

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 16 AUGUST 1865

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 16 August, 1865.

Improper Treatment of Immigrants.—Mechanics' Institute, Spring Hill.—Post Office and Money Order Department.

IMPROPER TREATMENT OF IMMIGRANTS.

Mr. GROOM rose for the purpose of moving the formal adjournment of the House, in order, he said, to draw the attention of the Government to a matter which came under consideration on the previous evening. It would be in the recollection of the House that the honorable member for Port Curtis had directed the attention of the honorable member at the head of the Government to the case of certain immigrants who came to the colony in the German immigrant ship "Peter Godeffroy." The explanation given by

the honorable the Colonial Secretary was perfectly satisfactory; but it occurred to him (Mr. Groom) that the subject was one deserving of more attention, from its importance, than it had received at the hands of the honorable gentleman. He had been informed, this morning, by the German clergyman, that the person in charge of the immigrants, as surgeon, was utterly incompetent; that he knew nothing of his duties; and that, shortly after the departure of the vessel from port, scarlet fever broke out on board; and that the fact was not reported, on the arrival of the ship, to the proper officers. He (Mr. Groom) had been in the hospital himself that day, with certain gentlemen, and had witnessed the deplorable condition of the passengers by that ship. The disease named did not appear to be confined to the passengers by that ship. There was a little child in the hospital, about three years of age, that had arrived by the "Royal Dane," and it was in a dreadful condition. The wardsman had informed him, that when it was brought in, it was weighed, and its weight was only eighteen pounds. There it lay—a perfect picture of misery. When the parent applied for nourishment for the little one, to the proper officer on board, she was pointedly and repeatedly refused. These cases appeared to demand a special commission, to be appointed by the Government, to inquire into the circumstances, and ascertain the true state of affairs; and, after what he had seen, he wished to know the views of the honorable member on the subject.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it certainly was far from his intention to convey the impression that this was an unimportant matter, in the few remarks he addressed to the House last night. He had not then much information, and, up to the present time, he had not seen the report of the Board at Rockhampton, appointed to inquire into the circumstances of the voyage of the "Royal Dane;" but it was a serious matter, and the Government had withheld all gratuities to the officers of that ship. He believed the surgeon of that ship had misconducted himself. There was no doubt, that on board the German immigrant ship, much greater neglect of duty took place on the part of the surgeon-superintendent; and he (the Colonial Secretary) had called a special meeting of the Immigration Board to inquire into the state of the ship, in order to inform the Government who were the culpable parties. It was, as he had before said, in the power of the Government to punish severely the persons who shipped the immigrants, and improperly provisioned them;—they could be mulcted very heavily indeed, in severe penalties. The land orders would not be handed over to the shippers, and none of the gratuities would be paid to the officers, until the Government were satisfied that the conditions for securing the health and comfort of the immigrants had been complied

with. The Government were certainly in a position to punish the offending parties for their neglect and other misconduct. He hoped to have a full report on the subject very shortly, which he would lay on the table of the House.

The motion for adjournment was then, by leave of the House, withdrawn.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE, SPRING HILL.

Mr. PUGH moved—"That this House will, to-morrow, resolve itself into a committee of the whole, to consider of an address to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on the Supplementary Estimates for 1866 a sum not exceeding £500, as a grant in aid of the Mechanics' Institute, Spring Hill, Brisbane, on condition that a like sum be provided by private contributions." Honorable members, he said, might be aware that the locality for which the vote was asked was becoming a very populous and important one. Some time ago, the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works was waited upon by a deputation from the inhabitants, and a very handsome grant of land was given, upon their representations, as a site for the erection of the new institution. A temporary reading-room had been put up, and had been opened about three months; and already one hundred and thirty subscribers were on the books; and the sums promised for the erection of the proposed building amounted to nearly £250. The inhabitants of that locality, he was disposed to think, numbered now more than two thousand. They were desirous of securing to themselves the advantages of a mechanics' institute, and he believed it would be found as deserving of a grant as any institution in the colony. It was worthy of consideration that grants in support of such institutions as the one in question were for education purposes; and, whenever they were asked for, the House was not justified in refusing them. If he had thought it was a frivolous thing, he should not have brought the motion forward; but it did not interfere with any other institution, and he hoped there would not be any opposition to it. As there was much other business on the paper which honorable members were anxious to get through, he would not detain the House, but simply make his motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it would go very much against him to oppose a vote for such a purpose; but, at the same time, he wished the House to recollect that an application from Fortitude Valley, which was prior in date, had not been favorably entertained up to the present time. He had before expressed his opinion in the House, that it would be much better to combine those institutions, and have one public institution, with a free library for the whole of the inhabitants, than to have various small institutions multiplied over the city. As a grant of land had been given, and the people repre-

