where there was a constant shifting of the population and constant increase, that no such state of things existed in Ireland and that in Ireland the population is, absolutely stereotyped from year to year, and that there is no justification for having a register twice a year. Before raising the question at the Speaker's Conference I consulted the hon. Member for Dublin and also the hon. Member who sits now on the

Treasury Bench and was a member of the Conference and very efficiently represented the view of the Conservative party. All Irish members of the Conference were agreed that we only wanted one register in the year in Ireland. Consequently, when the Conference came to report—

Mr. DUKE: If that is so, and if this is the wish of all parties, I must take the responsibility of accepting this Amendment. It may be necessary on Report to suggest some modification, and perhaps my hon. Friend would leave it over until the Report stage.

Mr. HEALY: No, no!

Mr. DUKE: If hon. Members take a strong view on the question, and this being a peculiarly Irish matter, I accept, subject to this, that I may have on careful consideration some proposal by way of explanation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

CLAUSE 32.—(*Commencement of Act and First Register.*)

(1) This Act shall come into operation on the passing thereof: provided that nothing in this Act shall affect—

- (a) any Parliamentary register for the time being in force, or any Parliamentary elections, or the constitution of the House of Commons, until Parliament is first dissolved after the first register to be prepared under this Act comes into force; or
- (b) any local government register for the time being in force, or any local government elections, until the first register to be prepared under this Act comes into force.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in this Act, the first register to be prepared under this Act shall come into force on, and remain in force until, such date as His Majesty may fix by Order in Council, and His Majesty may by any such Order alter, in connection with the first register, any registration dates, and direct that this Act shall have effect as so altered.

(3) If any difficulty arises as to the preparation of the first register or the holding of the first elections after the commencement of this Act, the Local Government Board may by Order do any matter or

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thing which appears to them necessary for the proper preparation of the register or the proper holding of the elections.

Mr. KING: I beg to move, in Sub-section (1) (a), after the word "dissolved" to insert the words "or ceases to have continuance."

This is similar to an Amendment I moved yesterday and which I understood would be accepted. I am sorry the Home Secretary is not in his place because there is no doubt that there has been some little misunderstanding as to this matter. I made some rather strong remarks yesterday when I found that my Amendment was not to be accepted and I now venture to apologise to him for any remarks I made because it is so easy to misunderstand, and I hope he will accept this apology in the spirit in which I offer it.

Mr. DUKE: I take it that the intention of this Amendment is to provide for the case of the determination of Parliament by the effluxion of time. I do not think there will be any difficulty about that, but perhaps my hon. Friend will keep it until the Report stage and I will mention it to the Home Secretary.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Sir F. BANBURY: I beg to move to leave out Sub-section (2). I do so for the purpose of obtaining some explanation as to its meaning. The Sub-section says, "Notwithstanding anything in this Act the first register to be prepared under this Act shall come into force on and remain in force until such date as His Majesty may fix by Order in Council." During the last two years we have had no register and the old register has continued in force. One of the reasons for bringing in this Bill is in order to provide that there shall no longer be a stale register and that a register is to be made every six months. But, as I understand this Sub-section, the Government will have power to keep the first register in force for two or three years. The Sub-section says it may "remain in force until such date as His Majesty may fix by Order in Council."

I myself do not see what is the necessity for that. I have always very much objected to the power being taken out of the hands of this House and

7.0 P.M. put into the hands of the Cabinet. I do not at all like the idea, when we pass certain legislation,

of having that legislation altered, amended, or nullified either by the Government or by Order in Council. In addition to that, the Clause goes on to say,

"His Majesty may by any such Order alter in connection with the first register any registration dates, and direct that this Act shall have effect as so altered."

I do not know what it is intended to do by that. I do not suppose it was put in without some reason or reasons. There must be something in the minds of the Government, and I think they ought to explain it to the Committee. No one is in the habit, even in these days, of putting Clauses into Acts of Parliament which have no meaning. There must be something behind this which requires explanation from the Government, and I shall be obliged if the Home Secretary will give us the information for which I have asked.

Sir G. CAVE: In regard to the first point, I would reply that there are two registers of electors to be prepared, the Spring register and the Autumn register. The first comes into force on April 15th and the second on October 15th, each remaining in force for six months. There is a possibility that the Bill may become law at such a period as to make it really impossible to bring the first register into force on the date prescribed by the Act, and the only purpose of the first part of the Sub-section is to enable an Order in Council to be made modifying that particular date. There is no question of allowing any register to remain in force more than six months. It is only meant to meet the special contingencies of the time. Much the same observations apply to the second point raised. The work of the proposed register may be so heavy that some of the periods may be insufficient for the purpose, and the purpose of the second part of the Sub-section is to allow the authorities to take note of the special difficulties of the case and to modify accordingly.

Sir F. BANBURY: I am satisfied with the explanation given by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw my Amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: At end of Sub-section (3), add the following new Sub-section:

"(4) This Section shall apply to any new register to be prepared and to any elections held during the continuance of the present War and a period of twelve months thereafter, as it applies to the first register to be prepared under this Act and to the first elections held after the commencement of this Act, respectively."—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Clause, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 33 (*Repeal and Short Title*) ordered to stand part of the Bill.

POSTPONED CLAUSE 18.—(*Voting by Absent Voters.*)

(1) For the purpose of giving persons whose names are entered on the absent voters' list an opportunity of voting at a Parliamentary election, the returning officer shall, where an election is contested, as soon as practicable after the adjournment of the election, send a ballot paper to each such person at the address entered against his name on the absent voters' list in the register together with a declaration of identity in the prescribed form.

(2) The ballot paper marked by the absent voter and accompanied by the declaration of identity duly signed and authenticated shall, if it is received by the returning officer before the close of the poll, be counted by him and treated for all purposes in the same manner as a ballot paper placed in the ballot box in the ordinary manner.

(3) A person whose name is entered on the absent voters' list shall not be entitled to vote except as an absent voter in pursuance of this Section.

(4) His Majesty may by Order in Council prescribe the forms to be used for the purposes of this Section, and make Regulations as to the mode in which ballot papers are to be sent to the voter and as to the authentication of any marked ballot papers, and generally for the purposes of carrying this Section into effect and for preserving the secrecy of voting in pursuance thereof.

