

which are the most important in public servants are precisely the ones which no competitive examination will touch. Still, I think the Government ought to be chary about abolishing qualifying examinations which are totally different from competitive examinations; and I hope the Secretary of State and the Ministers generally, will be firm upon that point and see that no man is promoted, as of course, from one class to another without passing a reasonable qualifying examination. I would like to know from the First Minister, as this is a question of policy, whether he sees his way at all to introduce competitive examinations in the first rank. I admit that after the first appointment competitive examinations ceases to a great extent to be a good test, but I still think that competitive examination, particularly if a number of people are applying, as I see they are, would be a great safeguard, both to the public service and perhaps to the gentlemen themselves.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. After the best consideration I have been able to give to the matter, I think it would be very difficult to have a qualifying examination which would satisfy the heads of the Departments. We have found that, in fact, a competitive examination, which allowed the highest number of marks to give a priority or right to the appointment, would result in denuding the common schools of all their schoolmasters. The hon. gentleman shakes his head, but I can assure him that there is a rush of schoolmasters for appointment in the service, and they, of course, are able to do the most abstruse problems in arithmetic and geometry, qualifications which may be very valuable in a teacher, but which are not, perhaps, so obviously useful in a clerk in an office.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. Would not the age test pretty effectually exclude these?

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. No; there are a great number of them under 35.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. Does the Civil Service Act allow them to be examined up to that age?

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Oh, yes, up to 35. If you look over the list of those who have got marks in book-keeping and arithmetic, a majority of them are school-masters, and many of them are farmers' sons who have passed the qualifying examinations. A man may have half-a-dozen sons, and he wants to see one of them in the public service. If a civil servant has good physical health, sufficient education, and has passed the qualifying examination, he thinks he should not be cut out by the man who taught him arithmetic. I do not think it would be right. Some of these special qualifications, of course, at once give a claim to consideration. I know both that in the Department of the Interior when I was at the head of it, and in the Indian Department, we have found it necessary especially to look out for good accountants. A good accountant is very difficult to get, and we take great care on that point in selecting from those who have passed examinations in book-keeping and arithmetic. We have taken great care about that matter. With that qualifying examination we should be slow in introducing competitive examinations into the service. Of course the moment parties are placed on the list as qualified to hold office, the Minister at the head of the Department makes his own selection, and I dare say hon. gentlemen opposite would not object to the practice that there should be a kindly feeling of preference giving to sons of political supporters—I think whether it were considered objectionable or not it would be practiced by any Administration.

Mr. MILLS. The Committee understands from the First Minister that the system of competitive examinations is one which the Government have declined to adopt and that they are satisfied with the qualifying examination. It seems to

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT.

me that the qualifying examination has in many instances been very greatly qualified. I think I can give names of parties in the service who have failed to pass the examination, and with respect to whom the First Minister would find it difficult to say they were specially qualified.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I should like to hear them.

Mr. MILLS. It is perfectly obvious from the statement of the First Minister, that the system of political appointments is to be kept alive; that the Government are resolved to appoint their friends, and that the most the qualifying examination does is to protect them against persons notoriously unfit for the public service being thrown into it. We know that in England one of the principal objects aimed at by the system of examination is that the special fitness of the parties offering themselves as candidates shall determine whether they shall or shall not enter the public service. If they show themselves eminently well qualified then they are appointed, and their political preference is a matter which is never taken into consideration. We know now from the statement of the First Minister that the English rule at all events is not to be the rule here, and that the appointments are as much political to-day as they have ever been. What is the result of this particular system? It is that when parties cannot undergo examination, or are not inclined to undergo them, other grounds for the appointment will be sought. I might ask the Minister of Militia, whether Colonel Bacon or Mr. Donaldson, the latter of whom was not in the public service at the time, the Civil Service Act was adopted, passed the examination before they entered the service? I might ask the first Minister whether the son of Mr. Boulton, who I understand is in one of the Departments, has undergone the examination, or whether he is specially qualified for the post which he occupies.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I am quite sure the son of Mr. Boulton passed the examination, or he is not in the Civil Service.

Mr. MILLS. I think he is in one of the Departments. How far do Ministers supervise the examinations? While the Government may determine generally what the character of the examination should be, beyond that the examination should never be interfered with by the Administration. If there is any class of men in this country who ought to have nothing to do with the examinations, or interfere in any way with them, it is that of the Ministers of the Crown. The Board of Examiners should be wholly independent and distinct from the Government, and the examinations ought to be conducted in such a way that the public will feel that everyone examined has been fairly dealt with, that there has been no favouritism, and that the standing of each one is fairly indicated by the answers given to the questions and the conclusions arrived at by the examiners. This is a matter of very great importance, and I repeat it is specially important that the examiners should be wholly free and independent of any interference on the part of Ministers.

Mr. CHAPLEAU. The Ministers have nothing to do with the examinations. The examiners, moreover, are perfectly independent. If there has been any interference by the Government it has been only on one or two occasions after the examinations have taken place, when complaint was made that something was done decidedly out of what was intended to be done under the rules. For instance, in one examination for promotion special questions of arithmetic were considered to be of such a complicated character that the number of points was reduced slightly by the examiners themselves. So far as the examinations are concerned, the Ministers have nothing to do with them up to