sented that they were prepared—which he very much doubted—to raise £500 for the erection of a building; as they were willing, in the cause of education, to make such a great effort, they deserved favorable consideration. Still, he should be very glad if those institutions were consolidated. The Government had no desire to deter the community from obtaining such a laudable object.

Mr. LILLEY said he was one of the inhabitants of the locality named, and it was quite true that his request for assistance for Fortitude Valley had not been attended to. However, he believed that the people had been making an effort to get up a national school, and they were not quite prepared to subscribe the amount required for their school of arts. But the people of Spring Hill were ready, having subscribed £250, and all were good promises; and he thought it probable that they would subscribe £500. It was worthy of consideration, that they intended to use the building as a national school as well as a mechanics' institute; and that was an additional reason in favor of the grant for such institutions, which were worthy of support until such time as they should all be consolidated. He was strongly inclined to favor the statement of the honorable the Colonial Secretary as to the desirableness of establishing a free public library. It seemed, however, at the present time, that there was no chance of the city possessing such an institution. The North Brisbane School of Arts did not in any way serve the purposes for which it was established, and it was very requisite that it should be placed in an efficient state. Until all the local institutions were combined, and a public library established, he did not see that any harm could be done by supporting the motion. He hoped the House would grant the amount asked for.

Mr. TAYLOR said he objected to the vote, as he could not see the use of having so many mechanics' institutes or schools of arts scattered over Brisbane. If this motion were agreed to, there would be a number of similar applications from all parts of the country. The honorable member for Fortitude Valley would come forward. At one portion of his speech, he (Mr. Taylor) was surprised—that 250 persons had made promises of money, and that they were all good. He agreed that it would be best to have a good public library for all, instead of several small institutions.

Mr. McLEAN said if the Spring Hill people required a national school, let them have it, by all means; but he thought that to make it supplementary to a mechanics' institute or a school of arts, or to scatter those institutions over the town, giving one to every ward, would be a waste of public money; and the House would not be performing their duty to the country to sanction it. Far better would it be for the public to take the matter in hand, and establish one large

institution for the benefit of all. Brisbane was not such a large town, that the people of Spring Hill, or any other hill in it, could not attend one institute.

Dr. CHALLINOR said he had been disposed to take the view which some honorable members had expressed, and had thought that Spring Hill was not such a very great distance from the centre of Brisbane that it needed to have a school of arts to itself. Still, the House must not forget that if they looked upon it as an educational institution, it was not desirable that men should have to travel too far in search of that knowledge which they desired. He was disposed to alter his views on this question, in consequence of an application having been made by Fortitude Valley for a mechanics' institute, and there being such an institution in South Brisbane. Certainly, at present, those places were in somewhat the same position as Spring Hill; but all those persons who wished to avail themselves of the respective institutions would not come to a central institution; therefore, he was willing to vote for the grant, on condition that the residents of Spring Hill raised a similar amount. He took a different view from that expressed by the honorable the Colonial Secretary. If there was a free library in Brisbane, he could not see why one should not be given to every other town in the colony; but there were not funds enough for that. He did not see why money for such a purpose should be given to the city, which was supposed to be rich, and was strong; and denied to the provinces, which were weak. It would be giving an undue preponderance to the metropolis, and be making the whole country pay for the convenience of the citizens. He thought that a feeling had been engendered in the metropolis which did not exist in the country towns; it was so much accustomed to receiving public money, that it could not do without such assistance.

Mr. PUGH: You mean the West End.

Dr. CHALLINOR: He was very glad the honorable member referred to it. Look at the Ipswich School of Arts! That had been commenced in a very small room; the institution now possessed a finer building than was to be found in any other town, and it was a better institution than any of a similar character in the colony; it was a credit to the West End and to the colony. He thought it was because the people of Ipswich had been left, in a great measure, to walk on their own feet, and to work with their own hands, that they had such a fine institution. There could be no question about it, that where there was a grant of public money, there was always an inkling for it. While he should oppose the establishment of a free library in the metropolis, he had no hesitation in supporting a grant of £500 for the mechanics' institution, Spring Hill, on condition of a similar sum being raised by the people themselves.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is for the metropolis, still.