The CHAIRMAN: In relation to the various Amendments to this Clause, I think I had better not make any statement now, but deal, as it arises, with any point any hon. Member wishes to make.

Mr. COOTE: I beg to move, in Sub-section (1), after the word "Parliamentary" ["at a Parliamentary election"], to insert the words "or local government."

I think the same privileges ought to be given to the local government electors as are in the Bill accorded to Parliamentary electors. What I ask for is a very small concession, but it would be a very popular one. There are voters in local government elections who are obliged to go long distances to record their votes, and I think they ought to be treated on the same basis as voters for Members of Parliament. The proposal commends itself to the general public outside, and I hope it will commend itself to the Committee.

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman answers, I should like to ask him what course the Government proposes to take with regard to this Clause? It is rather difficult to discuss these Amendments without knowing what the House will be asked to do. As the matter was left, the Government were reconsidering these proposals with a view to bringing up a new Clause, or new Sub-sections of the Clause, the purport of which was to establish a system of proxy voting where postal voting was impracticable for soldiers and sailors, leaving the postal vote in cases where it was practicable. Perhaps the Home Secretary will make some statement, for I note a new Amendment of his on the Paper?

Sir G. CAVE: I have been, as the right hon. Gentleman possibly knows, in consultation with Members of the House in regard to the proxy proposals, and we have endeavoured to combine both systems, postal and proxy. That is, instead of giving in every case of an absent voter the right to vote by proxy, we suggest meeting the difficulty by extending the time for voting, as suggested by the Amendment of, I think, my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Pancras. This could be done by Order in Council. There it is clear that it is not possible to meet the difficulty in that way, as in the case of a soldier and sailor at a distance the proxy vote is suggested. It is agreed on all hands that this right to vote by proxy must be given where the vote could not otherwise be recorded. There have been conferences of Members of the House, and, in view of all the circumstances of the case, I think it is undesirable, when we have endeavoured to deal with the question in Committee, that we should go forward at the present. What I propose to do, therefore, is not to move my proxy Amendment to-day, but to ask the Com-

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mittee to deal with the other Amendments on the Clause on the understanding that before the Bill reaches Report I shall put down Amendments to deal with the point. In regard to the particular Amendment now before the Committee, I am afraid I could not possibly accept it. The matter is not a small, but a very large one.

Colonel SANDERS: The Home Secretary has just made an announcement postponing this subject till the Report stage. To many of us who are interested in this question such a decision comes as a great disappointment. Two or three months ago we consented to the question being postponed. We agreed to it because the Home Secretary was to put down this Amendment on the Paper. The last thing we expected was that when the question came up it would again be postponed. We agreed to its being postponed when it came on before the Recess because the Home Secretary was to put down this Amendment, with which we are in full agreement, and we certainly thought that when the House met again this question would be taken. I do not know that there is any way in which it is possible for us to raise the question now if the Home Secretary does not move his Amendment. But if what he suggests has to be done, I would ask him, in framing his regulations on the subject, to consider two things that I do think are of very great importance. One of them is that if proxies are to be sent to some members of our forces and not to others, and it is to be at the option of the Home Secretary to whom they are to be sent, that the decision should be made in plenty of time to enable soldiers in distant regions to get the proxy at such a time that there will be no doubt about the matter.

The other matter is as to the sending of absent voters' cards to those to whom it is decided they should be sent, instead of the proxy forms. If an absent voter's card is sent I presume it will have special postal facilities, and that arrangements will be made for it to get to the member of the forces, sailor or soldier, quicker than it would through the ordinary course of the post. If that be so, I think it would only be common fairness to send either the candidates' addresses, or something or other which would enable the man to know how the matter stood. After all, the men in the trenches—at least, a good many of them—do not take a very great interest in politics. If they

get the card simply with the names of the candidates on, especially now that the constituencies are going to be redistributed, there will be nothing to tell them which is which. I would ask the Home Secretary to consider this question of whether some means might not be found of sending, at the same time as the absent voters' cards are sent, something by which the views of the various candidates may be distinguished, so that the absent voter, soldier or sailor, may know for which party he is voting. That is all I wish to say at this stage, but I must say I very much regret indeed that the Home Secretary should have come to the decision to postpone again what, after all, is a most important Clause, and for which a great many people are inclined to support the Bill who otherwise might not like to.

Sir G. YOUNGER: I equally regret that my right hon. Friend wishes to postpone the Clause in this way, because it is a very important Clause indeed. The House determined to give soldiers and sailors the vote, and it is our duty to see that they get a proper opportunity of exercising that vote. It is impossible on the Report stage to get an opportunity to elucidate such points as my hon. Friend brought up. We do not have a free and easy discussion on Report. The procedure is so restricted that I do not see how we are ever to frame this Clause in the way it should be. It not only requires a Committee stage, but also a Report stage, in order that any irregularities or mistakes may be corrected. Will the right hon. Gentleman agree to recommit the Bill in order to take this Clause, or, rather, will he recommit the Clause? That would satisfy me; but I do say, in a matter of this kind, which is so important, and on which the party to which I belong places very great stress, that we ought not to be in any way restricted in dealing with the Clause and seeing that it is properly drawn up.

Mr. DENMAN: On a point of Order. Is it now too late to suggest that this Clause be postponed until after the Schedules, because that would give time for the Amendments to be on the Paper, and we could then examine the question properly? We are only touching the first Amendment on the Paper, and if I am still in time to suggest the postponement of the Clause, I should be very glad to do so.

The **CHAIRMAN**: On the point of Order, that is the same point which arose when we first considered Clause 18, and I pointed out that it was an unusual thing to do. There was a precedent for so doing when an Amendment was withdrawn, and in that case it would be competent for the Government, if they so pleased, to move the postponement of the Clause until after the Schedules. The other suggestion is to recommit. That could be done in respect to this Clause either at the front of the Report stage, I presume, or at the end of the Report stage.

Mr. DENMAN: In view of your ruling, I should like to urge the Home Secretary to adopt the course of postponing the Clause until after the Schedules. The Schedules must take several days because there is a great deal of matter in them. We have no desire at all to make the Debate longer by postponement and I do not think it will make the Debate longer. We all feel that this question of the absent voter is of great importance, and I should like very respectfully to press that course upon the Home Secretary.

