

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I have no apology to offer to the House for addressing myself to this matter, nor any congratulations to offer to the Government for introducing the Bill. A large number of members who have spoken prefaced their speeches with con-gratulations to the Government. I am opposed to nearly all the proposals of the measure. There is only practically one proposal that I am a thorough believer in. I shall deal with the clauses to which I take strong exception in committee. At the general election I clearly stated to my constituents that I was opposed to the Government, and that the Government could rest assured that I would wholly oppose them on most of the reform pro-posals. I claim that both phases of the question, that is from the Government point of view and my own point of view, were fully put before the electors in the constituency I have the honour to repre-sent. The Government view was espec-i-ally put, because the Government thought it necessary to send two Ministers down there to endeavour to prevent one who was opposed to them from being returned. I don't know that there is any truth in it, but it has been suggested that I owe my election to that fact. The districts asso-ciated with my district, namely, South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, and Emerald Hill, all returned opponents to this Government. I am strongly of opinion that had the people of the country had the time and the opportunity to consider the whole of these proposals - if these proposals had been placed before them as fairly and clearly as was done in the electorates I have named - the Government would not have such a large majority as they have. Of course that may be a matter of opinion. I am in favour to some extent of a slight reduction in the number of members of this House. I recognise that the saving of democracy does not rest on the numbers, but rests on the opportunities, that are afforded to the electors to express their opinions. While I attach some importance to the numbers, I attach much greater importance to the manner in which the seats are to be distributed. The whole question of the numbers resolves itself into the distribution of the seats. Although I belong to the labour corner, and am a labour member, I have no desire to see the House entirely composed of labour members, but I have a strong desire to see, and I recognise the necessity for, all interests and all communities of interests being represented in the House. When the House is considering the redistribution of seats, I hope it will rise above party questions and above the war cry that the Premier made to the country when he asked the: people to support those loyal members who stuck to him. While I do not object to any one who is loyal, I am afraid that this is the cry of spoils to the victors. I sincerely hope I am wrong, and that we will endeavour to secure that unity of interests and that fairness of representation that no Reform Bill would be complete without. There is a matter that I consider important that is not in the Bill. I consider that no Reform Bill is thorough unless it provides to give equality to each elector, that is, one value for one vote. The men with the greatest opportunities of obtaining knowledge, the men most closely in touch with Parliament, and who have the greatest advantage in their intercourse, and in the interchange of opinions, are evidently to be placed at a disadvantage compared with those who live in the country. While reared in the country myself, and not long a resident of the city, I know there are just as intelligent, earnest, and patriotic men in the country as in the towns, but I also know from practical experience that the opportunities of obtaining knowledge in the country are not so great as in the town. While I would not seek to place a resident in the country at a disadvantage, I claim that residents in the city should not be placed at a disadvantage. Now, I come to the proposal for a double dissolution. I would have preferred to have seen a proposal for the introduction of the referendum, for I believe it is a simpler, cheaper, and more effective way of settling vexed questions or difficulties that may arise between the two Houses. If the double dissolution clauses are passed and brought into operation, they will never be practically given effect to. They will lead to that spirit of compromise between the two Houses that we will practically have Government by fear. I think the referendum would be much better, but I will vote for this proposal, believing that there is not much hope of getting the referendum, and recognising

that the double dissolution and the other proposals are a distinct advance on our present position. The Premier, in introducing this Bill, said he recognised that the proposal to give separate representation to the public service was a grave constitutional change. I wish to point out that another important member of the Ministry, namely, the Treasurer, has expressed himself strongly in favour of the referendum in connexion with grave constitutional changes. In a memorandum attached to the report of the Royal Commission on Constitutional Reform he says

I recognise that there are some manifest advantages in the use of the referendum, and the proof of it as the best means of ascertaining the true opinion of the people on proposals involving grave constitutional changes.