Dr. CHALLINOR: Never mind about that. It is not placed in a different position from the provincial towns. If it were intended to make the institution a free library, I should unhesitatingly oppose it, unless the Government were disposed to establish one in every town in the colony.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that, of course, he should naturally feel inclined to vote for the amount asked for. He was very glad to say that the institution would prosper, whether it received the grant or not. There was a large number of subscribers who looked upon it as a great hardship to have to come down the impassable road from Spring Hill of an evening; and it was by them that the new institution had been started. He anticipated that the School of Arts, North Brisbane, would be a very successful institution; it was now being re-organised, and it promised to be extensively patronised. But if this amount were voted, perhaps the House would see the honorable member, Dr. Challinor, come down for a similar vote for Little Ipswich, or for North Ipswich; and there would be another required for that portion of Toowoomba which was separated by the swamps. He (Mr. Douglas) would not vote for the motion. With respect to what had fallen from the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, to combine a national school with the school of arts, he did not see how it could be carried out.

Mr. LILLEY: Only to supply the building for the school.

Mr. DOUGLAS: Of course, the Education Board could pay rent for it; but unless the building were handed over to the Board, that proposition could hardly be carried out. No doubt a national school would be established there. A large population was resident in the locality. He thought, on the whole, that it would be best for those gentlemen who were interested in the new mechanics' institute to devote their attention and energies to the establishment of a reading room;—they would have a place to meet in on public matters, and, if they got the papers and reviews, that was all they wanted. As to a free library, it was a very desirable object—perhaps it was a luxury. The only one that he knew of was at Melbourne; and it certainly was a magnificent institution. The honorable member for Ipswich, Dr. Challinor, was not quite correct in assuming that it was for the benefit of the metropolitans only; for large numbers of books were sent periodically to the provinces, so that all the country was benefited by the public library there.

Mr. WALSH said he should oppose the motion, because he believed it was a request coming from a mere parochial establishment. If the House gave way to such demands, the whole revenue of the colony would be taken away. One of the reasons that he had heard was assigned by the Spring Hill people for desiring to secure an institution of their own

was, that the new School of Arts, in North Brisbane, was such a horrid ugly building, they would have nothing to do with it. But there was another reason why he should not vote for the motion: there was not a sufficient population on Spring Hill—

Mr. PUGH: As many as in Maryborough.

Mr. WALSH: There was no proof that Spring Hill was of that importance which would justify the House in acceding to the motion. If every suburb of a town like Brisbane were to be supplied at the expense of the country with an institution of the sort, where would be the end of the applications to the House for money? Several more would come in from Brisbane; Ipswich would send in two or three; Toowoomba would do the same; and he was sure Maryborough would also follow suit. If the motion were agreed to, Maryborough would be justly entitled to make a second claim on the Government. £500 was outrageous. A large town like Maryborough, an important seaport, had not received more than £200. Yet, for the suburb of a town, a place that the House were told was inaccessible, they were asked for £500 to put up a building of a hybrid kind. He objected to the public money being spent in that way. If it were to be a school of arts let it be one, but the House were not to be misled; and they should not allow the schools of the country to be interfered with, by turning them to the two-fold purpose of reading-rooms and school-rooms. If a national school were required for Spring Hill, let one be established. From the experience of Maryborough, he was convinced that the two-fold institutions did not work harmoniously and kindly.

Mr. WARRE objected to the motion. He should be very glad, he said, to give his vote for a grant for a public library for the city, because it would be good for the colony at large; and the institution might be combined with the School of Arts. While he believed it was the duty of the Government to assist in placing a school of arts or a mechanics' institute in every town in the colony, he did not think the House would be justified in voting the public money to be distributed over the city in the way proposed by the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pugh. He would much rather that the House should vote £500 to make the road good to bring the people of Spring Hill down to the present School of Arts.