Mr. H SAMUEL: I think that course would best meet the wishes of the Committee. We have some heavy work before us on the Report stage, and if we have to consider for the first time really the details of the method of securing the soldiers and sailors' votes, I am afraid it would cause great inconvenience at that stage. Postponement until after the Schedules are taken would allow the Government some days before taking the matter in Committee, and I would recommend the proposal to the favourable consideration of the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. M. HEALY: Might I suggest that it would be much easier and simpler to deal with the Amendments if the Clause as a whole is recommitted, so that we might have the opportunity of seeing the Clause as a whole? It would make the matter much easier if we could see the creation of the Government complete before we set ourselves the task of amending it.

The **CHAIRMAN**: I should say on the point of Order that has been put to me there is a further possibility which I did not mention at the time, namely, that if the Clause were put in the Bill as it stands now, recommitment would take place immediately following the completion of the Bill in Committee; that is to say, if I had reported the Bill with Amendments to the

House it would be possible then at once to recommit it in respect of Clause 18. The difficulty, of course, in that process would be that the Amendment would not then be on the Order Paper. That might be circulated in the White Paper if the Government took that course.

Sir G. CAVE: I am anxious to meet the Committee. I think, in view of what you have said, that the best course to adopt would be to postpone the Clause, and if that would make it possible for us to put on the Paper the Amendments we desire to propose, with your permission, when this Amendment is disposed of I will move to postpone the further consideration of the Clause until after the Schedules have been dealt with.

Colonel L. WILSON: Might I ask when the right hon. Gentleman hopes to have the Government Amendment on the Paper?

Sir G. CAVE: There is plenty of time. I do not think the Schedules will be reached for some time.

Mr. COOTE: Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to accept Amendments on the Paper, and will they be embodied in the new Clause?

Sir G. CAVE: The Clause will appear on the Paper as it stands, and most of the Amendments, I think, will be covered by the Amendment I propose.

Mr. COOTE: I beg leave to withdraw the Amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion made, and Question, "That the Clause be further postponed until after consideration of the Schedules" [*Sir G. Cave*], put, and agreed to.

The following new Clause stood on the Paper in the name of **Sir G. CAVE**:

"The foregoing provisions of this part of this Act shall not apply to university constituencies, but the governing body of every university forming, or forming part of, a university constituency shall cause a register to be kept in such form as they may direct of persons entitled to vote in respect of a qualification at their university and shall make the register available for the purpose of university elections for the constituency. The governing body of any such university may charge such fee as they think fit, not exceeding £1, for

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registration to any person who receives a degree at their university after the passing of this Act."

Sir G. CAVE: I have to introduce some Amendment, which is that the new voter for a university constituency shall make a claim before he can be placed on the register. Of course, there are a very large number of graduates in the country who have lost touch with their university, and I think it is right to ask them to make a claim. I propose, therefore, to move the Clause with the addition of these words, "Provided that the governing body may direct that a person who before the passing of this Act has received a degree, but was not entitled to vote in respect thereof, shall have no right to be registered unless he makes a claim for the purpose."

NEW CLAUSE.—*(Register for University Constituencies.)*

The foregoing provisions of this part of this Act shall not apply to university constituencies, but the governing body of every university forming, or forming part of, a university constituency shall cause a register to be kept in such form as they may direct of persons entitled to vote in respect of a qualification at their university and shall make the register available for the purpose of university elections for the constituency, provided that the governing body may direct that a person who before the passing of this Act has received a degree, but was not entitled to vote in respect thereof, shall have no right to be registered unless he makes a claim for the purpose.

The governing body of any such university may charge such fee as they think fit, not exceeding one pound, for registration to any person who receives a degree at their university after the passing of this Act.—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Clause be read a second time."

Lord HUGH CECIL: In regard to the slight modification which the Home Secretary has indicated, I only want to say that I think the University of Oxford would like to have an opportunity of considering that. The Government all through have been exceedingly courteous and kind in their communications with the universities, and have done all they can to meet all reasonable difficulties. It would be impossible for me to say off-hand

whether the modification of the Clause does fully meet the difficulty which the university felt in organising the new register. It is, of course, merely a matter of machinery, and not a matter of anything more substantial, but the difficulty is, as the Home Secretary said, that a very large number of degree holders have quite lost touch with the university.

Mr. H. SAMUEL: Registration means putting upon the register, and the new register is made up twice a year. The new Clause does not intend, I understand, that the fee for registration should be charged on each occasion on which the register is made up. Perhaps that may be made clear.

Lord H. CECIL: The register of the university will be different in this respect, that the only difficulty arises in making the register. Once it is made, it will be a continuous register.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause read a second time, and added to the Bill.

NEW CLAUSE.—*(Application of Act to the Isles of Scilly.)*

The provisions of this Act shall apply to the Isles of Scilly as if these isles were an administrative county and as if the council of the isles were a county council, and any expenses incurred by the council under this Act shall be paid as general expenses of the council.—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Brought up, read the first time and second time, and added to the Bill.

NEW CLAUSE.—*(Regulations to be Laid Before Parliament.)*

All rules, regulations, or provisions made by Order in Council under this Act shall be laid before each House of Parliament forthwith; and if an address is presented to His Majesty by either House of Parliament within the next subsequent twenty-one days on which that House has sat next after any such rule, regulation, or provision is laid before it, praying that the rule, regulation, or provision may be annulled, His Majesty in Council may annul the rule, regulation, or provision, and it shall thenceforth be void, but without prejudice to the validity of anything done thereunder.—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Clause be read a second time."

Sir G. YOUNGER: I would like to know what opportunity we shall have of discussing these Regulations? We had sent to us the other day the proposed draft Regulations about the alternative vote, and it was a most voluminous document. I would like to know what opportunity we shall get of discussing the Regulations which are now proposed. Should we be relegated to the necessity of discussing them under the ordinary practice of the House when it is perfectly impossible to do so with any effect?

Sir G. CAVE: I do not think that question arises upon this new Clause.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause read a second time and added to the Bill.

