

What is the position in regard to the Post Office Savings-bank ?—The Post Office Savings-bank is controlled absolutely by the Treasury.

There is no change being made with regard to the Post Office Savings-bank ?—No change at all.

Neither in connection with the investments nor anything else ?—None at all. There is no change at all.

Mr. J. T. CARR examined.

*The Chairman.*] What is your full name, Mr. Carr ?—J. T. Carr.

And you are representing ?—The Post and Telegraph Employees' Association.

You wish to discuss clause 20 of the Bill ?—Yes, sir. My organization wishes to place its views before this Committee. This is the only opportunity we will have of bringing our objections to clause 20 before the House—before members of Parliament. The effect of clause 20 would be as follows : At the present time the Governor-General in Council appoints the Secretary of the Department and his three administrative officers—the First Assistant Secretary, the Second Assistant Secretary, and the Chief Telegraph Engineer. The effect of this clause will be to increase the number of appointments from four to eleven ; and if certain other positions are regraded it is not at all improbable that at some future date other positions may be automatically brought under this clause. At the present time promotions other than Administration Division promotions in the Service are made in the first instance by a Promotion Board, on which the employees are represented by an elected representative. We are jealous of our representation on the Promotion Board, and as a matter of principle we are opposed to any removing of positions from the control of that Board. Furthermore, the findings of the Promotion Board are subject to review before the Appeal Board. The Appeal Board also is a representative Board, on which we have our representative, and we are equally jealous of our rights of appeal. If an appointment is made by the Governor in Council there is then no right of appeal ; so that under the operation of clause 20 of the Bill the right of appeal is destroyed in the case of the seven existing positions, and possibly in the future an indefinite number of other positions, which may be regraded at a later date, will come under that clause, and the right of appeal in regard to them will also be destroyed. These, I think, are the main reasons why we are opposed to clause 20 : First of all, it ignores the Promotion Board ; and, secondly, the right of appeal is destroyed for the unsuccessful candidate. It may possibly mean this : that the Secretary of the Department may select for one of those positions an officer of a comparatively junior status in the Service, and recommend to the Governor-General in Council that that individual be appointed. That would be quite conceivable ; and the other controlling officers of the Service would be passed over, and no right of appeal whatever would exist. I am just putting this suggestion to you, so that you will appreciate the operation of that clause. You will recollect that when the Bill was tabled in the House at first we were in the unfortunate position of not having had an opportunity to peruse the Bill and register any objections we had before the departmental and Ministerial heads. That position was inevitable at the time, but we have been given an opportunity since of conferring with the departmental head, and we now have his point of view on the Bill. And, while we quite appreciate his point of view, we regret we are unable to accept his views on the matter.

*Mr. Sullivan.*] Your objection is to the Department's viewpoint, and more or less to the Department's attitude ?—Yes. The Department's attitude is apparently dictated by the desire to select the most suitable and efficient officers to fill these positions according to the opinion of the Head of the Department. We consider that the most suitable officers for those positions should be appointed under the provisions of the present existing Post and Telegraph Act of 1918. We consider that the provisions of that Act should be given effect to. The Promotion Board has to appoint persons who are best entitled to hold any given position. Now, the Governor-General in Council can do no more. Of course, as I said, the decision of the Promotion Board at the present time is subject to the right of appeal, and that right is taken away from these specific positions under clause 20 of the Bill. Merit is the basis of the appointment now, and according to the terms of the Act the Board must appoint persons by merit.

*The Chairman.*] Then it is not so much the appointment of the seven that you are afraid of, but the fear that there might be others ?—We are opposed to the appointment of the seven and of the future possibilities that exist.

There is fear of the future ?—I think so.

*Right Hon. Sir Joseph Ward.*] The point that the Committee is considering on this matter is that the chief executive officer of the Post Office, who is held responsible for the control and administration of it, subject to the requirements of the Act—the point is that unless the officers, counting the seven, are men who meet with the requirements of the additional responsibilities consequent on the expansion of the business of the Department, that they might, with the best intentions, be unsuitable men put in for the Government and the Department. The point is whether the chief executive officers, who are to be the controllers of the Department as a whole—should they or should they not be selected from the rank and file, as you say. By accident a wrong man might be appointed. That is the real point ?—I think it is a serious encroachment on our present rights in the matter of appointment by the Promotions Board, and of the right to appeal.

Was there any exception taken to the selection by the Governor-General in Council of the three (four) administrative officers—was there ever any representation made against the selection being made ? It is for the administrative government of the whole Service, including all the staff ?—We have never raised any objection to the appointment of the four administrative officers by the Governor-General in Council ; we have recognized that the Government must appoint its own executive officers, its responsible officers, to control the Department ; but the extension of the power of appointment further down into the Service will be a matter of very serious concern to us.