Mr. PUGH, in reply, said he had little expected that his motion would have met with so much opposition. He certainly had counted on the support of the honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Watts, and the honorable member for Maryborough; but the very name of Brisbane seemed to have startled them into opposition. Honorable members had argued on totally false premises: if the honorable member for Maryborough had attended to the motion, he

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The question was then put, and negatived, upon a division, as under:—

Ayes, 9.		Noes, 15.	
Mr. Macalister		Mr. Taylor	
„ Bell		„ Herbert	
„ Blakeney		„ Walsh	
„ Lilley		„ Watts	
„ Miles		„ Stephens	
„ Coxen		„ Groom	
Dr. Challinor		„ Forbes	
Mr. Fitzsimmons	} Tellers.	„ Jones	
„ Pugh		„ Mackenzie	
		„ Haly	
		„ Wienholt	
		„ Royds	
		„ Sandeman	
		„ Douglas	} Tellers.
		„ McLean	

POST OFFICE AND MONEY ORDER DEPARTMENT.

Mr. MACKENZIE said: Mr. Speaker—It will be in the recollection of honorable members, that I moved, some time ago, for the appointment of a select committee, in consequence of certain correspondence which was laid on the table of this House, in which the Postmaster-General complained that his department had not been properly treated by the Government; that he had been kept from having a sufficient number of officers;

and that, under these circumstances, it could not be in an efficient state. The object of the committee was to inquire into the general position of the Post Office department; and, also, as to the management of the Money Order branch, without touching, properly speaking, upon the inquiry which the Government had previously instituted in that branch. However, the committee found it impossible during the inquiry to keep clear of that: the affairs of the Money Order branch were entered into, and in one clause of the report it is alluded to. I do not intend to take up the time of the House by making long quotations from the correspondence or the evidence. I shall merely take the respective clauses of the report for my text, and allude to those portions of the evidence which bear upon it, and not quote unless where absolutely necessary. The first clause of the report is to this effect:—

"1. Your committee having examined the Postmaster-General, the accountant, the late Postmistress, and other officers, are of opinion that the Post Office is not at present, nor is there sufficient evidence to shew that it has at any time been, in a state of inefficiency from the want of an adequate staff of officials."

We came to this conclusion upon the Postmaster-General's own evidence. By referring to pages 9 and 10, questions 1 to 8, and to pages 17 and 18, questions 210 to 222, it will be seen that the Postmaster-General there contradicts himself, in so far that he does not admit that the department was in a state of inefficiency at all up to the present time. It was, so to speak, putting the case metaphorically—it might have got into a state of inefficiency if the Government continued what he calls "starving" his department. Questions 1 to 8, in page 9, are in the examination of the Postmaster-General by Mr. Forbes; and there, Mr. Prior distinctly states that the staff "were inadequate to their duties"—and that they were "in a very inefficient state." When pressed still further, he was obliged to admit that there was not that inefficiency that he first spoke of. In page 17, question 210, Mr. Prior again, while under examination, states that he found the office, when he first went in as Postmaster-General, in "a very inefficient state." The next question is—

"211. You found a certain number of officials in that office at the time?"—

He answers—

"A certain number, yes."

He goes on to state, in his further examination, page 18, that the whole of the officers, except one, are still in the department, and they are all efficient; he does not state that any are inefficient. In page 27, Mr. Nightingale's examination, question 247 is put to ascertain whether the department was ever in an inefficient state at any time since he joined it, and he says that it was not. I put this question, and it will be seen that

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a number of years, since Separation, are embraced in it:—

“247. Has the Post Office been in a disorganised state since you first joined it in 1860? No.”

That is the answer of the accountant. I now turn to the evidence of Mrs. Barney, page 31, questions 6 to 12. She states that the office was never in a disorganised or inefficient state. There was some little disorder in the office. As honorable members will see in the evidence, at the time referred to the Postmaster-General had started on a tour of inspection; and, previous to starting, he had made changes which, in Mrs. Barney's opinion, were not suitable—certain officers had been put into the office who were not up to their duties. That is the substance of Mrs. Barney's evidence. Further on—I refer to my own evidence, page 36—I differ from the Postmaster-General, who said that at the time he took the office of Postmaster-General he found the staff in an inefficient state. I think, therefore, that honorable members, by reading that portion of the evidence, will see that the committee are fully borne out in the statement made in the first paragraph of their report. The next paragraph is:—

“2. Your committee inspected the Post Office, and found everything apparently in good working order, but would call attention to the scattered and limited accommodation provided for the rapidly increasing business of this department.”

