



## REVENUE DEPARTMENTS.

*HC Deb 05 March 1906 vol 153 cc111-72 111*

|                               |               |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Customs                       | 350,000       |
| Inland Revenue                | 830,000       |
| Post Office                   | 6,250,000     |
| Total for Revenue Departments | £7,430,000    |
| Grand Total                   | £21,410,000." |

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§ MR. H. J. TENNANT (Berwickshire)

said that he proposed to move a reduction of the Vote by £100 in order to give the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary an opportunity of making a statement on two important matters connected with the administration of his Department now ripe for his decision. The question he proposed first to bring under the notice of the Committee was connected with the by-laws issued by the London County Council under the Employment of Children Act. Under this Act, which was passed three years ago, local authorities were required to make certain by-laws and to submit them for confirmation to the Home Office, which was given power to hold an inquiry into the subject. The London County Council submitted their proposed by-laws to the Home Office more than two years ago, and he complained that these by-laws were still under the consideration of the Department. He was quite aware that his right hon. friend was not responsible for that; but still he was entitled to express his opinion that the inaction of the Home Office had been most unfortunate. The most important points raised in the by-laws were street trading by girls under sixteen years of age, the hours of employment of children of school age, and the employment of children in barbers' shops. With regard to the last-named they had to remember that these barbers shops usually were badly ventilated, that much bad language was used in many of them, and that not a few were merely betting dens whither bookmakers resorted, were, in fact, chiefly kept open for that purpose. He was aware that Mr. Chester Jones informed the Home Office and the public in his Report that he was not convinced that this was the case, but the reading of that Report certainly had not carried to his mind the conviction that the facts were not as stated. Indeed, he had seldom read a Report which, to his mind, was more unfortunately conceived and executed. The next point was as to the hours of employment of children of school age. How could these children, who had been well described by the Member for Northampton as "the trustees of posterity," derive profit from their schooling under the conditions which Mr. Chester Jones in his Report appeared to approve? They were permitted to begin delivering milk or papers at 6 a.m., and would go 116 home to breakfast at 8.30,

having, it may be, to walk a mile and begin their schooling at nine. Then after school they were allowed to go on working till nine o'clock so that it would be ten o'clock before they got to bed ! How could they expect such children to become strong, useful and healthy citizens? Again, there was the question of street trading by girls under sixteen years of age. Three years ago in the Committee upstairs he was successful in carrying an Amendment prohibiting street trading by girls under sixteen, but unfortunately on the Report Stage he was defeated on that point. Expert opinion which he was able to quote at the time was very strongly in favour of the prohibition. Witnesses for great cities like Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin and Birmingham, all appealed for prohibition. What did they say? They declared that it constituted "a considerable danger to the girls, who came so utterly to the bad." It unfitted them entirely for any other form of employment. The Chief Constable of Birmingham said "once a street trader, always a street trader." He wished the House would bear that in mind. He could not think it would willingly condemn these poor children to such a life from which there was so little probability of escape. Mr. Chester Jones in his Report had failed entirely to realise the intentions of Parliament. Parliament certainly appreciated the danger to morals; but behind all that there was the devastating influence of the street on character and industry. This danger had entirely escaped Mr. Chester Jones. In the course of the debate to which he was referring, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the St. Augustine Division of Kent, who was then Home Secretary, said he did not suppose that the local authorities would fail to make proper by-laws, and he added that those authorities knew best what was good for the children in their districts. That might be so; indeed, he was prepared to maintain that many had shown they were anxious to safeguard the interests of the children. What had been the action of the London County Council? Originally it asked that it should be empowered to prohibit altogether street trading by girls under sixteen, and it was on the suggestion of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for St. Augustine's that they put in a provision that children 117 might be so engaged if accompanied by a parent. He earnestly hoped the right hon. Gentleman who was now at the head of the Home Office and his advisers would allow the Council to revert to their original intention in this matter. He could not believe that the right hon. Gentleman would allow himself to be led away by a Report unilluminated by any ray of sympathy or imagination. Perhaps he ought not to say "imagination," for Mr. Chester Jones declared that the opposition to the by-laws had been most faint-hearted, and again— The lack of opposition may have been due to some cause of which I am not aware. Such was the character of Mr. Chester Jones's imagination. And what was his advice? It was that these children, the future mothers of our race, should have no obstacle put in their path, but should be permitted to run their unimpeded course in the gutters of our highways.

The second subject with which he proposed to deal had regard to the new scheme of examination for inspectorships under the Factory Act, for which he knew his right hon. friend was not responsible. Some hon. friends of his might say that it was only a detail. That he admitted to the full, but efficiency of administration, after all, depended in great measure on details. Formerly there were eight subjects for examination, of which six were compulsory. Now there were eleven, of which only two—English composition and arithmetic—were compulsory. Two others—sanitary science and factory law—were deferred for two years, but neither mathematics, economics, chemistry, physics, mechanics or the history of industrial and social legislation were to be taken compulsorily by the candidate. But how was an inspector

who was deficient in the knowledge of those subjects to do his duty? It was absolutely essential, in his opinion, that he should have such knowledge. His right hon. friend told him that the examination now was only in book knowledge, and that they would acquire experience which in factory law and sanitary science could be tested. Where was he to learn physics? Was it to be in the laboratories of the employers? He thought it very unfortunate that this experiment should be made. Take the case of an inspector ignorant of mechanics. Was he to wait to gain 118 his experience until, a safety valve failing to operate, a number of workmen had been sent to their death. How could they expect an inspector to conduct a prosecution for failure to fence complicated and dangerous machinery unless he knew something about mechanism! This Department was indeed a very important one. The figures for 1904, which were the last available, showed that in this country there were 257,130 factories and workshops, docks, warehouses, etc., an increase of 3,246 over 1903. The persons employed numbered roughly 4,250,000. The total number of inspectors was 154, so that for each inspector there were 28,217 people employed. It might be said that the Department had grown rapidly seeing that in 1894 there were only 100 inspectors, but since that year the number of factories and workshops had grown from 169,849 to 257,130. In 1904, 93,968 accidents were reported to the Department. Thus it would be seen that this was a most important Department. Some of the members of the staff were his personal friends. For thirteen years he had carefully watched the discharge of the multifarious and onerous duties of the Department, which he submitted were discharged in a manner which commanded the admiration of the House. It was of vital importance that they should not in any way impair the efficiency of this overworked Department which was the guardian of the lives, limbs and liberties, of 4,250,000 of His Majesty's subjects. What were they going to do by this new system? Two alternatives would be open under it. Either these novices and tyros would have to be accompanied in their rounds by experienced inspectors, or else they would have to do their work at their own sweet will, and would inevitably bring the Department and the administration of the law into contempt. At the very time when increased efficiency was demanded, when they were increasing their demands on employers could they approve such a change? Every new reform would be regarded with suspicion, and every new act might be met with hostility; they would be laying up a store of enmity which would cripple the administration and hamper the usefulness of the Department, and the right hon. Gentleman would be driven back on the path beaten and 119 caked with the footmarks of his predecessors—the path of the line of least resistance. He earnestly appealed to his right hon. friend to eschew this path and to adopt a course of bold and vigorous reform.

§ Motion made, and Question proposed, "That Item, Class 2, Vote 4 (Home Office), be reduced by £100."—(Mr. H. J. Tennant.)

§ MB. J. R. MACDONALD (Leicester)

said the matters which the hon. Member opposite had brought before the House were undoubtedly matters of detail, but as had been truly observed, it was just in so far as these matters of detail were successfully dealt with by the Home Office that that Department's credit would stand. It would be unnecessary for them to push very hard the first subject raised by the hon. Member for Berwickshire. They knew that the right hon. Gentleman was not responsible for that extraordinary delay by which a simple code of by-laws, drafted by a very responsible authority after full investigation and

after having been examined by two of its most important committees, had been allowed to lie for two years on somebody's table at the Home Office; and then were made the subject of another exhaustive inquiry. He had confidence that the right hon. Gentleman would be able to satisfy the County Council upon this matter. He should like to emphasise on behalf of those associated with him one important point. At the present moment we are face to face with the unemployed problem, and those who had studied that problem in detail had come to the conclusion that there was no more prolific source of unemployment than allowing boys and girls to go on to the streets after school hours to earn money as street traders. If the Home Secretary inquired into that subject he would find that the welfare not merely of the children themselves, but of the nation, would depend on a wise and active administration of some by-law prohibiting street trading as far as it could be prohibited. He had lived in hope that when the Home Secretary came into office and discovered the extraordinary syllabus issued in January this year, which had altered the character of our factory inspectors, the right hon. Gentleman would 120 assert his authority and order it to be held over until he had had time to hold an inquiry into its meaning, operation, and design. He would venture to show why the Home Secretary should revise his opinion as regards that syllabus. Factory inspectors as soon as they were appointed enjoyed a salary of £200 and were entitled to enter factories and examine the conditions existing in them. They had to decide whether machines were dangerous or not after only a few days of passing their examination in which they might say, according to the syllabus, that they were absolutely ignorant of everything connected with machines. The inspector might have to examine into the causes of accidents—causes of which he might confess in his examination to be absolutely ignorant; he might have to decide on the efficiency or inefficiency of structures; he had to examine dangerous processes and come to conclusions regarding them, and he had to prosecute, or make himself responsible for prosecutions, under reports given to the Home Office by his subordinates. These gentlemen, armed with this authority and charged with the responsibility of this office, might declare, according to the subjects he had chosen in his examination, that he was ignorant of practical mechanics, ignorant of physics, and ignorant of chemistry. There were only two obligatory subjects, English composition—which only amounted to essay writing on any subject under the sun—and arithmetic, which was equal to the fourth standard which he had to pass at school thirty years ago. There were four subjects he could take from among eight—English literature from Shakespeare to Wordsworth—he was glad that the Home Office had not abandoned hope of having poets among the mechanical workers—English history, which must relate to factory legislation—general modern history, such as the history of the civilised world from the beginning of the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, and either French, German, or Italian. If he was not educated in the modern languages he could take higher mathematics. This extraordinary syllabus eliminated every possible subject that had a practical bearing on the work of the office for which the candidate was sitting. There was not a single test placed 121 upon a theoretical knowledge of the practical work, or upon the operations of the practical work itself. By this curious arrangement a young student coming down from the university could pass this examination without any supplementary study. If the Home Secretary would examine this syllabus and compare it with the ordinary class work, at Oxford particularly, he would discover that the questions which the student had most at his finger ends when he left the university were just the questions which enabled him to scrape through and become a fully qualified factory inspector. That was not a heightening of the standard, for the Labour Members would be the last, on account of

