

the same time, accomplish another, and, in itself, a most desirable object, namely, that of leaving on the Executive its full responsibility, in regard to the formation of these contracts.

Your Committee would suggest that the whole transaction should be, as at present, fully completed by the Executive Government; that the contract should be entered into with the offerers preferred by them, and that it should be executed; but that a clause should be inserted in every such contract, providing expressly that it should not be binding unless either (1) it has been approved by Resolution of the House of Commons, or (2), has lain on the Table of the House for a month without disapproval.

In reality and strictly such contracts are, at present, subject to the approval of the House; and the very proper practice recently introduced, by the late Government, of declaring the subsidies to be payable out of monies to be voted by Parliament has, in a great measure, warned contractors of the real state of the case. Any plea, however, of ignorance or misapprehension should be excluded by the insertion of the clause above suggested; and the contract, when executed, should at once, and without waiting till a vote under it is required to be asked, be laid on the table of the House, accompanied by the report of the Postmaster General to the Treasury, and, if the Treasury have dissented from his recommendations, by a minute setting forth the grounds on which they have proceeded.

It has been matter of consideration whether it will be enough to lay the papers before The House, on the footing that, after the lapse of a certain period, the approval of The House shall be assumed, or whether a specific vote should in all cases be taken on a statement by the Minister. Your Committee incline to think that the object in view will be best obtained by the alternative course which they have suggested, while some practical difficulties would thereby be avoided; but in whatever form this be done, Your Committee are satisfied that great benefit will accrue, not only directly, from the control of Parliament at a stage where that control can be freely and effectively exercised, but also in its indirect, though not less important, results.

The certainty of an immediate consideration by Parliament of the act of the Executive would tend greatly to secure a thorough attention to all the elements necessary for a right decision; and if any of these had been overlooked, it would afford a certain means of having it immediately brought into view.

Had the practice now recommended been in observance when the contracts which have formed the chief subject of the Committee's remarks were entered into, Your Committee do not believe it possible that those evils could have occurred which they have brought under the notice of The House.

It is true that emergencies might occasionally arise, by the unexpected breaking down, for instance, of an existing service, or the sudden bursting out of a war, which might require new arrangements, necessary to be entered upon without the delay that would ensue, if Parliament were not sitting, before these could be brought under its consideration. But the postal service is not in this respect different from the other services of the empire, in which, in special emergencies, expenditure unauthorised by Parliament becomes absolutely essential. In all such cases the Executive must take the responsibility of sanctioning whatever immediate urgency requires; and it has never been found that Parliament exhibited any reluctance to supply the means of meeting such expenditure. There are no grounds for supposing that any such sudden emergencies occurring in the postal service might not safely be left to be met in the same way with similar emergencies in other services.

Your Committee proceed to make some suggestions which present themselves from the consideration of the evidence. With respect to the details of the arrangements for the conduct of the business Your Committee purposely refrain from making any rules, but they prefer stating the objects which should be effected by the departmental regulations:

1. Whatever may be the distribution of the business, the responsibility of the Treasury should be complete and effective. However lax the practice, the Treasury is now responsible in theory. The decision on Post Office contracts is not a mere