The committee attended at the Post Office and went through it very carefully; and, as far as they could see of the department, everything appeared to be not only in good working order, but the office was amply supplied with officials, who have very limited accommodation. There is hardly room for the officers to work at all, and the committee have pointed out this to the Government, and they urge them as soon as possible to erect a new Post Office. The third paragraph is:—

“3. Your committee, on examination, believe the Money Order branch of the Post Office to be now in an effective state, with a better system of checks, and a more efficient staff than existed at the time Mrs. Barney had charge of that office.”

Though not desiring, myself, and some other members of the committee not desiring to enter too much into the defalcations that had taken place in the Money Order branch—because we considered that there had been sufficient inquiry into them by the board appointed by the Government—still, as I remarked before, we found it necessary to enter into these matters, because the Postmaster-General himself was particularly anxious that we should do so. It will be found by referring to his evidence, pages 2 and 3, question 26, that he says:—

“I hope that at one point of the sitting you will be good enough to examine the office and look into the books. The chairman will then be

able to compare what the office was when I first went there and what the office is now; and, I think, I need hardly go further into the general department, for this reason, that it is, I think, evident to every one that the real point at issue is in the Money Order office—the responsibility or non-responsibility, or how far the responsibility of the late defalcations in the Money Order office are attributable to the Postmaster-General.”

I told him that we would not go into that; at any rate, not at present. Then, again, the Postmaster-General is asked by me, as chairman—page 3, question 36—

“Have you any further statement? I should like to go into the Money Order Office, if you permit me, because on that, I believe, hinges the whole of the matter. * * * *”

Now, the whole of the matter did not hinge upon that; it hinged upon the statements made by the Postmaster-General himself, in his correspondence with the Government, as to the state of the department, including, of course, the Money Order office. The committee examined the Post Office. It seems to have an ample staff—quite sufficient to carry on the work; but there is this difference between the state of the Money Order office now and when the defalcations were discovered; an additional clerk has been appointed, and the accountant of the Post Office has the supervision of it. At the time the late Postmistress, Mrs. Barney, was appointed, the accountant was withdrawn from the supervision of that branch, and the system of checks was also altered—in fact, there was no check on any particular officer;—but now there are two officers who check one another. This will be borne out by other members of the committee who will address the House, and it is proved by the evidence. The fourth paragraph of the report is—

“4. Your committee would submit that the evidence now laid on the table of your honorable House, bears out the opinion expressed by the Board appointed by the Government to inquire into the defalcations which had taken place in the Money Order office—that the Postmaster-General misinterpreted the wishes of the Government as regarded the separation of the money order branch from the postal department.”

As I said before, we were obliged to enter into the subject, and the evidence was carefully considered by the committee. It will be seen that not only does Mr. Prior admit his responsibility, but it is admitted in other portions of the evidence, which were very carefully sifted by myself. In page 12, questions 73 to 76, Mr. Prior speaks as follows:—

“73. You have handed in documents signed by Mrs. Barney. Were they ever in the hands of Parsons since they were signed? They were, I believe.

“74. You admit that you receive daily statements from the Money Order office? I beg pardon; I did not receive them personally myself. Mr. Nightingale, as head of the Money Order office,

receives them. Formerly, Mrs. Barney received them.

"75. You never have received them formerly? Never, day by day. When I called for returns, the daily sheets were received to check them.

"76. You state that you were overlooker of that office. Does that refer to the present time, or to the time when Mrs. Barney held the position as head of the office? As Postmaster-General, the Money Order office was under my department then; more intimately now."

There is a clear admission that he considered it was under his department, and that he was responsible for it. In question 79, page 13, he is interrogated very much to the same effect; and, by referring to it, honorable members will see that he there, also, admits his responsibility as head of the Money Order office and Postmaster-General. In page 17, questions 205 and 206, by myself, as chairman, this further evidence is given:—

"205. Then, as to the position of the Money Order office. You, as Postmaster-General, admit that it was not a distinct branch under your supervision? I have said all along, with due deference to you, sir, that it was a distinct branch, and that it was under me, as Postmaster-General.

"206. What is your definition of a distinct branch? A separate office, in the same department, for which the head of that office is responsible."