their experience of factory inspection and the great interest involved, to hinder the right hon. Gentleman in making the standard of examination higher and more efficient with a view to the work being better done by the inspectors, but they would strongly oppose any step which would earmark the position of factory inspector to a certain small class, which was really the effect of the promulgation of this syllabus. Then there was the age reservation, under which in the case of the manager of a factory the age might be raised. Fancy asking the manager of a factory to pass a general examination in the history of the civilised world from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, or to answer a paper in advanced geometry. To ask a man who was claiming exemption under that addendum to sit down and pass an examination like that was simply insulting the whole class to which he belonged. Then they wanted general education as well as detailed knowledge. The Labour Party would not object to that, but it was surely a very severe reflection upon working classes that general education could only be had inside a university. The general education necessary for an efficient factory inspector, in his opinion, was better obtained outside than inside a university. As a matter of fact at the present time, owing to polytechnics and an excellent system of evening technical education, combined with a revised system of apprenticeship, they were making it more possible for the sons of the working classes to enter those responsible positions of the State and fill them with 122 credit, but this purely academical and theoretical university and collegiate syllabus was putting a premium upon book learning, and making it impossible for a man with a practical knowledge of factory theory and practice to compete with young men just leaving Oxford and Cambridge. He might say that when he was in Johannesburg he met almost the whole of Balliol University, and the only justification given him was that under circumstances such as existed there, the administrators were said to require a very general knowledge and a general education. Every single one of those gentlemen had been an absolute failure [Cries of "No, no!"]. Perhaps there was one exception, but with one exception the whole of the Balliol kindergarten in South Africa had been a failure. The right hon. Gentleman was proceeding precisely on the same lines as those responsible for the Transvaal acted upon immediately after the war, and he ventured to prophesy that if the experiment was conducted for three or four years the same disastrous results would have to be recorded at the Factory Department of the Home Office. These men when appointed were handed over to subordinates, and the time of the subordinates was taken up looking after them. These very men, who had not the opportunity of becoming full inspectors, had to coach the men who were appointed to the full inspectorships. It was impossible for the right hon. Gentleman to arrange it otherwise, but he said he was going to give two years probation. That was nothing new. They had two years probation now. As a matter of fact, in a Supplementary Memorandum which was issued the two years probation was extended, and what he was afraid of was that this also was going to continue. At the end of two years the Home Secretary might say, "I am willing to extend the probationary period for the inspectors who have not been satisfactory." Were they going to have the two years extended as it was possible to extend them now? Were these theoretical gentlemen to be kept permanently on the factory inspector staff? He thought that was exceedingly unfair to employers. The Labour Party were anxious to act in the fairest way they could towards 123 employers, and it was certainly unfair that employers who were doing their best to meet the requirements of the Home Office should have their factories inspected by men who had no practical knowledge of what was going on in the factories. Decent employers of labour should make a strong protest against this attempt to use the factories as schools for university men who received appointments

as inspectors. There never was a happier hunting ground provided by the ratepayers for people who were able to send their sons to be educated at Oxford, and whose idea of respectable occupation was that they should turn their attention to the Civil Service. This was an expression of the tendency which had been going on for some time. There was a rule in the Civil Service, he understood, which made it impossible for men in the lower grades to rise to the higher grades of the service. This syllabus must be considered in view of the organisation of the staff. Let him remind the Committee what the organisation of the staff was at present. There were thirty-six assistant inspectors. They were appointed by a colleague of the right hon. Gentleman when a Liberal Government was in office. When appointed they had larger powers than they had now, and assurances were given that they would have opportunities of rising in the service. They were at first able to enter factories, but there had been a process going on during the past thirteen years which had closed the doors to the assistant inspectors. Now, if an assistant inspector went into a work place and discovered irregularities, all that had to be done was for the person responsible for the irregularities to show a gas engine in order to be able to tell the assistant inspector that he was in a factory and not a work shop. In such a case, the assistant inspector had no power whatever; he could only report the occurrence to the full inspector and the whole process of investigation had to go on again. Of the thirty-six assistant inspectors, twenty had reached the maximum salary and position. The maximum salary of an assistant inspector was £150 and the minimum salary of a junior full inspector £200. Every pressure had been brought to bear on the Home Office to allow these assistant inspectors 124 who had reached the maximum to be promoted to positions where they would enjoy higher salary and more power, and, if he might say so, more honour in respect of the excellent work they had been doing since their appointment. It was a matter of common knowledge that one of these inspectors passed an examination a short time ago for the full inspectorship, but from that day he had never been called upon to fill a vacancy although several had occurred since. After that three gentlemen from the universities passed examinations for inspectorships, and two of the number were appointed to fill vacancies, and the third gentleman who was not appointed at the time had since without further examination received an appointment. That was how the workmen were treated on the one hand and how the middle class university men were treated on the other. Twenty men who had reached the maximum, who had been trained at the public expense, and who had made themselves efficient, were, according to the methods of the Home Office, kept from entering the higher positions, while new, untried, and unknown men were, upon mere classical and literary examinations, going to be placed in the higher positions. What could they expect their assistant inspectors to think if their merits were not recognised? The only way in which their merits were at present recognised was by handing over to them the newly appointed men to be initiated in the work which they themselves knew. Although the assistant inspectors passed examinations they were not encouraged to study and to acquire the general knowledge and culture which would qualify them for the higher positions. If it were necessary he thought he could also make out a similar case as regards the women. It must not be imagined that the appointment of women as factory inspectors was such a grand thing as some people thought. At the present time the right hon. Gentleman would discover by looking at the records of the Home Office that practical women with a knowledge of sanitary science and law, and of ad-ministration, had been applying for appointments for years, while untried clerks and private secretaries without practical experience had been appointed 125 Over their heads. He ventured to hope that the right hon.

Gentleman would very seriously consider the down grade in factory inspection which was marked so conspicuously by the issue of this syllabus. He and his hon. friends of the Labour Party held that capital should not be unnecessarily harried by untried men of no experience, amateurs who had merely passed literary examinations; they held also that workmen should not be exposed to the dangers of their calling by the imperfect knowledge of inspectors. He still trusted that the right hon. Gentleman when he replied would be able to say that he could see his way to offer some of the vacancies which were impending in the factory inspection department to practical men and women who were fitted by their experience for the work, and thereby to fulfil the great hopes which had been raised as to what was going to happen now that his Party had come into office.

§ SIR CHARLES DILKE (Gloucestershire, Forest of Dean)

said the hon. Gentleman opposite, in his concluding words, spoke of the women inspectors employed by the Home Office, and the hon. Gentleman who moved the Amendment thanked the Home Secretary for increasing the inspectorate in the women's department. His impression of the reply given by the Home Secretary to a question a day or two ago was that the increase of a single inspector in the Estimate was not the increase which was now contemplated. He understood it was intended that a further increase should take place. On that question he had to thank the Home Secretary for the action he had in contemplation, and to express his agreement with the hon. Gentleman opposite in wishing that the new appointments should be kept, if possible, up to the high standard which had prevailed in the existing staff. No one who knew the facts could doubt the excellent service which had been rendered, and everyone who wished for the successful working of the department would hope that the future appointments would be up to the standard of the highest and best prevailing at present. To some extent he shared the apprehensions of previous speakers, but 126 it was not for him to go into the details which they had so admirably stated in regard to the rules under the Employment of Children's Act. On the general principle he would say that the rules which had been so carefully thought out by the County Council should not be delayed for two years. His wish had always been to support the municipal and the local authorities in the work of their districts, and so far as the Home Office was consulted in regard to rules of this sort—and the Local Government Board in regard to similar rules—authority should be exerted with the view of co-ordinating the action of the local authorities rather than with the view of putting difficulties in their way. No one who knew the state of things prevailing in this country could doubt that the London County Council had the sympathy of the great cities in this matter. He joined his hon friends the mover and seconder of the Amendment in urging the Home Office to meet them as quickly as possible. The honour and the responsibility in regard to the rules depended virtually on the municipal body; they were the people who would be blamed if things went wrong; and they were the people who must know the facts better than any others could do. He thought, therefore, they ought to be trusted. The hon. Member for Berwickshire had referred to the work of the officers of the factory department and to the international conferences in which we had from time to time taken part. Last year on the Home Office Vote he himself made an attack on the then Government for having refused, on the advice of some of their officials, to take an effective part in first-rate international labour conferences. He pointed out at that time the reasons which made it overwhelmingly necessary for this country to be at the head of the movement and he

showed how we were falling into the rear. He took this occasion again to point out to the House of Commons that it was not only the case that we had dropped out of the running in the international topics which he detailed last year, but to show that we had dropped out of the running with respect to subjects which were coming before the House this session. The Home Office had got behind in the advice they had received in a number of 127 cases, and he could not help thinking that any weakness in the Department as regarded these practical questions would be most detrimental. They were going this session to discuss the whole amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Act in this country, and yet this was the only country which had taken no part in the international discussion of this subject at the Conferences in Dusseldorf in 1902 and in Vienna in 1905. All the difficulties arising here, and which would arise, had been dealt with most efficiently by the representatives of foreign Governments at these Conferences at which this country was unrepresented. When last year, by pressure in the House of Commons, they were successful in getting our Government represented on other classes of subjects, this country refused to sign the protocols. If there was any question bearing on legislation on which the Home Office must trust to the experienced advice of its Factory and Workshop Department, it was this one, and he was certain that that advice would be in the direction of taking part in international action. For example, all the other Powers were now going to make common their legislation in regard to compensation for accidents by means of treaties. At the present moment an alteration was pending in the system of recruiting the inspectorate of the Home Office. When his attention was called to it last winter it seemed to him impossible that such action should have been proposed to be taken. He had sent the syllabus issued by the Home Office to two of the highest authorities in this country on the practical working of factory inspection, and both condemned the new syllabus in the most positive terms. Under these circumstances he joined earnestly with his hon. friend who had spoken for his own personal knowledge, in the belief that this was a retrograde step in the recruitment of that Department, and he also joined with him in urging the Home Secretary to either withdraw or modify the syllabus.

§ THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT (Mr. GLADSTONE,) Leeds, W.

said that his hon. friend the Member for Berwickshire had referred to the bye-laws in regard to the employment of children 128 with special reference to London, and complaint had been made by him and by the hon. Member for Leicester as to the long delay in bringing about some solution of the question. Of course he could not say what had passed during the last two years, but he thought, that though there had been numerous causes for the delay, it had been somewhat unduly prolonged. When he came into office he found a report from Mr. Chester Jones on the subject, which had been sent to the London County Council for their observations, and he had waited for their reply. Personally, he had had no opportunity to lose any time, for he had no experience of the subject at that particular stage; but he hoped that the London County Council would send in their observations as soon as possible. His mind was perfectly unbiassed on the subject, but he had had such a pressure of other business that he had not been able to approach the full consideration of this particular matter. He also took note of the observations of the right hon. baronet the Member for the Forest of Dean in regard to the importance of co-ordinating whatever was done under this Act throughout the country. He passed from that to the remarks of the right hon.



