

but I do not think it would be safe to make the doing of it obligatory. We take the power to abolish the office and express our intention of doing so, unless we find it impossible in the public interest. It will be unsafe at this juncture to abolish that office. It is sufficient for the present that we declare our desire to proceed in the direction of that economy. There was no agitation or inquiry suggested in any committee with reference to the getting rid of this office.

Mr. LAURIER. The legislation which the hon. gentleman proposes is altogether dependent on the fitness of the inspector to discharge both offices. If he turns out to be a good man, then the other office will be abolished; but if he should not reach the expectation of the Minister of Justice, the other office will be continued. But I will put it another way to the hon. gentleman. Suppose that the accountant dies to-morrow—then the office is abolished and the duties would devolve upon the inspector, as to whose competence the hon. gentleman is not satisfied. The hon. gentleman must see that it is not reasonable to base legislation upon the contingent capacity of the incumbent of an office. He must decide whether there is work for two officers, or only one. If there is work for two, let it be provided that two officers shall be appointed, and if only for one, let it be so stated, and let a competent officer be selected.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. I do not think the hon. gentleman gives altogether the credit to the department that it deserves in the effort that it is making.

Mr. LAURIER. I wish I could.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Suppose the hon. gentleman's views should prevail, what would the position be? We should have two officers, as the law now provides.

Mr. LAURIER. Not necessarily.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Certainly. I am not stating to the House, as I am not sure that, in the public interest, we could afford to abolish that office.

Mr. LAURIER. I am sorry to hear you say that.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. I will give the reason. We are not in possession of the slightest evidence that this clause would work. But between this and the meeting of the next Parliament, we might come to the conclusion that we are able efficiently to administer the department without this officer. In such a case we could not take a single step until another session. I do not stand strongly upon this. I thought it would be better to come to Parliament and state that, a new

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER.

officer having been appointed to the position of inspector, possessing all the qualities for the discharge of these duties, that it might be that as soon as he had an opportunity to get his work in hand—and he has not had that opportunity, as the hon. gentleman will see, as he was appointed only two or three months ago—this economy could be carried out. If so, the Government would be prepared to carry it out. But, certainly, with only two or three months' experience for the inspector—he has not had the time even to visit all penitentiaries under his supervision—it would be impossible for us at the present moment to say to Parliament that we are prepared to take this step. But we can say that if we are able to do so, we will.

Mr. McMULLEN. It appears to me there is another point in this question. I do not know whether I am right in my conclusions or not. This clause says:

At any time after the present accountant of the penitentiaries ceases to hold that office, the Governor in Council may abolish the said office.

And so on. It seems to me that that installs the present incumbent during his natural life. Suppose the hon. gentlemen now on the treasury benches should be replaced by some other Cabinet, who should find that this economy could be carried out. It seems to me that this would place this officer in such a position that the Government could not deal with him, but would have to come and ask authority from Parliament.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. No; that is not the object, nor would that be the construction.

Mr. McMULLEN. I do not know the hon. gentleman's object, but it seems to me that would be the effect of the clause.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. I am sure the hon. gentleman will accept my assurance that this Bill does not affect the officer's status in regard to any matter of discipline under the Civil Service Act. That is not the intention, nor is it the effect of the language. But, of course, so far as that is concerned, we do not propose ruthlessly to abolish this office.

Mr. LAURIER. This is the effect of what the hon. gentleman says: We have made an appointee to the position of inspector within the last few months, and we think we have appointed a good man. If he turns out to be as good a man as we suppose, he will be able to discharge the work of two officers, and there will be a saving; but if he is not equal to the discharge of these duties, two officers will be appointed, and you will have two men to do the work which might be done by one if he were a competent man and able to do the work. The whole of this section, according to the hon. gentleman, depends upon the compe-