

decrease of \$27,283 in the civil government estimates for the Interior Department. It is a decrease for this reason. The largest portion of the expense of this department is in connection with Dominion Lands, and the economy which will be effected amounting to over \$25,000 during the next fiscal year, will be brought about by the abolition of unnecessary offices in the outside service. It will be at once apparent that when these offices are abolished in the outside service, it will necessarily place upon the officers estimated for under the head of civil government, a considerable increase of work. Before it is discovered how that change will work out, it would have been imprudent for me to decrease the number of clerks in the inside service, and consequently there has only been a decrease of one third-class clerk. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Cochrane) was evidently under a misapprehension as to the question of economy. When he comes to figure up the salaries paid by the Department of Interior, after these Estimates are passed, he will find that notwithstanding some small increases, there is on the whole a decrease of over \$25,000.

Mr. FOSTER. The question that has been discussed—and I must say very fairly discussed on both sides of the House—is one which is of sufficient importance to engage more of the attention of the House. Its importance has been added to by the explicit declaration of two Ministers of the Crown which completely changes the basis upon which additions are to be made to the salaries of civil servants in this country. We cannot allow a complete change to be made in this way without comment, and without calling the attention of the House and the attention of the country, to what is involved. I listened particularly to the law as it was read by my hon. friend (Mr. Sproule), and I ask the Minister of Marine and Fisheries who is a lawyer: Whether he thinks that they can, under that rendering of the law, drop the statutory increase other than for cause; such cause being inattention to duty or some other reason which in the opinion of the department casts a stigma upon the clerk. If ever the words of a statute were explicit, these are. There is the general declaration that there shall be a minimum and a maximum salary, that the minimum shall commence at so much, and that there shall be a statutory increase of \$50 a year. There is a very proper power placed in the hands of the Minister to prevent that increase being given, which the law says shall be given, if there is any cause which approves itself to the Minister, such cause being something which rendered the clerk either, from inability, or inattention, or carelessness, or bad habits not deserving of that increase. But outside of that I ask my hon. friend if he thinks that under the reading of the law they have the right to prevent the increase.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. It is not of much use for my hon. friend and me to discuss this matter, because I tell him that the matter was formally submitted to the Minister of Justice, and he gave a long reasoned opinion that it was not compulsory but entirely permissive.

Mr. FOSTER. I think it would be very interesting if the hon. gentleman would bring that down.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I think the hon. gentleman should bring it down without a motion.

Mr. FOSTER. Now, I think we have got upon something else than legal ground. Civil servants have rights as well as any other good citizens of this country—as well as Ministers of the Crown. A Minister who enjoys his office and emoluments ought not to treat an official with anything but the fairest consideration. I think that is a principle which we will all agree to. No man goes into the civil service of this country without looking into it beforehand. There are in the civil service a great many young men of excellent education and excellent parts. When looking for a career for themselves, these young men looked to the civil service. They read the statute law, and besides that they had the custom of twenty-five or thirty years to guide them. I have no doubt that a member of Parliament on either side, when explaining the matter to an applicant for a position in the service, would say: The law is this: you go in at the minimum, and there is a maximum to which you attain, and you attain to that by increases of so much per year, such increases being given so long as you perform your duties well and get the commendation of the head of your department. The young man enters the service on this basis. He is not a lawyer, and is not looking for technicalities; but there is the plain meaning of the law, and the practice of twenty-five or thirty years. You may say there is no abstract right which the civil servant can claim. But he has taken his step outwards in his career on that basis, and that ought to be taken into consideration by any Government in discussing whether there should be changes or not. The law contemplated that in fixing a minimum and a maximum; it contemplated that there should be an increase in some manner. Was that left to hap-hazard, or to the will of the Minister? No; Parliament thought it best not to leave it to hap-hazard, and it prescribed in the law under what conditions and circumstances these increases should be made. We are all agreed upon that. But, my hon. friend says, it costs a great deal, this civil service. I admit that; I have always admitted it. I have no hesitation in saying that I think our civil service has cost us more than it ought to have