I think this is a clear admission on Mr. Prior's part that he was responsible for the Money Order office. In page 19, question 23, speaking of certain documents which were withheld by Parsons, in connection with the Money Order office, I ask Mr. Nightingale, the accountant, this question—

"23. And you consider that Mr. Parsons should have immediately furnished them to you? Yes—to the Postmaster-General."

That officer gives it as his opinion that the documents should have been furnished to the Postmaster-General, as head of the Money Order branch. In Mrs. Barney's evidence, page 34, questions 85 and 86, I read:—

"85. Considerable allusion has been made, in the course of this inquiry, to the late lamented Treasurer, Mr. Moffatt. You consider it is a misfortune, in this case, that his evidence is not to be had; as so little is documentary and so much was oral? Assertion upon that point is needless. I would have been very glad, because I am quite sure that Mr. Moffatt's intention was not to separate the office.

"86. You feel clear that it was not to make it a distinct branch? My impression was, distinctly, that it was not to be removed from Mr. Prior's supervision."

Next we come to page 36, questions 4 and 5, which were put by me to the honorable the Colonial Secretary. As the questions and the answers are very long, I will merely draw the attention of the House to them. Therein I ask the honorable gentleman to explain certain statements made by Mr. Prior, to the effect that he was made to believe that the Money Order office was to be divided from the Post Office by the Government at that

time; and the Colonial Secretary distinctly denies that allegation. At the same time, on further examining the honorable the Colonial Secretary, as to a statement made by the Postmaster-General, to the effect that he was the first to discover those defalcations, the Colonial Secretary entirely contradicts that, and states that they were first discovered by him, and that he drew the attention of the Postmaster-General to them. However, I shall have occasion to refer to a portion of the evidence following. I think the committee were justified in giving their opinion as the same as that given by the board appointed by the Government—

"That the Postmaster-General misinterpreted the wishes of the Government as regarded the separation of the Money Order branch from the postal department;—"

and in regard to the making of that branch a distinct and separate branch, over which he had no control. The fifth paragraph of the report runs as follows:—

"5. Your committee would recommend—

"(1.) The erection of a new General Post Office, at as early a period as may be found practicable."

I think there can be no second opinion upon that part of the subject.

"(2.) The appointment of a Postal Inspector, as well as a chief clerk in the office, which latter would obviate the necessity for the appointment of a Postmaster, as now proposed by the Government."

The committee entered very fully into this part of the subject, and their opinion, as well as that of the Postmaster-General, is, that if a postal inspector were appointed it would relieve him of a great deal of duty, and obviate the necessity for his leaving the head office; and that if a chief clerk were appointed to assist him in the head office, it would be better than to appoint a postmaster and to allow Mr. Prior to act as postal inspector, as he does at present. It is desirable now, whatever it may have been two or three years ago, that the Postmaster-General should remain at home, and the evidence shews this. The committee further recommend:—

"(3.) That a system of promotion, as sketched out by the Postmaster-General, should be carried out through the different grades of officials in the office, efficiency being made the basis of such promotion; your committee being of opinion that a knowledge of the duties to be performed is as essential in the Post Office as in any other department."

My own private opinion is, that it is much more essential there than in any other department; and it was after a careful examination of the duties in that branch of the public service, that we came to this decision. I may here remark, that the argument of the Postmaster-General, in his correspondence, and also before the committee, was, that it would be much better the patronage of the department should be left in his hands, as

head of the department. I examined him very closely on this point, and it appears that the appointments of two defaulting officials—Parsons and Matthews—were made by himself. It is proved by the evidence, that the Postmaster-General appointed certain officers in the department, whom it was afterwards found necessary to get rid of; so that his argument on that account falls to the ground. It has, however, always been my opinion that the recommendation of the head of a department should be taken in the appointment of officers; because, if officers are pressed upon him by the Government, whom he knows nothing about, he may have a just cause of complaint, that inefficient officers have been given to him, and that he cannot properly conduct his department with them. Here is a case in which the appointments have been wholly left to the head of the department; and, whether from any fault of his own, or from want of proper officers, he has completely failed to make out his case. The fourth recommendation of the committee is:—

“(4.) That an arrangement should be effected for the present between the Post Office and Telegraph departments, as far as a joint inspection of the postal and telegraph lines is concerned, which might afterwards lead to an amalgamation of two offices so closely connected.”

