

vants in departments when virtually there is little or nothing for them to do. Another point is this. I notice that whenever even the present Government has made a move in the direction of discharging their duty with respect to the removal of unnecessary or incompetent civil servants, the cry is immediately raised that it is done for party and political purposes. I want to relieve the Cabinet from the position of being charged with acting from party and political motives when civil servants who are absolutely unnecessary or incompetent are still retained in power, and that they are so retained perhaps because of influences brought to bear on Ministers, or partly also because if they are turned out, the Government is charged by the Opposition with acting from party and political purposes. In Canada I believe to-day we have not less than perhaps 1,000 civil servants more than are absolutely necessary to perform efficiently the public service of this Dominion, and it must be remembered that we are paying a large amount annually for our civil service. I contend it would be greatly in the interest of the country—it is an absolute necessity, if we are to secure the reductions which can be made, that a board of this kind should be appointed. I propose that it should be placed in an independent position, in a position similar to that now occupied by the Auditor General, so that the members of the board would not be subject to dismissal by any Minister or the Government, but could only be removed by the joint action of both Houses for cause. Three members would compose the board. It would be their duty, and indeed they would have the right under the law to enter every department and demand the submission to them of all books and statements of labour and duties performed by each clerk, and after carefully and thoroughly investigating the duties performed by the several clerks of the department or any branch of it, the commissioners would have power to dispense with the services of those officers they considered were not necessary. The Bill requires that within fifteen days after the suspension or dismissal of any clerk the fact be reported to the head of the department, and it is further provided that within fifteen days after the opening of the session of Parliament each year a list of those removed by the board shall be submitted to Parliament as the names of those superannuated during the year have to be submitted at the present time within the first fifteen days of the session of Parliament. My impression is, that if this Act meets with the approval of the House and becomes law, it will effect a much improved condition of things in our civil service. I have discussed the matter with men in the civil service who are well posted with regard to its present condition, and I am glad to say, that I have received from those gentlemen every encouragement

Mr. McMULLEN.

to proceed with the Bill. They believe that a board of this kind will be the means of weeding out unnecessary, inefficient, and undesirable officials, and that it will free the country from enormous expense in retaining useless officers. This is an explanation of the several provisions of the Bill which I hope will receive unbiassed and careful consideration from hon. gentlemen. I trust that the Government may be able to lend it their countenance and assistance, and that through its influence the civil service may be gradually improved, and the expenditure considerably reduced.

Mr. WOOD (Hamilton). If the hon. gentleman (Mr. McMullen) would go a little further, and take off the shoulders of members of Parliament and of the Government, the responsibility of appointing officials, I believe he would do the country a great service.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I regret that I had not the advantage of hearing my hon. friend (Mr. McMullen) make his opening remarks in introducing his Bill. I am not sorry to find that hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House are driven to the conclusion, that it would be an extremely unsafe thing to leave our civil service in the hands of the present Government. In that, I quite agree with the hon. member (Mr. McMullen), and I think it is quite possible that the First Minister has, perhaps, prompted this move. The hon. gentleman has likely introduced the Bill at the instance of the First Minister. We all remember the pitiful wail sent up by the leader of the Liberal Government from 1874 to 1878, in regard to the terrible position in which he found himself. He discovered that he was besieged and overwhelmed by hungry supporters, and he had to stand day and night over the treasury of the country to prevent its being pillaged by adherents of the Liberal party. The hon. the First Minister now knows how to sympathize with his predecessor, the leader of the Liberal Government, in his desire to preserve some regard for the honest administration of public affairs, and, at the same time, to ward off the attempt of the Liberal party to besiege him at every turn. The former leader of the party told us himself that he was compelled almost to sacrifice his own life in defence of the treasury. Anything that will relieve the civil service of this country from the oppressive and tyrannical acts of the present Administration, will be hailed, if not in this House, at all events, in the country, by a general acclaim of approval. I have no hesitation in saying that this Government has already demoralized the public service to such an extent that it will take years to restore it to its former condition. There is no person, I will not say "no person," but I will say there is no intelligent man in this House or out of it, who does not know that the very foundation of a good, economical,