Gentleman in regard to the Berne Conference. He agreed that we were much behind other nations in matters relating to labour. When he came into office he found that his predecessor had this matter in hand, and was about to make certain proposals when his term of office was cut short. He was now in a position to tell the Committee how matters stood at present. The Swiss Government had sent a formal communication to our Government, asking for a reply to their proposal regarding the Berne Conference. Our answer, which had now been sent, or at any rate was on its way, was to the effect that the British Government accepted the principle of representation at these International Conferences and would be ready—subject, of course, to certain conditions which naturally they made on behalf of this country—to take part in these International Conferences on matters relating to labour and general industrial concerns as between one nation and another, and, in fact, between all civilised nations. It appeared to him 129 that nothing but good could result from such Conferences. He was not prepared to accept all that had been said as to the disastrous effects of the system of examinations for Home Office inspectors by the hon. Member for Leicester, although the hon. Gentleman had given a pretty clear account of how they appeared to operate. They all desired to raise the standard of examination in the best manner, and they all desired to get the best and most practical men appointed as inspectors. It was extremely difficult and skilled work, and everybody recognised that practical qualities and judgment, as well as the acquisition of practical skill in actual technical handicraft, were necessary. Of course, it was obvious that he was not concerned with all the preliminary steps out of which the new system was evolved. As a matter of fact, the consideration of the new system had been going on for the last fifteen months at the Home Office, and he had no doubt his right hon. friend would be able to give the views he held in support of the system for which the right hon. Gentleman was more responsible than he was. His right hon. friend shook his head, but when he came into office he found these proposals in print. Might he ask hon. Members whether, from the point of view of continuity in administration, it was desirable when a new Minister came into office for him to pull up by the roots the things which had been gone into with great care and at great expense by his predecessor? Then he had to consider whether, after all, this system of examination had not distinct elements of good in it. His hon. friend the Member for Berwickshire spoke of the probationary period as something new. He said that for a great deal of the time during the period which these novices, who were to be appointed under the new system, were engaged, they were learning their business at the expense of the manufacturers and their employers. That was not a true description, and under the old system they had to be examined in subjects in which they had actually no personal training. As his hon. friend said, they had acquired book learning for the purpose of the exercise of their calling, by a process of 130 cramming, which did no harm in a good many cases, but perhaps in some did a great deal of harm. These novices also under the old system had been inducted into their duties by the senior factory inspectors.

§ MR. J. E. MACDONALD (Leicester)

asked whether he might assume that they would pass an examination on practical subjects?

§ MR. GLADSTONE

agreed that some of the criticisms passed upon the new syllabus had force in them, but he pointed out that, after all, the Secretary of State was responsible for giving the nominations for the examinations. If nominations were given to a man with no other qualification than that humorously described by the hon. Member for Leicester, it might be quite possible to pass to these positions, through this examination, men who had no special qualification. Then it became a question of how this system of examination was going to be worked. At any rate, he gave this assurance to the Committee, that so far as he was concerned, he had no desire to see changes in the position of the staff in the direction feared by his hon. friends who had spoken in the debate. So far as he was concerned he would do his utmost to see that no such changes came about and that the qualifications of the inspectors, should be not only maintained at the present height, but, if possible, improved. In administering the Factory Department he would be particularly on his guard against the possible evils from the point of view of the hon. Member for Leicester, and he took note with some little reservation of the fact that the hon. Member preferred those who were outside rather than inside the university circle. He made that reservation, because there were new universities as well as old universities, and because there were university men among the inspectors who had done extremely well. He did not anticipate that at the worst, even if he were wrong, and the hon. Member for Leicester and his hon. friend below the 131 gangway were right, any great danger would result, because if he found that the new system was not working well, it would be very easy to change it and to go back to the system which experience had tested.

§ MR. H. J. TENNANT

inquired whether the system would be retained for two years.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

said that two years was rather a long time to bind oneself to, and he made no pretence of having gone into the whole of the reasons for carrying out this scheme. He would be glad to consider whether any change was necessary in the second examination, and also the hon. Member for Leicester's question about the period of time. The hon. Member for Leicester said he had heard that if the probationary inspectors were found to be quite unsatisfactory, then a further extension of the two years might be obtained.

§ MR. J. R. MACDONALD

said that was a very bad principle.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

said he quite agreed that it was a very bad principle. He should think that if after two years the probationer was found to be unsatisfactory, it would be a reason for not renewing the appointment. He would consider the question of the examination at the end of the period. With regard to these examinations, it had to be borne in mind that the point was how the probationary factory inspectors might be helped to qualify themselves. At any rate, they should be enabled to increase their practical knowledge in these subjects, and it would not be asserted that no knowledge of the mechanics of sound and safe working was required to pass the probationer from that stage to the

stage of inspector of factories. Another point raised by the hon. Member for Leicester was the position of inspectors' assistants. He should like to say, in the first instance, that, owing to 132 representations made by his right hon. friend opposite to the Treasury, that body had sanctioned an increased allowance of £25 a year to certain of the best of the assistants which, although it was a small amount, showed that steps were being taken to improve the condition of these men.

§ MR. J. R. MACDONALD

asked if that was an honorarium or an increase of salary.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

replied that it was an increase of salary. He recognised that the hon. Gentleman had put his finger upon a weak spot in the Act of Parliament. He would take particular notice of these cases. Some years ago he was closely associated with his right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in looking into the case of these clerks, and he recognised that extremely few promotions had been made from the ranks of the assistants to those of the inspectors. He also agreed that the assistant inspectors were somewhat prejudiced at present by the new system of examination. Under these circumstances he agreed that, having regard to the work that the assistant inspectors had to do, the scale of pay in their case would be hardly sufficient to make them contented with their position. The fact was that, through no fault of their own, the factory inspectors' assistants had got into backwater. It was an extremely unsatisfactory position both for themselves and for the public service, as they had come to a position where it was impossible to advance, and that fact must tell unfavourably on the work of the men themselves. These were difficulties in the question which he just mentioned, but he saw no difficulty in dealing with the question of inspectors' assistants. It was obvious, that the general standard of factory inspector at the Home Office had risen and was steadily rising, and under these circumstances it was hardly to be expected that the inspectors' assistants should be qualified to do the work of inspectors. It was no fault of their own that they were not qualified for what he might call the higher work of the Inspecting Department. It was impossible that this should not be the case. 133 They had not the thinking mind, the full scientific knowledge, the power to handle statistics, or the aptitude of appearing in court and fighting through a mass of details. All these things required knowledge and training, which were not available for the assistants. He saw, however, no reason why a change should not be made, and why the work given to the assistants should not be extended, and perhaps the privilege given to them of rising to a higher grade; in any case, the road ought to be kept open for their rising to the highest grade. They should not be debarred if they had the necessary qualifications. These were the general conclusions he had come to on the subject. He would not go into details; he wished to have time to think this matter out, because it must be considered not only in the light of the system advocated, but in the light of the factory legislation as a whole. He had indicated to the House the general views upon which he would be prepared to act, and he should, he hoped, act without undue delay.

§ MR. T. L. CORBETT (Down, N.)

said he desired very earnestly to draw attention to an official paper issued in 1905 relating to factory inspection—the more earnestly because the Home Secretary had given a most unsympathetic reply to Questions addressed to him on the subject.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

When?

§ MR. T. L. CORBETT

Ten days ago. The figures in that Report, which was issued by the right hon. Gentleman's own Department, were very striking. They showed that 82,652 women and girls were under the protection of the regulations of the Factory Act, whilst 144,132 were shut out from the protection for want of legislation, for the reason that a large proportion of these women and girls were working in laundries connected with religious institutions. He believed the chief objection to the inspection of such laundries came from those which were carried on under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. In England he believed the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and other churches under which these laundries 134 worked had no objection to the inspection of their laundries.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

The hon. Member is now entering on a subject which in his opinion requires legislation; that he cannot do; he can deal only with matters of administration.

§ MR. T. L. CORBETT

submitted that he was entitled to ask whether the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department admitted, as his predecessor had admitted, that voluntary inspection had failed. He hoped that what he had said would draw the attention of the right hon. Gentleman to the pressing need of something being done with regard to this matter.

§ MR. TREVELYAN (Yorkshire, W.R., Elland)

said he desired to call attention to a subject upon which there had been a considerable feeling arising, namely, the administration of the Aliens Act by the Home Office. It was true that this Government and this Parliament were not responsible in any way for the passing of that Act but that fact did not relieve them from the responsibility of its administration and making the Act as little onerous and as little discreditable to Englishmen as it was possible to be. For some time past there had been important communications in various newspapers which indicated that the Immigration Boards that had the administration of the Act had been conducting their inquiries, and had been arriving at their conclusions with an exhibition of considerable prejudice, if not actual illegality. The Act was administered by immigration officers who, in the first instance, inquired into the character and quality of the immigrant. There was an appeal from them to the Immigration Boards, but the question which interested the Committee was the composition of the Immigration Boards, which were Courts of Appeal, but which were outside the law. and from which there was no appeal. They

were practically uncontrolled in the decisions at which they arrived. He wished to know whether the information in the Answer given by the Home Secretary with regard to a certain case brought to his attention this afternoon came from the Immigration Board, or 135 whether his right hon. friend had any further information to substantiate the information he had given, as the allegation against these Immigration Boards was that they had been acting illegally. He desired to call attention to several cases in which the Immigration Boards had acted illegally. In one a Russian tailor who came to this country with £5 10s. in his pocket—the sum mentioned in the Act as being required to show that the immigrant could maintain himself—was ordered to be deported on the ground that there were already a sufficient number of tailors in England. In another case the immigrant desired to plead that he was a political refugee, but was not allowed to do so because he had not raised the plea before the immigration officer. He was not allowed to land. Was it true that men were being sent back to Russia at the present time who were either political or religious refugees? If that was so, as he understood it was, the Committee wanted to know why they were sent back. In many cases these people had the money necessary under the Act to maintain themselves, but even if they had not the £5 on which the Act insisted they ought not to have been rejected. The Act provided that any immigrant who proved that he was seeking admission to this country solely to avoid prosecution or punishment for offences of a political or religious character should be allowed to come in, however poor he might be. That clause was put into the Bill at the instance of Lord Hugh Cecil. It was the speech made by Lord Hugh Cecil which drove the Government of the day into incorporating that clause, and, if the law was now being stretched or broken in any way so as to keep these people out, the Government ought to see that that state of things was put an end to. He did not know whether use was being made by the Immigration Boards of the word "proves" in the Bill—whether those Boards were insisting that a man who said he was a political refugee should bring corroborative evidence to prove that he was so. Was it likely that he would be able to bring corroborative evidence? He would like to ask, first, whether the Government in issuing new regulations—as he hoped they would 136 do, and as he thought was indicated in a speech by the Under-Secretary of the Home Department—would, considering the condition of Russia at the present time, put in a suggestion that where a man came from a district in which there had been massacres, such as there had been in hundreds of districts in Russia, the fact that he had come from such a district should be taken as a proof that he was flying from persecution, in view of the difficulty there was of any sort of corroboration. Secondly, he would ask the Government whether under the new regulations they could not make it perfectly clear that these courts were to be held as open courts, and that reports should be obtainable of proceedings in them. When they were on the Opposition side they strenuously objected to there being no kind of appeal. Most of them thought that decisions should be given by an English court of law. As this was not so, he would first ask that these courts should be open courts in future; and, secondly, whether the Government, if they found, after the careful inquiry which he hoped would be instituted, that the present members of these Boards had been stretching their powers to the utmost to keep out these immigrants, they would change the complexion of these boards which, he believed, were appointed entirely by the late Government, who believed in this kind of legislation. There was no reason to support that legislation more than was necessary. It was the one Bill passed last year just to give the late Government an excuse for remaining in office. So little did the country care about it that the one Member from the East End of London who had been returned in support

of the Act was the hon. Member for Stepney. All the other Members in the district in which the Bill was going to win votes were swept away. There was no support for the Bill in the country; there was no support for its principles among the working-classes, and the Government would be perfectly justified in doing everything in their power to mitigate the severity of this first piece of Protectionist legislation. They should do all that was possible to admit victims of persecution and to show that this House, even if it did not at some subsequent period repeal this legislation, at any rate disapproved of it.