When before the committee, the honorable the Colonial Secretary gave it as his opinion—or, rather, he offered a suggestion—that such would be a very desirable object to gain, on economical grounds; and that it would contribute to the efficiency of the departments if the postal and telegraph lines were both inspected by the same person. The committee considered the subject, and came to the same conclusion, and embodied it in a recommendation in their report. It would effect a saving to carry out the recommendation; for often the Telegraph and Post Offices are both together, under the same roof. I have no doubt it may lead, in the end, to great economy as well as efficiency. The fifth recommendation is:—

“(5.) That the Post Office should be kept open on all public holidays, excepting Christmas Day and Good Friday.”

The reason of this is that great inconvenience has been caused to the public by the Post Office being shut up on the occasion of public holidays. I always thought that was a mistake; and, at the time I was the executive head of the department, the arrangement was, that one or two officials went away from the office on each holiday, and the rest remained; and those who remained got a day afterwards to make up for their deprivation of the holiday. It is extremely inconvenient to the public that the office should, as now, be closed for the greater portion of the day.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No, no;—that is not at all correct.

Mr. MACKENZIE: I can assure you it is correct; and I can be corroborated by other

honorable members who, on a recent occasion found the Post Office closed at eleven o'clock in the forenoon. The same may be said of the Telegraph Office being closed in the forenoon on general holidays. The sixth clause of the report is one which was inserted after I brought up my draft report in committee: and here I notice an omission—the draft report, as brought up by the chairman, is not printed, only the report with the alterations made in it; the alteration is shewn here in the proceedings of the committee, but not the draft report itself—

“6. Your committee believe there are circumstances in connection with the arrangement of the Money Order office which will render it advisable not to hold the Postmaster-General or Mrs. Barney collectively and individually responsible for the defalcations that have taken place in that branch of the department.”

Now, I am not one of those who blame the Government in this matter at all. And, as I am always quite ready to blame them whenever I can, some weight might be given to my opinion in this matter. I call attention to the difference between a Government trying to shield an inefficient officer, and trying to act justly to one who, from force of circumstances, was placed in a position that one ought never to have been placed in. I believe the Government acted with the best motives in this matter, and that, when the report of the commission was brought up, they came to a decision which was a just one. I for one do not blame them for that decision. I think there was great mismanagement, that might not have occurred but for faults on both sides. I must say that I hardly know upon what grounds this clause was inserted by the committee. I have no doubt that the majority of the House would be glad to do away with those fines; and I have no doubt the Government would be very glad to remit them. But I would not wish it to be put here that the Government are to blame for what they did, or that none of the officers referred to were to blame: still, I am very glad to support the report. For the carrying out of this inquiry, it is very much to be regretted that so much that was connected with the object of it occurred during the tenure of office of the late lamented Treasurer. I am quite sure that very much that is put down to what he said and did, is not proved satisfactorily; we have much that is merely hearsay, and we must take it for what it is worth. I now come to the last and most disagreeable section of the report.

“7. Finally, your committee would point out the difficulty they have experienced in arriving at conclusions on many points, in consequence of the numerous discrepancies in the evidence taken before them.”

In making use of the word discrepancies, I used a very mild term, indeed. I am sorry to say that in all my experience of committees of this House, and it has been very

considerable, I never had before me so much that is contradictory in the shape of evidence between the parties. The Postmaster-General first makes out that when he succeeded me as Postmaster-General—when I was a member of the Executive—he found the office in a very disorganised state. I found it necessary, in my examination, to contradict this altogether. My evidence on this point is corroborated by the accountant, Mr. Nightingale, and also by Mrs. Barney. The Postmaster-General makes statements with reference to the defalcations in the Money Order office; and he is directly contradicted by the honorable the Colonial Secretary. Mrs. Barney, in her evidence, in reply to questions I put to her at the end of her examination, as to what Mr. Prior said to her about the defalcations—questions 97 and 98, pages 34 and 35—makes a statement of what the Postmaster-General said to her on that occasion. The Postmaster-General is next called up and told of this, and is asked what he has to say in regard to Mrs. Barney's statement; and he then and there distinctly and positively denies having said what is attributed to him—says that it is all the other way—that Mrs. Barney made use of the expressions to him. I express no opinion on this myself at all;—I leave it to the House to form what opinion they like upon these discrepancies. I merely lightly allude to them, to shew that they have taken place, and honorable members must reconcile them the best way they can. The committee have done good in one way. They have shewn exactly how the Post Office stands—that it is in a good position at present. We have heard so many complaints of an inadequate number of officials, which are groundless, that the Government are quite right in checking the inordinate wishes of the heads of departments for assistance. With reference to the Money Order office, every man in his senses knows that the Postmaster-General was responsible, and that he should have kept the checks. The most important point is in the Colonial Secretary's evidence, in which a distinct statement is made, corresponding to what the honorable gentleman previously stated in this House—that Mrs. Barney was not to take money responsibility, and that she was not accountant in that office; and she has confirmed that in her own evidence. It is now for the House to say whether this report is in accordance with the evidence, and whether it is right; and, if they think that the committee have done justly, to support them. I now move that the report be adopted.

