

WEDNESDAY, 28th March, 1877.

Committee met.—Mr. CASEY in the Chair.

Mr. MEREDITH called and examined :

*By the Chairman :—*

Q. Are you Chairman of the Civil Service Board?—Yes.

Q. When was that Board established, and how?—In 1857, by statute.

Q. Will you state generally what are its functions?—The duties of the Board are set forth in detail in the 25th Section of "The Canada Civil Service Act, 1868." One of the most important duties is that connected with the examination of candidates for admission into the Civil Service.

In response to several questions, Mr. Meredith then made the following statement :—

Under the Act of 1857 we were authorized to examine all who presented themselves. Consequently many came up who, after passing, felt that they had claims, and were disappointed by not getting employment. Under the Act of 1868 we only examine those who have received nominations. We are notified by the candidate of his appointment, and proceed to examine him. Sometime the notification comes from the Minister. As a matter of fact the appointment is sometimes made by Order in Council before examination, though often subject to passing the examination. This is indeed the general course. In the majority of cases we don't examine till after appointment, and in many cases there is no examination. I don't remember any case of a man appointed by Order in Council before examination who failed to pass. Candidates would be allowed to try a second time, if they failed on the first trial. I am sure the majority of nominees do not come before us. Only 72 have been examined by us since Act of 1868. Those rejected do not bear a large proportion to those who pass. Two or three were rejected and tried over again, and only one was finally rejected. We do not make a classification according to merit, there is not much room for it. Under the old Act we had optional subjects which allowed us to some extent to show the proficiency of candidates. There was no rule giving an advantage to those who stood highest. The examinations have been always exclusively written. The time allowed varies. (See papers.)

Examinations are always held at the Seat of Government. Under the old Act it was held monthly, now it is held when required, that is when application is made. We would hold an examination for one applicant. The last examination held was in February, 1876, there was only one that year, and none in 1875. In 1874 there appears from our books to have been 15; in 1873, 10; in 1872, 14; in 1871, 13; in 1870, 16; in 1869, 3. No general heads of subjects are prescribed by the Act, but they are settled by the regulations of the Board, and confirmed by Order in Council. The examination is only useful in excluding those who are utterly ignorant and entirely unfit for the Service. It is not at all comparable to primary examinations in England, and is no adequate test of the qualification of the candidate. Any boy of 13 should be able to pass it. It is not nearly as severe as the entrance examinations of High Schools. We do not necessarily receive notice of any appointment. Any number of appointments might be made without our knowledge. We have no power to compel nominees to be examined. We have often represented to the Government that the law has not been complied with in regard to examinations. Appointment before examination is a violation of the Act. The Act applies in terms to both inside and outside Service, but the organization for the examination of the outside service as provided by section 2 of this Act, has never been carried out. Answers to questions at examinations are kept and will be produced. Nominees to a grade higher than the lowest should also come before us, according to the Act. We have but very rarely been called upon to examine men appointed to the higher ranks for special qualifications. The only subjects on which we have examined such nominees are shorthand writing and higher arithmetic, and, I think, book-keeping, occasionally. In my opinion, it would decidedly improve the efficiency of the Service to have a more severe preliminary and compulsory examination before appointment. I think the standing at these