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§ *SIR W. EVANS GORDON* (Tower Hamlets, Stepney)

said the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down had observed that he was the only representative left of those Members from the East End of London who supported the Aliens Act of last year. He would, however, like to remind the Committee that almost every, if not every, candidate in the East End who was successful was a supporter of the Bill, and before its Second Reading begged the then Opposition to support it. He desired to refer to the general opposition to the measure which at present existed. The facts were that a campaign had been organised ever since the Act came into force. He knew the source of that campaign, why it had been organised, and by whom. It was organised in order to prejudice the public in every possible way against the working of the Act. Cases had been cited in the newspapers and particulars given of alleged hardship upon certain immigrants. In one breath it was said that the Press had no means of ascertaining the facts regarding these particular cases which came before the Immigration Board, because the Press was not allowed to attend the Court; and in the next breath, they came forward with cases purporting to represent the real facts. He would ask the Committee how it was possible, if the Press were not admitted to hear these cases, that really truthful particulars could be given to the Press. From whom were those particulars received? They were received presumably from the very persons who alleged themselves to be aggrieved, and they were coloured to taste in order to excite prejudice in the eyes of the public. There had been a remarkable instance of that given to the House to-day. The Home Secretary, in reply to a question, had told the House of a fact of which he was already cognisant, namely, that a letter had been found upon one of the men who were alleged to have been harshly treated, in which the man in question was told that the only chance he had of getting into this country was to say that he had been persecuted, and it gave him the particular details of the story which he was to put before the Immigration Board. That story was that he was supposed to have been kept in a cellar for three days on bread and water, 138 and that he had seen his brother murdered before his eyes. That was the sort of thing the boards had to contend with; they had to judge from these people's pleas as to whether they had been persecuted or not. Jewish representatives of great weight and position, such as Mr. Leonard Cohen, had places on these boards, and so far as his information went they had in numerous instances discovered that these pleas of persecution rested upon no foundation whatever. In those cases, no doubt, the boards had rejected the appeal. But not one word had been said in the Press or by the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down of the manner in which the Act was being administered in the way of leniency and fairness. He had made some inquiries on the subject and he had been told by a member of the Immigration Board in London—one who was a Jew and in no way in favour of him personally or of the Act—that nothing could exceed the fairness, the impartiality, and the leniency with which it was being

administered, and he had spoken in the highest terms of praise of the manner in which the gentlemen sitting on these boards were at present performing their duty. He himself had not the least doubt in his mind that large numbers of people were admitted into this country at the present time who, if the Act were stringently administered, would certainly be excluded under its provisions. He for one welcomed any detailed discussion of the individual cases of alleged persecution or hardship which appeared in the newspapers. He would be the last to wish that any genuine case of persecution should be excluded from this country, but he did beg the Committee to show that spirit of fairplay which he was sure every member desired, and not to accept ex parte statements which were appearing from day to day in the Press, and which, on the evidence itself, must be ex parte, because the Press themselves admitted they were not present at the trials, and could not, therefore, accurately state what actually occurred on the Boards. He felt certain that the Secretary of State for the Home Department would be able to give a satisfactory explanation of almost every one, if not every one, of these individual cases that were brought 139 forward. He did so to-day in his reply. There was the case of Alexander Onix, which had aroused a good deal of notice in the Press; but when it came to be inquired into it was found to rest upon a very slender foundation. The individual was alleged to have been a persecuted man from Russia, but it transpired that his real residence was in Copenhagen. [Cries of "No."] He understood the right hon. Gentleman to say so.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

He was shipped from Copenhagen.

§ SIR W. EVANS GORDON

said that no doubt that case to a very large extent broke down when it was inquired into. He mentioned the fact that these cases were raised in this House. His belief—and it was confirmed by members of the Jewish persuasion who were especially interested in this matter, and were absolutely impartial—was that the Act was being administered in a manner erring, if any-thing, on the side of leniency rather than on the side; of severity. Hon. Members to whom this matter was perhaps somewhat new would do well to recollect that there were thousands of ne'er-do-wells moving about the Continent of Europe who had no prospect of doing any good in any country, and whom he had seen brought before charitable boards and institutions on the Continent at Hamburg and elsewhere, who would plead anything to get into this country, and who, in his humble judgment, it was most necessary to keep out. Those people were adepts at spinning harrowing tales as to the sufferings they had undergone, and he could assure hon. Members that many of those cases when impartially inquired into broke down. He was aware that the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Under-Secretary were in this matter in a most difficult position, as they were both determined opponents of the Bill last session. They had now to administer the Act, and he felt certain that both the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues would administer it perfectly fairly and justly. He hoped and believed that they would not allow any feeling they might hitherto have had to interfere with its just and fair administration. He believed that all the officers of Customs and other De- 140 partments involved had carried out their duties in an admirable manner. The fact that an Act in many respects so new and complicated as this, which had given rise to an extraordinary amount of criticism, had worked very smoothly was a credit to the

Department which had had it in hand. Those were the views he had heard from people who were perfectly impartial, such as shipowners and others who might be expected to complain if complaint were necessary. He begged the Committee to pause long and consider well before they accepted the sensational statements which were being made from day to day in the newspapers, and, before they came to a decision upon any individual case, to hear the full particulars, and to hear what the Department concerned had to say. He did not propose to follow the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down into the details of general policy. It would, indeed, be out of order at that moment, because the whole policy might come up again for discussion. With regard to the regulations, he hoped that the Committee would remember that the Act had been in force for only about two months, and it was, therefore, early to express any very definite views upon the manner in which it had operated.

§ MR. LEIF JONES (Westmoreland, Appleby)

said that no one in the House last session would dispute the sincerity of the support which the hon. Member opposite had given to the Aliens Act, and he was to-day the consistent champion of a lost cause. He had spoken of a campaign to mislead the public in connection with this Act. He knew nothing about any campaign of that sort, and he wished to associate himself with the protest made by the hon. Member for the Elland Division against some of the fruits of the Aliens Act. There was a campaign last year of which the hon. Member opposite might know something, and without such a campaign he did not think the Aliens Act would have disfigured the Statute Book of this country. An appeal had been made to them to hear both sides. That was what they were doing, and it was only to-day that the other side of the case was being put. They objected to the carrying out of this Act, on the ground that it would tend 141 to the exclusion of political refugees and immigrants coming to this country for the sake of poverty, and the working of the Act which they were entitled to review had justified the fears which were expressed when the Act was under discussion. The operation of the Act had been capricious. If aliens came in in less number than twelve, they were not interfered with, but if there were more than twelve, then they had to answer searching interrogatories, and pass the Immigration Officer and his Board. He did not know whether it was part of the intention of the little Englanders who supported this Bill to prevent the issue of third-class return tickets to the Continent. The Belgian State Railway had discontinued the issue of such tickets. The English railways had since done the same, and when it was realised that 50 per cent. of the holiday traffic to the Continent consisted of third-class passengers, it would be seen what a blow was being struck at the shipping industry. This was very much of the same character as the injury which would be inflicted upon the shipping interest by some other of those proposals of which they had heard so much.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

Order, order! The hon. Member is now criticising the Act, and he can only deal with the administration of the Act of the present time.

§ MR. LEIF JONES

said that under its operation the Act was excluding refugees who ought to be allowed to find a refuge in this country.



*THE CHAIRMAN*

I am afraid the hon. Member is disregarding my ruling. He must deal with the administration of the Act and nothing else.

§ *MR. LEIF JONES*

said the Act was so administered by the Boards of Immigration and their officers that they were shutting out refugees who under the Act were entitled to enter. Those refugees were helpless and ignorant people, and when they came before these Immigration Boards and were subjected to the difficult rules set up, they lost the opportunity which they might have under the Act of justifying their positions and procuring an entrance. It was upon that 142 point that he wished to appeal to the Home Secretary. He would quote three cases. One of them was a refugee from Warsaw, who went out on strike, and was ordered back again to work, but he made his escape from Russia, and he was not allowed to land by the immigration officer in this country. He thought it would be the intention of everyone in this House that a striker should come under the definition of a political refugee. Another case was that of a soldier who refused to fire upon the strikers, and having fled from his country, where he was in danger of his life, he was not allowed to enter, and had to go back to his own country or seek another refuge. Then there was the case of a woman who arrived in England with two young children. She had fled from Odessa after being robbed during the massacre. It was found that she had £9 in her possession, but she was rejected on the ground that she was suffering from weakness. If an immigrant came from a foreign country fleeing from massacre, and she arrived here after a troublesome crossing, it was not at all extraordinary that she should be suffering from weakness. To him that would seem rather more of a reason for helping instead of rejecting her. He thought that even the hon. Member opposite would agree that it was never intended that this Act should be used for the exclusion of such cases, and therefore he associated himself with the feeling which had been expressed that greater care should be taken by the Immigration Board to prevent a recurrence of these cases. He was glad to read the speech delivered by the Home Secretary on Saturday night, for in it he recognised the absurdities and hardships of this Act. The right hon. Gentleman admitted that in one case an action had been done unworthy of the British nation, but he went on to say that the Immigration Boards were sovereign courts whose decisions were final. Was it really true that these Immigrations Boards were sovereign courts? Was it not true that they were under the direction of the right hon. Gentleman, and that they administered the law along the line which he laid down? At any rate, the right hon. Gentleman possessed the power of the purse, and he could by limiting the expenditure limit its evil 143 operations. It was no light matter that they were raising, and they were acting with a full sense of responsibility, because they knew that the honour of this country was at stake. It was unworthy of the reputation of a humane and free people, and it did violence to the strong and hereditary sympathy of the people of this country in regard to the poor and oppressed of every land.

