

on lines that seemed to prejudice the basic principle of the new order. It is not profitable to discuss half-truths or gossip. We are very sensible, however, of the momentous consequences, for the service and for the country, which hang upon the interpretation which the commissioners may place on one or two details involved in their administration of the Act—details to which even now they must be giving anxious thought. We would like a word on one of these.

Clause 21 of the Act provides that if the deputy head of a department reports that the knowledge and ability requisite for a position are wholly or in part professional, technical or otherwise peculiar, the recommendation of the minister based on a report in writing of the deputy minister is sufficient for an appointment, provided the appointee be declared competent by the commissioners.

It is easy to appreciate what an

abyss is fixed between a rigid and a loose interpretation of a clause like this. Relax the authority of the commissioners even a little, and you have at once three-fourths of the upper offices in the service abandoned to the old abuse of the political appointment and shut to everyone who lacks the necessary influence. For what office under the sun, if it amounts to anything, is not ability of a "peculiar" sort necessary? Unquestionably the minister and the deputy minister must have a say and a large say in the filling of the upper positions; but it must be a say based purely upon considerations of good administration and not of personal favouritism or politics. It may sound like a paradox, but it is the literal truth, in the administration of a public service, that the freer you leave a Head and Deputy in the matter of appointments, the faster you fetter them to bad methods and results. The com-

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