

PUBLIC OFFICERS.

House resolved itself into Committee on Bill (No. 5) to amend the Act respecting Public Officers.—(Mr. McLellan.)

(In the Committee.)

Mr. BLAKE. The hon. gentleman ought to explain to us, to some extent, the reasons for the change.

Mr. McLELLAN. The only change made is to add to section 22 of the Act in the Revised Statutes the power to take as security from any officer in an office of trust, any deposit that he may have at his credit in the savings bank. The clause, after reciting what is in the general Act, adds :

"Or a conditional assignment of a deposit standing in the name of such public officer in the books of the Post Office or any of the Government savings banks, but in the case of an assignment of a deposit as aforesaid the interest shall be payable to the depositor in like manner as if no such assignment had been made."

Mr. BLAKE. What I suggested was, not that the hon. gentleman should state what the change in the Bill was, for that is obvious, but what the reasons for the change were.

Mr. McLELLAN. In many cases the officer says he can give just as good security as a guarantee company, as he has money on deposit and wants the Government to take that instead of taking the guarantee company or individual security.

Mr. BLAKE. Will the hon. gentleman say whether, to his knowledge, this method of obtaining security is adopted in the English or any other governmental system?

Mr. McLELLAN. I am not aware that it is, but it has frequently been pressed upon the Department here. Very often the guarantee companies, when called upon to pay, raise technical objections and delay, and we consider this better security.

Mr. BLAKE. Is there any provision in the law as to the extent of the security required?

Mr. McLELLAN. That is regulated by the different Acts of Parliament, and by the duties the officer is called upon to perform.

Mr. BLAKE. What occurred to me was this: if you obtained a private security, you obtained this certainty that there are persons who are competent, respectable people, who have pledged themselves for the good conduct of the officer. So, when you take a guarantee company, that company does not conduct its business on the theory that it will guarantee everybody; it makes, on the contrary, rigid enquiries as to the character, habits, the regulations of the transactions expected, in fact, as to everything concerning those it is proposed to guarantee. Knowing that, we know we have that sort of security, but when you propose simply that a sum of money will always be accepted, there is none of those securities. I have not attached so much importance to the simple *quantum* of the obligations as to the circumstance that people, whether private companies or individuals, are to be found who will run the risk involved in securing individuals. You know what happens sometimes when bail is asked. Bail is obtained by persons by simply depositing with those who gave the bail the amount of the bail. But that is not considered the very best kind of bail, although it is certain the sum of money will be forthcoming. What the law calls for is that security that a person will appear which is involved in another being willing to run the risk of his not appearing. Any security of that kind is, of course, got rid of by the proposal of the hon. gentleman. That was what occurred to me, and that was the reason why I asked him if he was cognisant of the fact that this mode of obtaining security was adopted. While I am on my feet, as I do not desire to trouble the committee again, I would suggest that it might be expedient to alter

the latter part of the clause so as to provide that the interest should be paid to the depositor only until the forfeit is made. As it stands at present, the hon. gentleman will find that the security is very inadequate, because there is an indefinite provision that the interest shall be paid, it may be for all time, no matter what may happen.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I go a good way with the hon. gentleman in his remarks, but I think that whole question was argued out when it was considered whether we should require personal security, or the security of a guarantee company. Of course, a guarantee company has to make enquiries of its own, but those enquiries do not come before the Government. I agree with the hon. gentleman that it is of very great importance that we should have some security for the character and conduct of the civil servant, the public officer, and that the amount is not of so much importance as the enquiries which precede the giving of the security; but I do not fancy that there can be a better inducement should be held out to them to become respectable members of society,—I use that expression,—to become steady, serious young men, looking out for the future, and preparing for a rainy day. It is of great importance to get these young men to deposit what they can spare of their earnings in the savings banks or other investments, instead of wasting their annual salaries, which is perhaps too much the custom of young men. When a civil servant accumulates a sum of money in this unquestionable security, in the Government savings bank or the Post Office savings bank, sufficient to be a valuable security to the Government, that is a patent proof that the person who has accumulated it has been saving, has been economical, has been steady, and has a view towards the future, so I think this is the most unquestionable kind of security which could be offered.

Mr. BLAKE. I quite agree with the hon. gentleman that this matter was, to some extent, settled by the decision of the question whether the security of the guarantee companies should be accepted or not. As we know, they make enquiries, and the sureties will make enquiries themselves. Therefore, in neither case does it come before the Government. It is the case of the private guarantor who does this on the ground of affection, or relationship, or friendship, or of the guarantee company who do it for business. If this is intended as a reward for economy and prudence on the part of the young men who are entering the service, and to encourage them to look forward to the happy day when they will be able to get their bonds released, and if this is to be an incentive to them to be economical, I am glad to know that at his advanced period of life the hon. gentleman possesses such a sanguine temperament. It reminds me, however, of the proposition he made once before, that he would probably induce the poor Indian to exchange his rifles for shotguns.

Mr. McLELLAN. According to the suggestion of the hon. gentleman, I propose to add to the last part of the clause "until the forfeiture of the security."

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. In answer to the remark of the hon. gentleman opposite that my sanguine disposition led me to think that this measure would be beneficial to the young men of the Civil Service, and that it was like my suggestion to persuade the Indians to give up the use of Winchester rifles by exchanging them for fowling-pieces, I may say that I was not then aware that it was a special instruction of the Government of which the hon. gentleman was, or perhaps was not, a member, that the Indians should be supplied with Winchester rifles. This Bill, however, saves the civil servant what he has now to pay to the