§ *MR. STUART SAMUEL* (Tower Hamlets, Whitechapel)

said that as a member of the Jewish community, to which a large number of these refugees belonged, he wished to state that the administration of the Aliens Act had given them the utmost dissatisfaction, and had excited the unanimous condemnation

of the Jewish Press. He hoped the right hon. Gentleman in the new regulations which he proposed to issue would make the Act clear to those poor people who came from foreign countries with no knowledge of the English language and who were unacquainted with the provisions of the Act. The fact that so many appeals had been allowed tended to show that the Immigration Officers themselves did not well understand the regulations under the Act. The right hon. Gentleman had said that during the month of January out of 202 cases 102 had not been allowed to land, whilst 100 had been allowed to land. He wished to point out that when the Act was passed the intention of Parliament was that this country should be open to the victims of religious and political persecution abroad, quite independently of their state of health and the amount of money they had in their pockets. The people of this country were not prepared to see foreigners persecuted because they were in ill-health. Under the present system of administration an immigrant might not be persecuted if he had £5, but a person who had only £4 10s. might be. That was the logical deduction from the way in which the rules were administered at the present moment. He might mention a case within his own knowledge of three women—mother, daughter (of the name of Stolkiner), and granddaughter—who came from Russia, where the younger of the three had been arrested for distributing pamphlets among the soldiers. Her father had been shot during the recent disturbances in Russia, 144 and she came with her mother and grandmother to this country, but they were refused admission because they were not in a state of good health. He maintained that that was absolutely illegal. If a girl whose father had been shot was not the victim of political persecution and in danger of life and limb, he would like to know who was. He wished to know what were the conditions under which they were to be allowed to come into this country. When the Act was passed the intention of the House and of the country generally was that this country should be a haven of refuge for those who were persecuted. The immigration officers had in hundreds of cases been unable properly to understand the regulations which had been issued. They were little to blame for finding it difficult to understand the rules. He did not at present propose to go into the question of the appointment which had been given to the private secretary of the hon. and gallant Member for Stepney. He would review that matter later on, when the Estimates came up for discussion. The hon. and gallant Member alluded to a one-sided view of this question, but if the appointment of a gentleman who was certain to have a bias had been made from the Liberal side of the House he thought it would have been universally condemned. A further reason why it was desirable that the appeals should be diminished was that the cost of administration depended on the number of appeals. The members of the Immigration Board were paid a fee for each attendance, and therefore the greater the fees the greater the cost. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for the St. Augustine's Division, when Home Secretary, stated that the cost to the poor-rates for the maintenance of aliens in 1904 was £28,000. He should look with interest to the cost of administering the Aliens Act. It seemed to him that it would be very poor finance to expend £40,000 in order to avoid an expenditure of £28,000. His own belief was that the Aliens Act would cost a large sum to administer, and that they would still have to expend the £28,000. It would be quite impossible to have any aliens on the rates, so far as the Jewish community was concerned, because they undertook the maintenance of their own poor.

said he desired to associate himself with the protest made against the administration of the Aliens Act. He was quite aware that they could not discuss the Act itself to-day, but he thought that the Home Secretary could not do better than always bear in mind that the Aliens Act was one of the most fraudulent pieces of legislation which even the late Government produced. When he remembered that, he also ought to remember that the only way to use that Act anything like decently was to administer it on Liberal principles. Under such administration the benefit of the doubt would on every occasion be given to the immigrant and not to the Immigration Board. The difference between working the Act in the way he suggested and working it otherwise would show itself very distinctly in administration. He asked the Home Secretary to inquire into every one of the cases of alleged mal-administration which had been brought forward and to be very vigilant to detect such cases. He had heard of a case of a family—he thought they were Russian—who were all admitted with the exception of a girl, nine years of age, who was dumb. He did not believe that the girl was legally excluded. When a body of officials was appointed those officials needed watching by this House and by the country at large. Every State official might become a serious danger to the community, and if that State official had to administer an Act which dealt with individual liberty a mistake on his part might damage the reputation of our country. Hence it was necessary to watch him very carefully indeed. He wished to know whether the Home Secretary had power to add to or to alter the constitution of Immigration Boards in any way. He understood that working men were to be put on the panels from which the Boards were selected. If the ex-Home Secretary put any working men on those panels they had not got on to the Immigration Boards yet. He hoped that the present Home Secretary would do something in this direction. It had been proved sufficiently that under the administration of the Act men who were undoubtedly political refugees had been sent back. It was reasonable to ask that 146 when a man could prove that he came from a country which was in a state of revolution, as Russia was, that man should be admitted at once, although he had not a cent in his pocket. He and his friends raised this matter under a sense of responsibility, and at the earliest possible moment they would endeavour to eliminate from the Act everything which was against the honour, not only of this country but of humanity, so that no one would be kept out unless he was suffering from infectious disease, or was a criminal.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

The hon. Member is talking now about future legislation, and that is not in order.

§ MR. MADDISON

said he was only expressing regret that he could not pursue the subject. He would again ask the Home Secretary to administer the Act in the interests of the political refugee, and not in the interests of that narrow exclusivism which was brought forward for electioneering purposes and which had done so much to defame the honour of our country.

§ MR. G. A. HARDY (Suffolk, Stow-market)

said he saw from the Estimate that a sum of £11,000 was put down as a charge for salaries in regard to the Aliens Act. There also appeared an item of £1,000 saved in

contributions given to the inebriate homes of this country. He wished to ask the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary if he would take into serious consideration what that reduction meant. Some few years ago it was definitely promised by the Government, when the inebriate homes were started, that 10s. 6d. would be granted for each inmate. Now they found such contributions reduced to 7s. 6d. The result of that would be that, so far as the county councils were concerned, they would have to take into serious consideration the question whether or not they would continue the homes. This change would affect various inebriate homes in every part of the country. He sincerely trusted that the Home Secretary would consider the matter, so that the poor drunken women of this country might have a chance of reformation.

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§ *SIR HOWARD VINCENT* (Sheffield, Central)

said their concern and responsibility in regard to the administration of the Act should be in regard to the people of our own country rather than to foreigners. He thought the greatest credit and gratitude were due to the right hon. Gentleman the late Home Secretary for the admirable way in which the rules had been drawn. He earnestly hoped that the present Home Secretary would allow a decent interval to elapse for the new rules to be thoroughly tried before interfering with them in any way. The hon. Member the Under-Secretary for the Home Department had made a speech in which he stated that an early change was contemplated. He hoped the regulations would not be changed until they had been properly and thoroughly tried. He would remind the Committee that Acts of this character had been in force in America for many years. The people of the United States were quite as alive as we were to the sentiments of generosity, charity and hospitality; but there was not the smallest feeling in that country as regarded any hardship. On the contrary, within the last few weeks a Conference had taken place in New York or some other important city, and the conclusion arrived at was that these Acts should be rather strengthened than weakened.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

The hon. Gentleman must discuss the administration of the Act in this country.

§ *SIR HOWARD VINCENT*

said that he did not want to discuss the Acts or the policy of the Acts in America, but the regulations under the Act of last Session in this country. What he wanted to ask the Home Secretary was to allow a decent trial of the rules introduced by the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor before attempting to interfere with them. He hoped the Home Secretary would inform the Committee how many lunatics and people of that character or suffering from incurable diseases were being supported by the taxpayers and ratepayers of this country and who had been admitted, unfortunately, into charitable institutions here? The case of a crippled child had been mentioned by the hon. Member for Burnley. 148 Nobody would show any hardship to a cripple or any person suffering from an incurable disease; but he did maintain that it was not the business of this country to receive such persons and let them be a burden on the ratepayers and taxpayers. It was the interest of the working people of this country that this Act and the regulations which had been drafted by his right hon. friend the late

Home Secretary should be put in force, and that the present Home Secretary should endeavour to administer the Act as passed by the House of Commons.

§ MR. J. R. MACDONALD

said that the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down had appealed to the Home Secretary to give to the new rules a longer trial; but, as a matter of fact, the two months' trial had been quite sufficient to demonstrate their most objectionable character. He had a list of forty cases which, on the face of them, seemed to be serious breaches of the honourable historical traditions of this country—traditions recognised from one end of the earth to the other, that all persecuted people might find refuge here. He hoped the Home Secretary would not allow such a state of things to last if he could possibly help it. The hon. Member for Central Sheffield talked about the working classes desiring that these regulations should be enforced, but he would like to remind that hon. Gentleman how the working classes the other day signified what their intentions were. Of course it was altogether impossible for the working classes to be absolutely unanimous on this or any other subject. But he could assure the hon. Gentleman that the working classes were prepared to maintain the incurables to which the hon. Gentleman had referred, even at their own expense, rather than close the doors of this country to refugees. The hon. and gallant Member for Stepney, who happened to be in a very happy-go-lucky frame of mind, had discovered that a certain number of ne'er-do-weels were desirous of finding asylum in this country. Undoubtedly some ne'er-do-weels did want to come here. Nobody wanted them; but in the administration of the Act no attempt had been made to discriminate between them and the cases to which attention had been drawn 149 this afternoon. There should be some machinery established by which the Home Office would be enabled to separate the genuine political refugee from the impostor and the ne'er-do-weel. Now Alexander Onix, whose case had been referred to, was a genuine political refugee. He came from Russia to Harwich, via Copenhagen, because he had left the Russian Army. His coming was known by political organisations in this country. A statement was made by one Wahl, a civilian comrade, who escaped from Reval with Onix, and this was what Wahl said—The inspector came on board with an interpreter, but the latter spoke only German. Onix knows only his native Esthonian (i.e. Finnish) and some little Russian. Wahl did all the talking for the party of three. The conversation ran like this:—Interpreter: Have you got your passports or papers of identification? Wahl: No, Sir. We have no papers. We are refugees who have just escaped from Russia. Interpreter: Have each of you got £5 in his possession? Wahl: Two of us have, but this man, Onix, has not. He fled in a hurry. But we understand that refugees may come in without money. Interpreter: No, you must each have £5. Wahl then offered to go to London, procure money for Onix, and telegraph it; and the interpreter at first thought this would be accepted. There Was some further talk in English, which Wahl could not understand. Then Wahl said: I can easily send £10. Interpreter (translating for inspector): It's no good, even if you send £20. Interpreter: How long are you going to stay in England? Wahl: Three or four days. We're going to America, and we have to wait for money from Russia. (£15 has since come for Onix to my address.) There was further talk in English, the shipping agent intervening. Then the interpreter told Wahl that if his friend in London would guarantee that Onix was going to America, he would be allowed to enter. He gave him a telegraphic address and said that a telegram before 8 p.m. would be in time. I telegraphed at 6.30, but before my telegram reached Harwich Onix had been deported. Now that was a

simple statement, and, if the Home Secretary inquired, it would be found that it was perfectly genuine; and that it was a type of certain other cases of a similar character. He and his friends wanted to know the reason for these deportations. Was it because the men were tailors or carpenters or members of trades which were already overstocked in this country? Then, he would ask the Home Secretary to consider whether the Immigration Boards could meet in public and not have secret 150 sittings? Another suggestion was that in the future administration of the Act, not only workmen, but the representatives of certain well-known political organisations—such as the "Friends of Russian Freedom," which had done such excellent work—should have a seat on these Boards. The whole point was that genuine political refugees should be allowed to enter this country, whether they had each £5 or only a cent., and whether they were tailors or carpenters or ministers or would-be M.P.'s. The Immigration Boards should be efficient and men should be upon them who understood what were political refugees, where they came from, and whether their cases was genuine or not. He had been glad to hear from the right hon. Gentleman that there would be better regulations and better administration of them, although he knew that the right hon. Gentleman's hands were tied to a considerable degree. There was another point which the Labour Party desired to bring before the right hon. Gentleman. The Act stated that a political or religious refugee must prove that he was such. Would the right hon. Gentleman consider what was the nature of the proof required to show that an immigrant was a political or religious refugee? And would the right hon. Gentleman frame new regulations making that point clear and simple? The representatives of the working classes in the House were genuinely anxious for the successful administration of the Act, but they were very jealous of the best traditions of this country. The Labour Party looked back with pride upon the magnificent stand which this country had made for the light of asylum for fugitive and persecuted persons and did not desire those privileges to be curtailed.