Sir G. CAVE: I have now to submit three or four new Clauses designed to meet the difficulties suggested by Clauses which have already been adopted. The first of them is suggested by the Amendment of the hon. Baronet the Member for the Ayr Burghs (Sir G. Younger) dealing with voting by persons employed at a polling station. I accept the hon. Baronet's Amendment in principle, but I should like to put it in the particular form which has been drawn by the Government draftsman.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Voting by Persons in the Employment of Returning Officers.*)—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Clause be read a second time."

Mr. M. HEALY: I am not aware that under the present law there is any legal objection to these officers leaving the polling station.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause read a second time, and added to the Bill.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Punishment of Offences Committed Outside the United Kingdom.*)—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Sir G. CAVE: I beg to move, "That the Clause be read a second time."

It has been put down to meet an Amendment put on the Paper by the hon. Member for North Somerset (Mr. King) dealing with offences committed outside the United Kingdom.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause read a second time, and added to the Bill.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Alteration of Polling Districts where Necessary.*)—[*Sir G. Cave.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Clause be read a second time."

Mr. DICKINSON: It is rather awkward to deal with these matters in this particular way. I have a new Clause on the Paper for the purpose of meeting this particular point, and I am unable to follow the wording of the new Clause which is now proposed by the Home Secretary. I dare say it carries out exactly what I have suggested, but I think there is one omission. I wanted the polling districts and the polling stations dealt with, and I think this Amendment only mentions polling stations.

Mr. M. HEALY: I take it that this proposal does not apply to Ireland?

Sir G. CAVE: No.

Mr. GULLAND: I should like to see it made a little more mandatory for the local authority to provide more polling stations than in the past. There are many places in Scotland where the new areas are absolutely enormous, where great difficulties will arise under this new Act with regard to transport and communication between certain districts and the polling stations. I should like it provided that in certain districts there may be a polling station in every public school. There is a great deal of feeling in certain parts of the country in regard to this matter, and there is a great desire that in relation to this large new electorate of men and women their votes should be effective by having a polling station very near their door. Take the new constituency of Govan; or any Highland constituency where the electors have a long way to come. A shepherd often has to walk fifteen miles to a polling station in places where it is very often impossible to get a conveyance. I think the right hon. Gentleman should consider this matter with a view to ensuring that every elector shall have a reasonable chance of recording his vote. I should like him to tell us where the responsibility lies at the present time, and if he can see his way to meet this difficulty that I am sure will arise when the Act comes into operation.

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Mr. H. SAMUEL: I should like to support what my right hon. Friend has said by suggesting that the Home Secretary might consider in that connection whether it is not advisable to give an appeal from the local authority to the Local Government Board in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, with regard to the number of polling stations, because if the local authority takes a *non possumus* attitude, perhaps owing to the influence of some official who is not alive to the necessities of the case, there is no appeal, as I understand it at present.

Mr. M. HEALY: I rise to reinforce that appeal. In Ireland some authorities neglect this most important matter. It is not their special business, and they are not interested in it. It is not at all germane to the ordinary matters with which they are dealing. If it is raised it is immediately suggested that it is to the advantage of one party or another, and the result is that there is a great tendency on the part of local authorities in Ireland to neglect it. In county Cork, with which I am acquainted, the distance voters have to go to the poll is quite unreasonable. A rearrangement is necessary, and I cordially support the suggestion that there should be some appeal.

Mr. DICKINSON: I put down, some time ago, a much longer new Clause than this, in which I tried to meet the points which have been raised just now, but I do not think it is necessary except in regard to the appeal. The law, if I remember rightly, is that you must have a polling station within three miles of every voter, except where, owing to the peculiar nature of the constituency—where there is a very scattered population—the local authority thinks is unnecessary. The prime obligation of the local authority is to give polling places within three miles of every voter, and I do not know that you could ask anything more than that. Of course, the local authorities have been very remiss indeed in carrying out their duties under the Act. Not only have they not, except under a good deal of pressure, made arrangements that there should be a polling place within three miles of every elector, but they have taken very unnecessarily wide advantage of this power of exceptional treatment that is given by the Act of Parliament. I quite agree that something ought to be done to ensure that

this exceptional power should not be exercised by local authorities to the detriment of the scattered population, because that is what it comes to, without some appeal, I should say, to the Local Government Board, or, in Scotland and Ireland, to whatever is the proper authority. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary would be prepared to consider some additional Amendments on the Report stage to his Clause to effect this, and if that were done I think a very great improvement would be carried out all over the country, an improvement very necessary now, inasmuch as we are adding to the electorate a lot of women who cannot be expected to go the distance that some people have to go to vote in scattered parts of the country.

The **PRESIDENT** of the **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD** (Mr. Hayes Fisher): The request that has been made is a very reasonable one for consideration. There is a possibility, I hope not a probability, that the new officials who will be responsible for the arrangements for elections will not be so fully alive to their duties as perhaps Members of this House would like them to be, and we should all like them to be. I cannot help thinking that in this respect and in other respects of a still wider nature, there ought to be some kind of supervision, probably by the Local Government Board, of the arrangements made for the carrying out of the law which we all want to operate as widely as possible. We want people to have every opportunity of getting on to the register, and after they have got on to the register we want them to have every reasonable opportunity of recording their votes without any great trouble or inconvenience. Many of them, as we know, may have to travel considerable distances, and I think it would be well if my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, as probably he will, would consider the whole of the position, and see whether by some new Clause or addition to his own new Clause we could not, when we come to a later stage, secure some supervision of the arrangements carried out.

Mr. GULLAND: There is one other point of great importance that occurs to me on this. I do not think the law of Scotland is the same as the right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Dickinson) has men-

[Mr. Gulland.]

tioned, because certainly a great many people go a great deal further in Scotland than three miles to the poll. The procedure for getting additional polling stations in Scotland is a very cumbersome one. The charge falls on the candidates, and therefore it does not matter to the local authorities how many there are. In the future, however, when the local authorities pay for them, they will not be so anxious to provide so many polling stations, and they may even cut down the existing number. I think that when they have to be paid for out of public money there may be more difficulty in getting these stations set up, and therefore it is the more incumbent on the Government to see that there is machinery to provide an adequate supply of polling stations.