If the Treasurer had acted up to his convictions as expressed in that memorandum, he ought to have made provision for the referendum as far as these grave constitutional changes are concerned. Now I come to what is principally agitating this House and the public, namely, the proposal to give separate representation to the public servants. When I first visited my constituency, I was personally acquainted with only four people, and I did not know, and I do not know to-day, how many public servants or railway servants reside there. I went down there as a distinct and determined opponent of the Government, I placed my views before the electors, and was successful in winning the seat. Therefore, I claim that I represent the feeling of the people in that constituency, and am in no way a representative of the public servants. We have heard a great deal of dramatic talk tonight. We have heard the Deity called on as a witness of how the public service have brought pressure to bear upon Government after Government, and member after member. I want to say this: If I were a member of the public service to-morrow, and knew I was suffering from some injustice I would have no hesitation whatever in using any legitimate means at my command which I could bring into operation for the removal of the injustice under which I suffered. Any Britisher would. He is breaking no agreement. He is only asserting his privileges and rights as a taxpayer and a man; and I, for one cannot recognise that anything has been put forward during this debate to show any great wrong committed by the public service. We have been told that the public servants should not meet in public meeting. Surely, it would be contrary to British freedom and Australian freedom, if we denied any person - public servant or not - the right to meet in public meeting. And because men have had the courage to go to these meetings and express themselves fearlessly, and endeavour to let their fellow-colonists know of the disabilities under which they suffer, we have heard the Treasurer of this State coming down and making a speech of the kind we have heard tonight. We have heard a great deal on one side of the question. We have not heard very much as to the other side of the question, and as to the attitude which some members of this Government are taking up towards the public service. If the information I have is true, we have the unparalleled spectacle in a British community of the Government appointing spies to go through the various departments, sneakingly and cunningly, to find out whether the men were loafing. I think that it is contrary to the spirit of British fair play to have these sneaks going through the public service in the manner in which they are to-day. And moreover, Mr. Speaker, the gentlemen who have been appointed by the Minister of Railways - I cannot think otherwise - have been appointed to this position as a reward for some political action performed in the past. When we find that these men are all residents of the constituency of the Minister of Railways

Mr. BENT.-You will find that they are not.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I say that they are.

Mr. BENT. -I say they are not.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I say that they are.

Mr. BENT.-I know better than you, surely?

Mr. ELMSLIE.-One of them was.

Mr. BENT.-One is a right good one.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-One was organizing or was secretary to the general committee of the Minister of Railways.

Mr. BENT.-A good man, too.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-That may be. He was chairman of the Minister of Railways' committee at Cheltenham.

Mr. BENT.-He was not.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-He was a member of the Minister's committee.

Mr. BENT.-But I tell you he was not.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-And a scrutineer.

Mr. BENT.-I tell you he was not.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I mention this to bring under the notice of the House the action of this apostle of reform and of good, honest; and sound government. If we are to appoint further members of the service as a reward for some political action, I maintain that the gentleman who is responsible for this appointment is not administering his department properly.

Mr. BENT.- He is quite as honest as you are, at any rate.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I do not think so. Compare our past records, and leave it to the public to judge.

Mr. BENT.-Never mind that.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-At any rate, in corroboration of what I have stated, I have here a copy of a journal which is issued in the Brighton electorate, and it corroborates what I have stated. It states

The announcement that ex-Cr. W. Lamb Smith, for many years resident in Moorabbin, and Mr. F. Henrichsen, of Brighton, had been appointed to report on the actions, or rather want of action, of railway employes, has been received with amused wonder in the district.

Mr. BENT.-Did you hear what I said ?

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I do not want to hear what the honorable gentleman said.

Mr. BENT.-I want to make you hear, that it is untrue what you are saying.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-If the Honorable gentleman will listen to what I am saying, I shall be prepared to

listen to him afterwards.

Mr. BENT rose to a point of order. He said he had told the honorable member that Mr. Lamb Smith was not in Brighton at all, and was never on his committee, and the honorable member ought to accept his statement.

Mr. BROMLEY.-Is it the famous Lamb Smith of the strike ?

Mr. BENT.-Quite as good as the honorable member, and a good deal better.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER.- I would point out to the honorable member that the rule is that when a statement is contradicted it must be withdrawn.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-I will withdraw it, for I have no desire to make a misstatement. I desire, however, to read this -

The former gentleman, when a member of the Moorabbin Council

Mr. KIRTON. - The Minister of Railways says that it is incorrect.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-The paragraph continues-

was always a keen critic of railway administration, and seldom missed an opportunity to have a dig at the department. Mr. Henrichson acted as secretary to Mr. Bent in his recent election campaigns, and, whilst having a good many critics, has also the reputation of being a worker and "a decent sort of chap." The appointment of Messrs. C. Jennings (bricklayer), and Mr. W. C. Cullen (ex-publican), and the publication of their extraordinary reports has been treated as a joke by some, whilst others prophesy that a few more such appointments will result disastrously to the reputation of the Minister. All four "scouts," "detectives," or "Bent's spooks," as the railway men call them, are constituents and strong supporters of Mr. Bent. The Minister explains that the "detectives" have not been given a free pass over all lines. He has given them authority to "see what is going on," and passes will be issued to them to carry them wherever necessary.

Mr. WARDE.-And yet it is said that there are too many men in the public service.

Mr. ELMSLIE.-If we have this system of spying and sneaking which has been initiated by the honorable gentleman, can we wonder that the public service rise up in revolt? There is not one honorable member of this House who, if subjected to the same kind of thing, would stand it; and I say that any Government, or the members of any Government, who would be guilty of that are not the people to lead us in the true way of constitutional or any other reform.