§ SIR CHARLE DILKE

said the hon. Member had taken a view of the words of the Act which was entirely confirmed by the debates which took place upon them when it was before the House as a Bill. It was the view which was taken of them by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the St. Augustine's Division of Kent when the Bill was before the House, and, although the right hon. Gentleman and he differed in toto as to the wisdom of the measure, 151 they were at all events throughout the discussions agreed upon that point. The right hon. Gentleman did not resist the Amendments brought forward on this point, but expressed his desire to give them what they asked for, and even his own friends and supporters complained of his going so far in what he had done. The concessions made were sufficient for Lord Hugh Cecil, who raised the very point which had been debated that afternoon. The noble Lord asked if he was to be told that because an individual, who had been in danger of massacre, had not a certain property standard, he was to be sent back to his native country. That was the whole point of the debate, and the promises which were made turned upon these very words which had been debated this afternoon. The Prime Minister attached no importance to the word "proves" and tried to improve Lord Hugh Cecil's substantive proposal, the noble Lord having raised the same point which they raised to-day. The Prime Minister thought he had met that point and Lord Hugh Cecil, who had protested on behalf of those who claimed the right of religious and political asylum, was satisfied with the words which the right hon. Gentleman proposed. The Opposition of the day however, raised some

difficulty, as they were not satisfied and thought they had not been fully met, as they wanted the addition of the word "liberty," which was suggested by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Although the Government divided against the word Lord Hugh Cecil was satisfied, but hon. Members never conceived for a moment that this point would arise in connection with the working of the Act. On the contrary, hon. Gentlemen on the Opposition side thought that the Prime Minister had gone too far. Besides the question of political or religious refugees, there was another important matter. They fought the Act of last year, and the worse Bill of the year before, on the question of political and religious refugees, and they thought they had been more successful than they had been, if the Act was to be worked in this way. But there was another important matter, and that was that they had also fought this matter on the ground of its interference with immigrant and trans- 152 Channel traffic, and therefore of its interference with the business arrangements of this country and the Continent. Was the Bill of last year worse than they supposed, or had it been made worse by the regulations or the administration of them? He confessed that it seemed to him that both the regulations and the administration of them had been unduly harsh, to a degree which was never contemplated by the opponents of the measure. The regulations or the administration of them must have been worse than the House of Commons contemplated. He was speaking in the presence of one who had had personal experience of the working of this Act. In the regrettable absence of Mr. Bowles from that House they could understand what he would say if he was stopped and asked if he had £5 and was an Englishman. He could imagine the kind of answer he would give in France. Another man he should not like to stop and ask would be the hon. Member for Accrington. The newspapers of America, when President Roosevelt's motor-car was run into by a trolley, had paragraphs of "What President Roosevelt said to the trolley man." It was nothing, as they would all understand, to what the hon. Member for Accrington would say to the Frenchman who asked him if he was an Englishman. Was it the case that Belgium and France had protested against the working of the Act, as it interfered with ordinary conditions to such a degree that it had produced consequences which nobody expected last year when it was passed? Mistaken as they might have been in passing it, he could not but say that the regulations which were drawn up were worse than the Act itself, and the working of the regulations was worse than the regulations themselves. They ought to have intelligible regulations issued and worked in the spirit in which the House would desire to see them worked.

§ *SIR JOSEPH LEESE* (Lancashire; Accrington)

said, after his right hon. friend's challenge it was impossible for him to remain silent, though he was not sure that he had not over-described the picture which he could draw. At any rate, he might be allowed to say this, that in his view, not only was this Act of Parliament degrading to the country but it 153 was degrading also to the individual Englishman. He was coming home from the Continent a few days ago, and on reaching the gangway of the cross channel steamboat he was confronted and addressed by a small gentleman in French uniform, who asked him in broken English "Are you an Englishman?" He was a good deal surprised but replied as politely as he could, "What is that to you?" For an Englishman returning to his own country to be cross-examined by a foreigner as to his nationality was certainly a new and degrading experience.

§ SIR HOWARD VINCENT (Sheffield, Central)

I was asked that question and did not think it insulting.

§ SIR JOSEPH LEESE

said, that after he had passed up the gangway, a gentleman on board the ship came to him, and said, "Are you a British subject?" He replied, "Mind your own business." Why should an Englishman going to his own country be insulted? He did not think he looked like an undesirable alien, and he had certainly a respectable ticket in his pocket. So this Act of Parliament, badly administered as it had been in this country, extended insults to the people of this country. When he got on board he said to the steward, "Is there a Frenchman at Folkestone to ask a man going to France whether he is a French citizen?" He said, "No, sir, there is no such Act in France."

§ COLONEL LOCKWOOD

rose to call attention to the salaries under the Vivisection of Animals Act.

§ MR. CREMER (Shoreditch, Haggerston)

rose to a point of order. If the hon. and gallant Gentleman asked his Question, would the Committee be precluded from further discussion of the question upon which they were engaged?

*THE CHAIRMAN*

The Committee will not be precluded from further discussion of the topic, but I understand that the Secretary of State for the Home Department wishes to reply now, and if that is so, I will call upon the right hon. Gentleman.

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§ MR. GLADSTONE

said in the first instance he would like to reply to the hon. Member for North Down who had asked him a Question about the inspection of laundries. The hon. Member said that at Question time he had given him a very unsympathetic Answer to the inquiry whether this Government would deal with the subject. He had told the hon. Member that they could not be expected to deal with the subject this session, and he would point out that the hon. Gentleman's own Party was in office for ten years and had left the question unsettled. It hardly lay with the hon. Member, therefore, to taunt him with giving such an answer in the first session of this Government.

§ MR. T. L. CORBETT

The ex-Home Secretary promised that he would introduce a Bill during the present session.

§ MR. GLADSTONE



said that the Question ought to have been addressed to a Member of the Front Opposition Bench and not to him. In regard to the question as to Inebriate Homes he would gladly look into it, but it was hardly possible to do it now, though he hoped it would be brought forward at another opportunity. Hon. Gentlemen opposite, who for ten years had been clamouring for an Aliens Bill, put off the passing of the Bill to the last month or two of the last session of their political existence, though he saw no reason from the point of view of hon. Gentlemen opposite why the Act should not have been passed years ago. But he confessed that since it had fallen to him to administer the Act he felt no surprise at the long delay in bringing the Bill forward. He could, indeed, quite understand the wish to pass it and to take the credit of it at the general election, and then to leave to their political opponents the difficulty, and possibly the odium, of working it. His position, and the position of those who acted with him, was perfectly well known with regard to the Act. He was not going to discuss the Act. They had disagreed with the main portion of it, agreeing with it only so far as it dealt with diseased people and criminals. They had considered that the subject was full of difficulties, that it would cause more trouble than it was worth, and 155 that there was not much chance of any Bill being worked effectively—in short, that there were many reasons against the proposals and hardly any in favour of them. What had been their experience? A good deal had been said in the debate about the Act, and he observed that it had not found many champions on the opposite Benches. Two hon. Gentlemen only who were protagonists and supporters of the Bill had spoken for it up to the present time, while other speakers had denounced it in no measured terms. He now occupied the unhappy position of knowing that whatever he did or said on the subject of the administration of the Act would draw fire upon him from all quarters of the House. He was inclined to demur to the statement that the regulations were not clear. He did not draw up the regulations, but he would undertake to say that very great care and pains were taken in the Home Office to make them as effective as possible. If they failed he doubted whether it was the fault of the framers of the regulations; the real cause of the difficulty of devising regulations dealing with this matter which would work smoothly in all quarters ought probably to be sought in the Act itself. In fairness to the officials who were endeavouring to work the Act at the various immigration ports, it should be allowed that the nature of the work which they had to perform exposed them to all sorts of difficulties. Certain people interested in passing immigrants into this country were putting the would-be immigrants up to various ways of evading the Act, and the immigration officials had to look very closely into individual cases. Difficulties arose owing to the language question. Immigrants came here, perhaps after dark, in bad weather, and the interpreter could not speak their particular language and, however carefully one tried to go into the details afterwards, it was almost impossible to ascertain what really had happened. In the case of Onix, the immigration officer did his duty as far as he was able, but it was also pretty clear that the intention of the third section was not carried out. He believed Onix did come under the designation of a political refugee, and ought to have been admitted. He did not blame the immigration officer. 156 That particular difficulty arose because very few Russians arrived at the port in question, and it was impossible to keep an interpreter at every port for every language. With a view to meeting this difficulty printed notices would be delivered to immigrants who, viva voce, could not be made to understand the interpreter. The Act had led to cases, sometimes painful, sometimes ludicrous, sometimes exceedingly difficult. For instance, there was the case of thirteen Scandinavian sailors who arrived at a port which was not an immigration port and at which they were not allowed to land. They

came to join their ships, and close by were the ships they had come to join. Inquiry was made as to what was to be done. If they had not been allowed to land the only course open to them would have been to return to the port from which they had come, then to have gone by sea to one of the Tyne ports, and finally reached their destination by train. He would not say whether the law was in any way broken in that case. Whether these men were allowed to land, or whether they joined their ships without landing he did not know; perhaps they did. It was not an immigration port, and over those ports the Secretary of State had no power. Then as to the American shipwrecked crew, he did not anticipate much difficulty in similar cases, as it had been arranged that the consular official concerned should be at once notified and leave given to the sailors to land. In the case of the French onion sellers, they were a most deserving class of men who had not come to compete in any British industry, but, on the contrary, to sell a desirable article of food to the poorer classes of this country; they were extremely well behaved and came and went without trouble to anybody. About seventeen arrived and were told they could not land owing to this Act. When that incident occurred he had been extremely anxious not to give unnecessary trouble to our neighbours, and the Consuls had been instructed to make known the provisions of the Act to these men, so that they might take advantage of the many loopholes—he would not call them loopholes, as it was perhaps an invidious term—the many opportunities which the 157 Act graciously allowed to these and other cases so that people might take their own measures to come into this country without in any way being inconvenienced. Then there was the case of the deaf and dumb man who, suspected of being a criminal alien, was brought before the magistrate, but as he was both deaf and dumb it was impossible to prove that he was either a criminal or an alien, and, as no one could discover his country or origin, there was nothing to be done but to discharge him. One painful case which had occurred was that of an idiot girl of nine years old who was rejected and sent back alone. [An HON. MEMBER: So she ought to have been.] He disagreed with the hon. Member. The Act ought to be made so elastic that full discrimination might be exercised in these cases and the fame of this country for generous treatment of these and other cases maintained. In that case the girl came back to this country a day or two afterwards as a first class passenger—[An HON. MEMBER: The same as the criminals]—and was in this country now. A good deal of inventiveness was being exercised in regard to these cases, but any case brought to his knowledge in which an immigration officer or board was charged with doing anything improper would be carefully inquired into as far as possible. Already there had been several cases referred to which on the face of them were of great hardship, but he was bound to say that in many instances there had been up to the present no corroboration, though the persons might be genuine refugees. He wished to remind hon. Members that his powers were extremely limited under the Act. For example, hon. Members had dealt with the word "proves" in Section 3. The onus of proof under that section was entirely on the immigrant. He had been asked whether it would not be possible to sift the men applying on religious or political grounds or because of persecution from those who were not. That really rested entirely with the Immigration Boards. If the Secretary of State were asked whether or no a particular act constituted an offence of a political character he could give his opinion, but 158 the Immigration Board was the sovereign authority so far as its own acts were concerned. It was quite true that in the appointment of a board the Secretary of State for the Home Department might have a good deal to say, and it was quite possible that he had the power of getting rid of a board and appointing a new one; but so far as the actions of the board under the Act were concerned, the Secretary