Mr. BRUNNER: I often think it would be a good thing that in widely scattered areas there should be travelling polling stations. It seems easy to arrange that in addition to fixed stations you should have a polling booth in a closed motor car that would travel over the country, be announced to be at a certain place at a certain time, and which could very easily collect a large number of votes that would otherwise not be registered at all. I believe it might be often a great deal cheaper than putting up a lot of fixed polling stations in scattered areas.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause read a second time, and added to the Bill.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Saving the Existing Livery Franchise in City of London.*)

Such of the Freemen of the City of London as are liverymen of the several companies and entitled to vote in the election of a member or members to serve in Parliament for the City of London shall be entitled to be registered as Parliamentary electors for that constituency.—[*Sir G. Touche.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Sir G. TOUCHE: I beg to move, "That the Clause be read a second time."

This Clause is for saving the existing livery franchise in the City of London, and in moving it I am giving effect to the wishes of the livery companies of the City. The matter is one in which the City of London is very closely interested. A meeting of the masters and wardens of

the various City companies was held at the Guildhall some time ago, when a resolution was passed in favour of this Clause being submitted to the House, and as recently as last Monday a great meeting of the liverymen of the City was held at Guildhall, when they also passed a resolution with practical unanimity—I think there was only one dissentient—asking that this Clause should be submitted to the consideration of the House. These liverymen represent a very large body of opinion in the City, and I am perfectly sure that it will be the wish of the House to give the most careful consideration to any representations that come from any such quarter. I should like to say on behalf of the City that this Amendment is not submitted in any hostility to the Bill. There is great sympathy in the City with the general trend in the Bill, but a community which is so linked with the traditions of the past naturally is not very strongly in favour of those parts of the Bill which deal with the abrogation of ancient and historic franchises. I am not alone in lamenting that this Bill differs from many other Franchise Bills in that it is not only an enfranchising but a disfranchising Bill. In that respect, as the Committee knows, it differs from the Bill of 1832, and from the Acts of 1867 and 1884. At a time when 6,000,000 additional voters are going to be added to the electorate, it surely is undesirable to wipe out some of the most influential voters in the country!

Unless the livery vote is preserved a privilege, or a right, which has been possessed for something like five centuries, will be taken away, and it will be taken away from the Guilds at a time when they were never more closely in touch with their tasks, and when they are almost all, without exception, considering measures for playing a useful part in the reconstruction of British industries after the War. I should like to ask whether this is the time when it is wise to make this serious inroad into the position of the City? It is a time when the City is rendering great services to the whole nation, when it is the corner-stone of the arch of Allied finance, when it is responding most generously to the calls of charity, and to all war appeals. It is a time when many of those who possess the livery vote, many of the members of the City Guilds, are away on the service of their country, and when they are perhaps not observing closely what is occurring in the House of

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Commons at the present time. Probably many of them have not the least conception that one of their most cherished privileges is being destroyed, and one can imagine what their feelings will be when they come back after the War and find that during their absence this right to vote as liverymen has been taken from them with practically no opportunity given to them to express any voice in the matter. The only justification, as it seems to me, for interfering with this vote is to secure a certain mechanical uniformity. I do not think that is at all a desirable thing in itself. It is contrary to the spirit of all our institutions. We quite recognise in the City that what is happening is not aimed against the City in any direct way, but nevertheless the effect of what is being done is to rob the City of an historic feature and to break an important link with the past. The claim of the City of London for exceptional treatment has already been recognised. It was recognised by the Speaker's Conference, and it has already been recognised by this Committee, so that in allowing them to retain the livery vote no breach of any principle is involved; and on the question of uniformity it is hardly necessary to point out that uniformity is not observed. The mere fact that the university vote is preserved and extended shows that there is room for variation, and that we are not kept down to one single form of qualification and no other. I will

8.0 P.M. point out that the City guilds have a great deal in common with the universities. From time immemorial they have been generous supporters of education. They have been foremost in the great cause of technical education, they were the founders of the City and Guilds of London Institute which is a university in itself, and they have provided large sums for its endowment. If the seats of learning are to receive an education vote then I think there is a strong claim on educational grounds for sympathetic consideration of this proposal. There is a further claim. The City is the financial centre of the Empire. I have talked to a good many members about this matter. In all parts of the House I have found there is no personal hostility towards the City. Those who have any desire for taking away the livery vote seem to be a very small body. They consist chiefly of those who are so insistent on every man having a vote whether he be qualified to exercise it or

not that they are intolerant of a vote being retained by collective interests which represent some of the most stable institutions of the country. When the vote is being given broadcast surely it is more than ever desirable to preserve a voice for views which are representative of so much that gives strength to the nation.

The City of London is, of course, a unique constituency. That is recognised in all parts of the House. It is also recognised that it deserves unique treatment. It is the business centre of the Empire, and if you take away the livery vote you take away votes from thousands of men who are specially qualified to represent city interests and city opinion. The livery voters represent practically every great interest in London. They represent the merchants, the commercial element, the bankers, and insurance, shipping, and other great financial interests of which the City is the centre. The City of London is the clearing house of the world, and it surely is not desirable that its representatives in Parliament should be very largely elected by its night population, the caretakers and the policemen who live within the City boundary. There is another ground on which I think there is strong reason for favourably considering this proposal for the retention of the vote. A great many businesses in London are conducted by joint stock companies. There are substantial interests in the City with hardly a single vote attached to them, although they represent very large interests. But a great many of the directors are members of livery companies and are liverymen. If they have this vote it might be said that the joint stock company interest is vicariously represented. The business occupation vote is a very inadequate compensation for sweeping away what is a peculiarly representative element in city life and city interests.

I am quite sure the Committee will fully appreciate the value of the City as a great national institution. It is a centre for the interchange of international courtesies. It dispenses hospitality with no niggardly hand to our Allies, and in every way it fulfils a useful and necessary function, one which could not be replaced with anything like the same associations which cling around the City. It has a great historic past. One objection to democracy is that it is rather too prone to abolish that which it is easy to destroy but impossible to replace. The history of the City is bound

[Sir G. Touche.]

up with the nation's history, and the history of the livery companies is bound up with the history of the world. The livery companies have played a great and honourable part in the past. They have always been democratic. They have co-operated with Parliament in times past. They have even financed Parliament. They have received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament. They have been foremost in demanding Parliamentary reform. They have even petitioned the King in the past for the removal of Ministers, and surely a body which can do that ought to be entitled to consideration. They have frequently come into collision with the heads of the State because they have stood for the rights of democracy. I venture, therefore, to submit that they have a very strong claim on the House of Commons which is trying to interpret the democratic spirit in the Bill now before the Committee. Anything which detracts from the ancient and historic features of the old City of London would be a national loss. Anything which diminishes its ancient characteristics—call them privileges if you will—and breaks its valuable traditions is to be deplored, and I think should be opposed by all who value the old City and what it stands for. This is not a party question. It has always been the pride of the livery companies that they have stood aside from party. They are just as much Liberal as they are Conservative. Their Liberal traditions have always been strongly marked. What harm would be done if the vote is allowed to continue? This is not a claim for an additional vote or a third vote. It would be an alternative to the occupation vote. No one on the register as a liveryman could do more than have his residential vote and his livery vote. He could not have his livery vote and an occupation vote also. One would take the place of the other.

But while it would do no harm to let it remain I think it would do harm to take it away. If it is taken away it will make the livery companies less representative than they are at the present time. It will weaken their status, and surely it is undesirable that that should take place just at the time when they are preparing to take a large part in the work of reconstruction in connection with the various crafts and industries of the nation. It was pointed out in the meeting held in the Guildhall on Monday that every Member of this

House who was a Freeman of the City had made the declaration which was made by the Prime Minister a few months ago when the Freedom of the City was conferred on him and when it was felt by the City that the addition of his name to the Roll made that Roll still more illustrious. The Prime Minister, on that occasion, made the declaration, "I will be obedient to the Mayor of this City and I will maintain its franchises and the customs thereof." That declaration has been made by every Member of this House who is a Freeman or a member of one of the Guilds, and I am quite sure that they will not regard that declaration as a mere empty form. I, therefore, venture to ask that those who are Freemen of the City will support the Clause which I am now moving. I do not wish, at this hour, to take up the attention of the Committee at too great a length. The claims of the City, I am sure will be regarded with sympathy in all quarters. In the ordinary course it may be my good fortune a few years hence to occupy the position of Lord Mayor of London. When that happens I hope I may have the privilege of entertaining the Members of the House of Commons, but I confess it would be a very painful thing for me on that occasion to look round the room and think that those who are my guests are the persons who took away from the City of London one of its most cherished privileges.

Mr. HAYES FISHER: I am glad my hon. Friend put down this new Clause, if only because it enabled us to have presented here a very beautiful picture of the ancient privileges and historic traditions of the old City with its freemen and companies. I can assure my hon. Friend that nobody is more reluctant than I am to offer opposition to the Clause which he has put down, especially as I come from a family which for one or two generations has been associated with the freedom of the City of London and has always honoured its traditions and privileges. This great and important City has played a most noble part in our history. It is still the centre for our great public and patriotic gatherings, and at no time in its history has the City done more to uphold its great traditions than it is doing at the present time in the service of the country and of the Empire. But for all that, and notwithstanding the very painful picture which has been presented to us that those

who cannot agree with my hon. Friend may possibly before many years roll by find themselves at his hospitable board and be the subject of his painful regard because we have to-day not been able to retain for him that privilege which he thinks to be the right of the freemen and the City companies—notwithstanding that, I am afraid I must oppose this Amendment. I do so on no narrow ground. My hon. Friend knows very well that this Bill is the result of a very great compromise between all parties in the House. He knows there was a time when the separate representation of the City of London was not considered to be secure in this House. In this Bill, as a result of the compromise between parties, that separate representation has been, I hope, made secure, and will so remain for many generations, and those hon. Members who shared the view about the representation of the City have been willing to exchange the old franchises for a new and more simple franchise which will be the basis of all voting power in the country if this Bill is carried into law. After all, there is much to be said for simplifying the franchise. For my part I am sorry to part with the ownership franchise, and I might have fought for its retention, believing as I do that it has been exercised for the benefit of the country and exercised in no narrow party spirit. But for all that we must all be aware in this House that all sides are called upon to make some sacrifice. All parties have given up something. I am one of those who feel that we are giving up something by this franchise, not because it benefits us in any party way, but because it is an old franchise which is part of our old traditions of which we are very proud. I am very sorry to part with it. After all, however, this compromise has been arrived at after long conference, and it is because of it that we have been unable to accept this particular franchise as one of those franchises which we can preserve. For that reason, I am very sorry that I have to resist the new Clause of my hon. Friend, with which otherwise I have so much sympathy.

Captain BARNETT: After the speech of my right hon. Friend it is almost hopeless to make an appeal to the Government to accept this Clause. I feel, as one of the Metropolitan Members, that I ought not to let it pass in silence. There is a tremendous amount in what has been said by the hon. Member for Islington (Sir G. Touche). The right hon. Gentleman has

pointed out that this Bill is a compromise. One hears over and over again that the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference are a compromise, but so far as they are disfranchising proposals they are no compromise at all. It cannot be said that this particular disfranchising proposal, which deprives the liverymen of the City companies of their vote, is a compromise, because some other people elsewhere are deprived of their vote. It may be a compromise for something else in some other part of the measure, though I do not think it is. So far as this Bill is a disfranchising measure, the concessions have been all on one side. I fail to see why this great enfranchising measure should have included disfranchising provisions like this, and, speaking not as a Member for the City but as a Member for a London constituency, I say that we all in London feel proud of our great city. "We are citizens of no mean city." From the very beginning of this Parliament the City companies have had the vote. They are being deprived of it now without any real just cause. I do not believe that any harm would be done to anybody if the City companies were left with their votes. I therefore support the new Clause, and it will be with very great regret if I find that the Government fail to make the concession.