of State had no authority to interfere at all. He had been asked whether there had not been many illegal actions by the Immigration Boards. He was quite sure that the Immigration Boards were trying to do their duty as well as they possibly could. They were men of character and intelligence who understood the Act, and were acting in accordance with its provisions; but even if they acted with the utmost strictness within their powers, that did not prevent numberless extremely hard cases arising. From the very nature of the case they must arise whatever regulations were made. The hon. Member for Burnley had asked whether it would not be possible to add a representative of the working classes to the boards. As he had already said, the number on the Immigration Board was limited to three, but he understood that there was a considerable number of workmen's representatives among those from whom the boards were chosen. He would make, however, further inquiry into the question, and if he were satisfied that anything could be done to improve the administration of the Act in that respect he would try to carry it into effect. He recognised that a serious responsibility rested upon himself in regard to this Act. To start the administration of an Act, to the greater part of which one was opposed in Parliament, was no easy matter. And, having regard to the fact that a great deal of the opposition to the Act was based on the belief that it would be very difficult to administer, to prevent its provisions being evaded, and to prevent them in some respects being made ridiculous, it was a matter of some concern to him that he should not lay himself open to the charge of justifying previous opinions by allowing matters to happen which the strict administration of 159 the Act would not allow. That was the position. For his own part he had to recognise that the Act was the law of the land, and he should endeavour to get as much good as he could out of it. So far as the criminal side of the Act was concerned he thought there was reason for satisfaction. Up to the present he did not know of any serious difficulty that had arisen. They had already rid the country of many notorious pests, and he did not anticipate that there would be much difficulty or much difference of opinion with regard to that side of the question. He should endeavour, so far as he could, honestly to do justice to the Act, and above all to support officers who were conscientiously doing their best in the interests of the Act. On the other hand, he recognised the proud position this country had occupied for a great number of years in opening her gates to the distressed people of the world. He should endeavour to further the Act as far as possible according to the intention expressed by Parliament when the particular provisions to which he had alluded were put in the third section of the Act. He would carefully consider any suggestions which might be made. He was collecting information from the Immigration Boards, but it was too early to present any information worth basing any serious argument upon. He would consider in what way he could avoid the painful cases which had occurred and which were likely to occur under such regulations. He had already stated that there were one or two ways in which he thought he could produce improvements in the working of the Act—first, by publishing at the immigration ports notices in every language likely to be used by immigrants; and, secondly, in regard to the sittings of the boards in camera. He thought these were disadvantages accruing from the present practice. So long as the Immigration Boards sat in camera every kind of story as to the doings of the boards and the reasons for their actions would get abroad, and all sorts of appeals would be made in this House for inquiry, and the Department would be in perpetual communication with hon. Gentlemen in order to explain away stories which had got about for the simple reason that the public had not an oppor- 160 tunity of hearing or seeing what went on within the walls of the court. He should consider that, and he thought at the present moment, so far as he was advised, it would be desirable

that the Press should be admitted. He would like to take the opinion of the Immigration Boards to ascertain what they had to say on the matter, but he could see no reason why the Press should not be admitted. He thought the maintenance of this seclusion would do more harm than good. He had mentioned three points in which he thought improvement might be made. He could only say that he should anxiously watch the operation of the Act, knowing, at any rate, that if he failed to do his duty in the spirit which operated on both sides of the House on the formation of the Act he would hear of it in this House; consequently, there was every reason why he should keep up to the mark. The Act threw a new responsibility upon the Home Office; he did not deny that it was a most distracting one, for it occupied part of one's attention every day. It was a new burden—a burden which had to be borne as well as possible, but he could not forget that the people of this country expected that they should not go back on old traditions, and that while they had a right, or claimed a right, to deal with certain classes of immigrants yet, subject to the law of the land, they ought to do all they could to maintain at the highest point the traditions of this country.

§ MR. AKERS-DOUGLAS (Kent, St. Augustine's)

said he was sure that the right hon. Gentleman and his staff at the Home Office would do their best to see that the Act was administered according to the intention of Parliament, and with as little harshness as possible, and without detracting from the intentions of Parliament. As to his taunt regarding the late period of the late Parliament's existence at which the Act was passed, he would remind the House that the measure was the outcome of a Royal Commission, and that if the first Bill, introduced shortly after that Commission had reported, had been allowed to pass, the initial difficulties of administration would not have been so soon transferred to the 161 right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman complained that there did not appear to be any champions of the Bill on the Opposition side of the House. They had, however, to obey the Chairman's ruling, and he somewhat regretted that some hon. Members opposite had managed to evade the ruling of the Chair—"No, no!"—and had managed to get in, at all events, a good many observations which—

§ MR. TREVELYAN (Yorks, W.R., Elland)

asked if the right hon. Gentleman was justified in reflecting upon the ruling of the Chair.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman was reflecting upon the Chair.

§ MR. AKERS-DOUGLAS

said he was not reflecting in the least upon the Chairman's ruling. Almost in every debate upon this question there had always been an acerbity introduced which was to be regretted in discussions in this House. The only point which they had to consider to-day was the administration of the Act. The hon. Member who spoke first based his whole case upon the assumption that the Immigration Boards were showing a prejudice against the political refugee. He accepted the view that the intention of Parliament was to prevent injustice to the political refugee, and the question at issue

was whether, in the administration of the Act, the political refugee was treated with any unfairness. There had been cases brought forward by hon. Members who thought they illustrated injustice, and who cited them as examples of the exclusion of persons who were fleeing from persecution. But it had been admitted by the right hon. Gentleman that there was not sufficient evidence to condemn the Immigration Boards, and he would repeat the appeal of the right hon. Gentleman that they should wait a longer time before condemning those boards or the rules or the procedure under the rules. So far as he was concerned he took the responsibility for the work done in connection with the framing of the rules whilst he was in office. He did not remember whether these rules were absolutely completed when he left office; but he, of course, took the entire responsibility for the work of his Department up to that time, and he knew that the rules were framed without any desire to strain the Act one way or another beyond the strict intentions of Parliament. If there was found to be any possibility of injustice under these rules the right hon. Gentleman would no doubt take the same course for correcting that tendency that he himself would have taken if still in his place. He had carried out his assurances to the House with regard to the constitution of the Immigration Boards, and had put a large number of working men on the panels.

§ MR. CREMER

Yes, on the panels, but not on the boards.

§ MR. AKERS-DOUGLAS

said that by placing working men on the panels it was thought that they would be placed on the boards. With regard to the Channel service, no grievance had been brought to his knowledge officially or privately; he thought the Act had been working with smoothness, and the reference to the hon. Member for Accrington and to Mr. Bowles showed that there was no partiality. He had seen the Act administered in several ports, and, considering the very great difficulties which surrounded the putting into operation of all new Acts, he thought it had worked with very considerable smoothness. They were quite as prepared to put these searching questions to men of the class referred to by the hon. Member for Accrington as to men coming from the borders of Russia.

§ SIR CHARLES DILKE

asked the right hon. Gentleman, as he had referred to his knowledge of the Channel service in a private capacity, whether the lines he referred to were exempted under the Act.

§ MR. AKERS-DOUGLAS

could not say without reference, but would let the right hon. Baronet know. He could not tell what regulations had been made since the Home Secretary had announced his intention of inquiring carefully into 163 the question as to the admission of the Press to the meetings of the Immigration Boards. It should be remembered that these meetings were not courts of law. The boards met chiefly for administrative purposes. The point was raised when the measure was under discussion in Parliament. He

thought the authority itself should be left to consider the question of admitting the Press; but so far as he was concerned, if the right hon. Gentleman found it desirable to make an Order from headquarters on the subject he had no doubt he would do so from the best possible motives, and he would not take exception to his action.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

said he had omitted to state that the possibility of appointing local advisory committees to help the immigration boards in ascertaining accurately the facts concerning aliens was being considered.

§ COLONEL LOCKWOOD (Essex, Epping)

said he wished to direct the attention of the House to the sufferings of dumb animals. He had considerable hesitation in again bringing this matter before the House, but not because he was in the least afraid that they would refuse to listen to him. He had always found the House generous in listening to the remarks he had to make on this subject. Nor were his feelings blunted by what he had heard in previous sessions from opponents on these benches. He was just as anxious now for the welfare of dumb animals as he was when he first entered the House. The reason why he was diffident in bringing the matter forward was that he was anxious not to spoil the cause he had so much at heart by making any over statement. He knew that there was no subject brought before the House from time to time that had suffered so much from over statement. He did not wish to accuse the inspectors under the Act or the medical profession of want of humanity. On the contrary, he looked upon the medical profession as the noblest profession in the world; and he was ready to acknowledge that if they asked for experiments on living animals it was because they believed that by them they could palliate human 164 suffering. His argument was that the medical profession were liable to look upon experiments on living animals as an easier method of obtaining knowledge than research into science. He maintained that the discovery of the X-rays and of radium had done more to palliate human suffering and to help the medical profession than any number of experiments on living animals. One felt strongly on a subject like this by reading of the awful suffering inflicted on animals, and in the discussion of it. there might be a tendency towards over-statement. He must say that no member of the English medical profession had ever been guilty of the ghastly and hideous cruelties which one read of as practised in other countries. Anti-vivisectionists had always been accused of over-stating their case; but there had been as much over-statement on the medical side. Years ago medical men said that science could not possibly be conducted unless they had a free hand to make experiments on live animals. Public opinion, however, became strong against vivisection. It was led by men who, no doubt, made over-statements, but who were so horrified at the cruelties which might be committed on dumb animals that eventually even the officials gave way. It took a great deal to make an impression on officials, even on the Minister of Education. Thereafter the Home Office consented to pass rules and regulations under which the experiments were conducted. With fuller information, he asked the Home Secretary to go further and exclude dogs altogether from the regulations. Dogs had a higher nervous organisation than other animals. He would say nothing about guinea-pigs and mice; but he did plead for the dogs. If the right hon. Gentleman could not see his way to exclude dogs from the operation of the Act, he asked him, in view of all that had taken place since the original Royal Commission

sat, and in view of all the evidence adducible in this country and in various parts of the United States, to appoint a Committee, or an impartial Commission which should consider the evidence on both sides—the evidence of faddists like himself or the hon. Member for Edinburgh and St Andrew's Universities, and to make recommendations to the House.