Question, "That the Clause be read a second time," put, and negatived.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN (Sir Donald Maclean): The next Clause ("*Special Provisions for Persons on War Service*"), standing in the name of the hon. Member for Chippenham (Mr. G. Terrell) should, so far as the first part is concerned, be an Amendment to Clause 5, and, so far as the remaining part is concerned, should come on Clause 18 when that is dealt with. The Clause (*Referendum on Female Parliamentary Suffrage*), standing in the name of the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. A. Ward), is outside the scope of the Bill.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Registration for Mercantile Marine and Fishermen.*)

An officer or seaman in the merchant service and a man employed in sea fishing shall be entitled to be registered as a Parliamentary elector for any constituency for which he would have had the necessary qualification but for the fact of his absences at sea in pursuance of his calling, and the qualifying period shall be one month instead of six months.—[*Mr. Fell.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Mr. FELL: I beg to move "That the Clause be read a second time." It was first suggested that this Clause should come as an Amendment to Clause 18, but that Clause refers to absent voters, and these are not absent voters at all. It was then suggested that it might come better as a new Clause after Clause 18 had been finally settled. I take it I shall not be able to move it as a new Clause when that Clause has been completed, and if I cannot move it as an Amendment to the Clause in its new form I shall be precluded from moving it in any shape. I am, therefore, obliged to move it at the present time. It relates solely to men of the mercantile service and to fishermen. In the past they have suffered great hardship. Their difficulty of getting on the register has been very great, and it will be a great hardship now that we have a Bill which is intended to facilitate the putting of all classes and all people upon the register if any difficulty is allowed to remain in their way. I suggest that they should have one month's qualification instead of six months. These men, of course, live at home in their fishing towns, but their boats are constantly coming and going, and it may be that within six months they are not resident in the town for more than a month. I think, therefore, it is a very fair suggestion that one month's residence should give seafaring men of this kind the necessary qualification. I know that the House sympathise with them, and I am sure that it will do its utmost to get them the vote. They are not absent and will not come on the absent voters' list, and they will not come on the special list which is to be prepared for soldiers and sailors. I can see no other way except that which I suggest in this Clause, by which they will be able to get the vote and take part in the elections. We have been a little upset to-day by Clause 18 not being discussed as we thought it would have been. If it had been discussed we should have known what the opinion of the Government was with regard to absent voters. I do not know what that Clause is going to be, and I do not know whether I shall be able to put down Amendments to it to cover this point. I am, therefore, obliged to move this new Clause, and I hope the Government will give the matter consideration and not refuse it without absolute necessity.

The SOLICITOR-GENERAL (Sir Gordon Hewart): My hon. Friend has so persuasive and conciliatory a method of

putting his arguments that it is always difficult not to agree with him. Although, as he truly says, there is no lack of sympathy on the part of the Government or of anybody in this House with the claims of the Mercantile Marine, it is a somewhat different question whether this new Clause should be accepted. I do not want at this moment to say anything which might have the effect of prejudging the decision upon this matter with reference to Clause 18, which has been by agreement postponed for a time; but I must point out that this proposal as it stands is nothing less than a proposal to introduce an entirely new franchise for the Mercantile Marine, with a qualifying period of one month instead of the otherwise necessary period of six months. If I rightly heard him, he said that the seafishermen and the men of the Mercantile Marine had their homes in their fishing towns. If that be so, they are already provided for. If they have no such residence, it might be difficult to say where they should be registered. But I am sincere when I say that I do not wish to prejudge the question. It will be considered with a number of other and cognate questions upon Clause 18, when the time comes to deal with it. In the meantime, I must say, on behalf of the Government, that we do not see our way to accept the proposed New Clause as it stands.

Mr. FELL: I could have wished that the Clause might have been accepted, but I see that there are difficulties—indeed, I knew that there must be. We have received the assurance that the matter will be considered with the other questions relating to seamen and fishermen which I know the Government will try to meet in every possible way. If they can see a way of getting these men on the register under Clause 18, I shall, of course, be only too pleased to find, when we see that Clause in print, that it is provided for. Otherwise, I must reserve this question in order to bring it up again on the Report stage, either by way of a New Clause or Amendment to Clause 18. On the assurance that has been given, I beg leave to withdraw this Clause.

Motion and Clause, by leave, withdrawn.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: The new Clauses standing in the name of the hon. Member for North Somerset (Mr. King)—*Definition of Bribery; Amendment of Provisions in 46 and 47 Vic., c. 51, and 47 and 48 Vic., c. 70, Relating to Undue*

*Influence; Amendment of 46 and 47 Vic., c. 51, s. 9 (1); Amendment of 46 and 47 Vic., c. 51, s. 10; Amendment of 45 and 46 Vic., c. 50, s. 74—*are out of order.

Sir STEPHEN COLLINS rose—

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: As the hon. Member for North Somerset is not here I cannot hear the hon. Member (Sir S. Collins) on a Motion standing in the name of an hon. Member not present. The only way in which this matter can be dealt with again is at the end of the New Clauses.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Registration Expenses in University Constituency.*)

The registration expenses of a university constituency shall be paid out of such fees or funds as the governing body of the university may direct, and it shall be lawful for any such university to charge a registration fees not exceeding one pound to any person who shall, after the passing of this Act, receive any degree entitling him to be registered as a Parliamentary elector for such constituency or who, not being already registered, shall claim to be registered as having received such a degree prior to the passing of this Act.”—*[Sir J. Larmor.]*

Brought up, and read the first time.

Sir JOSEPH LARMOR: I beg to move “That the Clause be read a second time.”

This Clause also stands in the name of the hon. Member for the University of Dublin (Mr. A. Samuels) and of the hon. Member for the University of London (Sir P. Magnus). The existing rule for the University of London has been that a registration fee has been payable—I think a fee of £1, in the case of every graduate who became an elector. Under the provisions of this Bill, the expenses of registration in an ordinary constituency fall very largely upon the State. There is no such provision in regard to university expenses. They must fall upon the funds of the university, which are, of course, funds for the great national purpose of education and ought not to be depleted for this purpose. The Clause proposes that the arrangement which has been in operation in the University of London for fifty years, without any objection or demur, should apply to all the universities. It is necessary that application should be made to Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin Universities, because under the previous franchises it was only members of the Senates

of those universities who were on the roll. The great objection to the previous franchises was that it was alleged that electors paid for their votes. They have to pay £12 or so to become members of the Senate, which carried with it the right to vote. That has all been done away with under this Bill. Every graduate of the university has a right to claim and establish his claim to be an elector, and unless there is some provision of this kind for a fund to pay the very great expense of the examination of these claims and the very great expense of publishing a long list of electors twice a year, those expenses will have to come out of funds which ought to be devoted to the higher education of the country. The case seems to me to be clear that that provision ought to be made, and I therefore beg to move.