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§ MR. TOMKINSON (Cheshire, Crewe)

said he wished to thank the hon and gallant Gentleman for having initiated this discussion. It as an undoubted fact that experiments on living animals had increased enormously in late years. The large majority of these operations, it was true, were slight, such as hypodermic injections, but there was an increasing uneasy feeling that they resulted in a vast amount of cruelty. Naturally the greatest attention was paid to the experiments made on man's best friend amongst animals, the dog; but he hoped that that was not to be taken as an implication that other animals were outside consideration. The law stated that certain experiments should not be conducted unless there was a special permit by the Home Secretary. In many cases the law took away with one hand what it gave with the other. They knew perfectly well that the excuse that the animals were put under anæsthetics and were not sensible to the operation did not hold water. A dog must be made so insensible by chloroform that it would die, or else was very sensible. Curare was now very extensively used to take away vocal power, but it left the poor animal not insensible, and he was satisfied that great cruelty was often inflicted. In the *Physiological Journal*, which sold at 8s.—a prohibitory price to the public, and published so many months after the operations had taken place as to put them beyond the statute of limitations in which prosecutions were allowed—they would find it admitted that operations of the most awful kind were not infrequently performed upon animals. He remembered reading of operations performed on cats which, it was stated, no dog could survive. His own feeling was that they had no right to exploit the animal creation for their own purposes. He should like to see experiments on living animals absolutely prohibited; but he supposed they must be content with asking the House to appoint a small Committee to inquire into the working of this law and report.

§ SIR JOHN TUKE (Edinburgh and St. Andrew's Universities)

said he wished to congratulate the hon. and gallant Gentleman who raised this question 166 on the moderation which he had exhibited in the expression of his views. He declared his conviction that there had been no abuse of the practice of vivisection. He knew that the Act, founded on the Royal Commission's Report, was carried out by honourable and upright gentlemen, and that physiologists and pathologists had no fear of any investigation that might be made. He admitted, although he held the opposite view, that there was a conviction on the part of a small minority that vivisection was cruel and unnecessary, and therefore for that reason he hoped there would be an inquiry. In almost all great communities for the purposes of public health such experiments were carried out in order to produce improvement of treatment. Thousands and thousands of these operations were carried out for the good of the human race, for the purpose of investigating such diseases as diphtheria, and the discovery of antidotes for such diseases as tetanus, hydrophobia, and others. Out of

32,000 experiments carried out last year 30,000 were performed mainly for the good of the human race,

*THE CHAIRMAN*

This debate ought to be confined to the question of the administration of the Home Office in regard to this subject. It seems to be degenerating into a debate on vivisection, which is not in order.

§ SIR JOHN TUKE

apologised and said that what he wished to assert was that the way in which this Act was carried out by the inspectors was thorough and complete. Misconceptions had arisen in the public mind which he was anxious to get discredited and therefore he wished the Home Secretary to appoint a Commission. It was manifestly impossible to fight out the question on the floor of this House; it must be investigated before some responsible authority.

§ MR. PICKERSGILL (Bethnal Green, S.W.)

said he entirely sympathised with the right hon. and gallant Member for the Epping Division, but did not think he could at the present moment usefully add anything to what he had said. He desired, however, to call attention to another subject.

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§ MR. H. J. TENNANT

rose to a point of order. A motion for reduction was now before the Committee and if another subject was to be discussed he would ask leave to withdraw the Motion.

§ MR. ARNOLD-FORSTER (Croydon)

inquired if the withdrawal would preclude further discussion on the Home Office Vote.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

No; that will not preclude any further discussion on any other subject.

§ Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

§ MR. CREMER

said he wanted it to be quite clear whether, if the hon. Member withdrew his Motion, should they be precluded from any further discussion on the Aliens Bill.

*THE CHAIRMAN*

If another reduction is moved to the Home Office Vote before a reduction is moved on a later item the Aliens Bill can still be discussed.



§ MR. PICKERSGILL

said the Motion for reduction which he had placed upon the Paper had reference to the Criminal Department of the Home Office; that was the Department which considered petitions from convicted persons. In England, unlike any other civilised country, there was no Court of Criminal Appeal, and a person convicted, however unjustly, had therefore no other remedy except to resort to the clemency of the Crown; he had to ask to be pardoned for an offence he had not committed. That was an utterly preposterous and ridiculous condition of things, but so long as it remained law they had to make the best of it. The Committee of Inquiry into the case of the unfortunate Mr. Beck found that the machinery for the investigation of these petitions was sadly deficient, and recommended that the legal element on the staff should be strengthened. The late Home Secretary denied that his staff required to be strengthened at all, and refused to carry out the recommendations of the Committee, His present object was to show that the machinery at 168 the Home Office was weak, and to prove to the right hon. Gentleman who now presided at the Home Office that it was important to take steps to carry out that recommendation. It appeared from the Report of the Committee that not one of the fifteen petitions which Mr. Beck sent up during the five years he was incarcerated was ever brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. This seemed to him to raise an important constitutional question. The Secretary of State was entrusted with the highly responsible duty of advising the Crown in the exercise of its clemency, and it was a most important question from a constitutional point of view that we had certain officials at the Home Office who took it upon themselves absolutely to prevent petitions from convicted persons coming to the knowledge of the Secretary of State. According to the Report of the Committee the case did not rest there. It appeared that at all events the bulk of these fifteen petitions never reached even the Permanent Under Secretary of State. That gentleman in his evidence frankly stated that his subordinates were allowed to exercise a discretion with regard to the cases which they thought it necessary to bring to his notice. Therefore it was obvious that unless these subordinates were trained and qualified men the most gross miscarriages of justice might remain absolutely without remedy. He did not propose to go through the details of the Beck case; it was an old case and a most painful one. Nor did he desire to go into the details of the illustrations which the Committee gave as to the want of grasp of the legal principle and the real question concerned in that case displayed by the Home Office clerks in the minutes they wrote upon the papers. But it was perfectly clear that so long as this system prevailed, under which there was no security that any particular case would come, he would not say to the right hon. Gentleman's notice, but even to the notice of the Permanent Under-Secretary, it was absolutely essential that they should have among the subordinate officials of the Home Office gentlemen who were capable, first of all, of seizing the crucial points of a complicated case, and then, having seized them, of putting them into a proper memorandum for the consideration of 169 the Secretary of State. The late Secretary of State for the Home Department declined to carry out the recommendation of the Committee on the ground that he could refer legal questions to the Law Officers of the Crown. That reply showed that the right hon. Gentleman had missed the real point of the criticism of the Committee, because it assumed that the crucial points of the case had been extracted and brought to his knowledge, whereas what the Committee complained of was that the subordinate officials of the Home Office had not those qualifications which enabled them to seize the crucial points and embody them in a memorandum. In the debates

which took place on this question in the late Parliament the present Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed the opinion that the legal element of the staff at the Home Office required to be strengthened. He hoped therefore the present Secretary of State would see his way to carry out the recommendations of the Committee. The Beck case had excited a very strong feeling in the country, and the evidence taken before the Committee showed that there was a want of adequate legal training in the subordinate officials of the Home Office, upon whom great responsibility was thrown.

§ MR. ARNOLD-FORSTER

said he regretted what seemed to be the unsympathetic reply of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State with regard to the question of the inspection of uninspected laundries, and he desired to make one suggestion to the right hon. Gentleman by which, quite apart from any legislation, he thought a great deal might be done in the direction of inspection. They were all quite aware of the fact that there were a great number of places where a trade was carried on for profit which were not inspected by the factory inspectors, in respect to which a great deal could be done without legislation. He desired to draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to what had been done in a very recent period by the Bishop of London. His Lordship invited all persons over whom he had any authority who were interested in any of these institutions where work was being carried on without inspection to consider this matter and to report 170 to him as to what action they could take. He warned them that public opinion would not continue to tolerate the carrying on of this work without inspection, and suggested that they should bring their institutions voluntarily under the control of the Home Office. Having read of the horrors which took place in some of these places in regard to which there was no inspection, he (Mr. Arnold-Forster) would suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that he should second the efforts of the Bishop of London. He believed that if an appeal of that kind were made they would have an answer from those responsible, and in that way they would know the magnitude of the evil, and what were the institutions which thought it necessary, for reasons which appeared to them good and to him bad, to withdraw from the supervision of the law.

§ MR. GLADSTONE

said he should be very glad to look into the matter referred to by the right hon. Gentleman, and see if anything could be done. Though they could not do everything at once, he would look into the matter without delay. With regard to the question raised by his hon. and gallant friend, he must point out that, of course, he had to administer the Act relating to vivisection—perhaps one of the most disagreeable duties he had to perform—and all he could say was that so far as the administration of that Act was concerned he had taken as much care as possible. The hon. and gallant Gentleman asked whether dogs could not be excluded from vivisection, but he did not think that was possible without legislation. The hon. Member for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities asked whether a Committee or Commission could be appointed to inquire into the question. That was a matter to which he should certainly give his attention, because it was now nearly thirty years since the last inquiry was held on the subject, and he would consider whether it was desirable to hold another inquiry. The hon. Member for Bethnal Green raised a very important question with regard to the legal training of officials at the Home Office. With all respect to the gentlemen who

composed the Commission of Inquiry into the Beck case, he ventured 171 to disagree with some of their conclusions. He did not agree that the Home Office was inefficient in legal training, nor did he think, with all respect to the legal profession, that that was precisely what was wanted. They certainly wanted very high qualities, but he believed that those qualities were got by service in the Home Office, and in that respect he could not speak too highly of the work that was done daily by the subordinate staff of the Home Office. He quite agreed that in the case referred to a mistake was made, but mistakes were made by other people: even in the case of the most eminent judges they could have no guarantee against mistakes. What was wanted was an adequate staff of trained men. They had trained men, but he thought that the staff wanted strengthening, and he had already made a proposal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the point. With regard to the question of a court of criminal appeal, that of course must be considered in relation to the question of Home Office administration, and vice versa; but the whole matter was now under consideration.

§ MR. T. P. O'CONNOR (Liverpool, Scotland)

said the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Croydon had asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to ascertain which conventual laundries were willing to have inspection and which not. That was a matter he would leave to the right hon. Gentleman in consultation with those who controlled those institutions. He only wished to say that the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Croydon, who, he regretted, was not now in his place, in making this recommendation spoke of the horrors that occurred in certain establishments. Knowing the opinions and the traditions of the right hon. Gentleman, he thought he could pretty well understand what he meant. He wished the right hon. Gentleman had spoken a little more frankly, and he would have been able to say in reply that anybody who brought a charge of that kind against the devoted women who managed these laundries in the religion to which he belonged was saying something which was not only contrary to the truth but to decency and Christian feeling.

§ MR. CLAUDE HAY (Shoreditch, Hoxton)

said he ventured to ask 172 Question as to the conditions under which cab drivers' licences were given and taken away, and also a Question as to the fee charged for such licences. They all knew that the work of a cabman was not becoming easier day by day, and that therefore any new charge placed upon his calling was a very serious burden upon his weekly budget. He understood that the right hon. Gentleman had withheld the extra 2s. 6d, which was more or less the fee of the Home Office, but there still remained a fee of 7s. 6d. for the cabman to pay, which was far too high. The time had come for these fees to be reduced, and nothing more than a mere nominal fee for registration made.

And, it being half-past Seven of the clock, the Chairman left the Chair to make his Report to the House.

§ Committee report Progress; to sit again this evening.

Back to CIVIL SERVICES.

Forward to EVENING SITTING.