Mr. HAYES FISHER: With the greatest respect to my hon. Friend, I do not think this Clause is necessary. As regards the first part of it, which deals with the registration expenses of universities, they can now be paid out of any fees or funds as the governing body of the university may direct; but with regard to the substantial part of the Clause, undoubtedly some new Clause or some Amendment was necessary, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has put down an Amendment in the Government new Clauses which practically covers this and which enables the universities to charge a fee of £1 for registration. I believe my hon. Friend's case has been fully met.

Sir J. LARMOR: If I may be allowed to explain, I unfortunately had not the advantage of being here to move my Amendment, which came on much sooner than what I anticipated, because of the postponement of Clause 18. I am informed that the Amendment in the form in which the Home Secretary included it merely gave the right to charge a fee to any person who took a degree after this date. But there are 10,000 persons who have claims to be electors who took degrees ten, twenty, and even thirty years ago. I understand there is no power to charge a fee in those cases. Those are the very cases for which power ought to be reserved. After the War it may be considered a hardship to charge a fee on graduates who take their degrees. The people on the register now have paid to be members of the Senate. It is not equitable that people who shirk the responsibility of being members of the

[Sir J. Larmor.]

Senate should now get for nothing that for which everybody in future will pay a registration fee. If I am correct, that point remains unsatisfied, and I should like, either now or on Report, to have it further considered.

Mr. HAYES FISHER: I do not think my hon. Friend was in the House when the Home Secretary moved his new Clause. My own impression is that the case of my hon. Friend is covered by that new Clause. But if there is what he would consider a glaring defect in it, if it does not carry out its object as fully as it was intended to carry out, I will represent that to the Home Secretary, and we will reconsider the matter on Report and see whether we can in any way strengthen the Clause, so that we may be able to cover the case which has been put before the Committee by my hon. and learned Friend.

Sir J. LARMOR: On that understanding, that the lacuna, which I think a very vital one, shall be further considered on Report, I am prepared to withdraw the Clause.

Motion and Clause, by leave, withdrawn.

NEW CLAUSE.—(*Compensation to Existing Assistant Overseers.*)

“Every existing assistant overseer, vestry clerk, or rate collector who suffers any direct pecuniary loss in consequence of this Act shall be entitled to have compensation paid to him by the council responsible for the payment of the expenses of registration, as provided in Section thirteen of this Act, and in determining such compensation regard shall be had to the conditions and other circumstances required by Sub-section (1) of Section one hundred and twenty of The Local Government Act, 1888, in regard to cases of compensation under that Section, and the compensation shall not exceed the limit therein mentioned, and the expression in Sub-section (1) of that Section ‘The Acts and rules relating to Her Majesty’s Civil Service’ shall mean the Acts and rules relating to His Majesty’s Civil Service which were in operation at the date of the passing of The Local Government Act, 1888, and the provisions of Sub-sections (2) to (7) of Section one hundred and twenty of that Act shall apply with such modifications (including the substitution of the ‘Local Government Board’ for the ‘Treasury’) as may be required, and in-

cluding in Sub-section (2) the substitution of the words ‘next before the thirtieth day of September, nineteen hundred and fourteen’ for the words ‘next before the passing of this Act.’”—[*Mr. Dickinson.*]

Brought up, and read the first time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, “That the Clause be read a second time.”

Mr. HAYES FISHER: It will perhaps make the right hon. Gentleman’s position easier, because the Government intend to accept the Clause.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause read a second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. HAYES FISHER: We have arrived at a stage at which we may be very well satisfied with the work the Committee has been able to do upon the Bill. A great many Members who are very interested in the Schedules are not present and undoubtedly would not in the least anticipate that we should arrive to-night at the Schedules. I am quite ready now to move “That the Chairman do report Progress and ask leave to sit again.”

Question put, and agreed to.

Committee report Progress; to sit again To-morrow.

PETROLEUM (PRODUCTION) [PAYMENT AND EXPENSES].

Motion made, and Question proposed, “That it is expedient to authorise the payment out of moneys to be provided by Parliament, into the Petroleum Royalties Fund constituted under any Act of the present Session to make provision with respect to the searching and boring for and getting of Petroleum in the United Kingdom, of a sum equal to ninepence for every ton of Petroleum gotten on behalf of His Majesty, and of any other expenses chargeable under such Act.”

Mr. LEIF JONES rose—

Mr. DENMAN: On a point of Order. I do not know whether you propose to call first upon those who have handed in Amendments.

The DEPUTY - CHAIRMAN: An Amendment may have been handed in, but I have not seen it.

Mr. DENMAN: It was handed in this afternoon. I have not a copy with me.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: It does not seem to be here. Does the hon. Member remember what it is?

Mr. DENMAN: I shall move to report Progress.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: I will take the Amendment if the hon. Member hands it in.

Mr. DENMAN: The Amendment was handed in in the names of eight different Members of the House. I have not the Amendment on me, and I do not suppose that any of the Members who put it down are here at the moment. It really seems to put us in a very invidious position if in a perfectly orderly way we hand in an Amendment and are deprived of the opportunity—

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: I am not depriving the hon. Member at all. I am asking him to move his Amendment.

Mr. DENMAN: There is an act of deprivation, because no one is here with a copy of the Amendment.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. Member know what the Amendment was about or what it was?

Mr. DENMAN: I could frame it again if I had a copy of the original. It surely is a perfectly orderly and correct procedure to hand in an Amendment and expect it to be in possession of the Chair when the subject is reached. As it is not in the possession of the Chair I shall certainly move to report Progress. There is

an Amendment and no one has it, and the only thing is to postpone the Debate until the Chair has discovered the Amendment which has been lost.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN: There is nothing before me. If the hon. Member wishes to move to report Progress, I will accept the Motion.

Mr. DENMAN: I beg to move, "That the Chairman do report Progress, and ask leave to sit again."

Mr. HAYES FISHER: I am sure the Government would not wish in any way to take advantage of any Member of the House because the Committee has been good enough to go through business at a very great pace. There will be other opportunities of considering this Amendment, and I shall most readily accept the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Committee report Progress; to sit again To-morrow.

The remaining Orders were read, and postponed.

Whereupon Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER, pursuant to the Order of the House of the 12th February, proposed the Question, "That this House do now adjourn."

Question put, and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Seventeen minutes before Nine o'clock.

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