Dr. CHALLINOR said that though the evidence accompanying the report now under consideration was very voluminous, he had gone carefully through it; and he must say that, in his opinion, it was impossible for any person disinterested in the matter to care-

fully read over the evidence and not rise with the strong impression that there was a decided apparent inclination to inculpate one party and clear another. That might be an erroneous impression, but it was the impression that had been made on his mind. He did not think it was necessary for him to say that it was the Postmaster-General whom it was intended to inculpate. It appeared to him that the evidence was a sort of fishing evidence to criminate the Postmaster-General. He felt he was the more at liberty to say so, because when the matter was first brought before the House, when the committee was moved for, he thought the Postmaster-General was to blame, and that Mrs. Barney was not to blame; but from reading the report and the evidence accompanying it, he had come to a different conclusion. There were five salient points in the evidence to which he would refer. The first was as to the resignation of Whiston R. Barney; the second, Mr. Prior's recommendation to separate the Money Order office from the town delivery room; the third, Mr. Prior's recommendation for the appointment of a chief clerk or secretary; the fourth, Mrs. Barney's appointment to the Money Order office; and the fifth, the enlargement of the bonds required to be furnished by Mrs. Barney. Now, with regard to the first of those, the House might fairly conclude that the reports of the Postmaster-General were fully justified; for the then Colonial Treasurer did accept the resignation of Whiston R. Barney, notwithstanding the extraordinary letter accompanying it, and which would be found in pages forty-four and forty-five of the evidence, and that without appointing him to any other office in the service. The work of the General Post Office, however, went on perfectly well afterwards in relation to its inland department, notwithstanding this young man's resignation; and persons residing in the provinces continued to receive their letters as usual. It appeared perfectly clear, also, that the Treasurer was convinced of the correct judgment of the Postmaster-General with regard to the necessity of separating the Money Order office from the town delivery room; for the Government themselves adopted that view, and gave effect to Mr. Prior's recommendation in that respect. Then, he thought, they might go still farther. The Postmaster-General considered that the business—the management, and superintendence, and supervision—of the Post Office of the colony had outgrown the powers of the Postmistress; and they might say, without being derogatory to the late Postmistress, that though she might have been able to manage it when the colony was merely a dependency of New South Wales, she might not be able to manage it when the colony was separated, and the business of the Post Office increased so rapidly. Therefore, he was not astonished that the Govern-

ment did adopt the recommendation of the Postmaster-General to remove Mrs. Barney. Much had been said with regard to the ability displayed by the late Postmistress, and he was not disposed to combat that; and a letter was put in by Mrs. Barney, expressing the views of the Postmaster-General of New South Wales on the subject. Well, he (Dr. Challinor) had an impression that the efficiency of the department at that time depended on a person whose name did not appear in the report, but who was seen in the delivery room previous to Separation. His opinion was, that much of the efficiency of the department was due to that gentleman. It was next found that the Postmistress was removed on the recommendation of the Postmaster-General, as would be found by the letter in the Appendix marked E, and which was as follows:—

“The Treasury,
“Queensland, 29th December, 1863.

“SIR,

“I am instructed by the Honorable the Treasurer to acquaint you that your letter of the 12th instant having been under the consideration of the Executive Council, the Government approve of the necessary alterations being made in the present Post Office, Brisbane, and the Colonial Architect will be instructed to give effect to the same.

“As the arrangements proposed necessarily deprive the Postmistress of the premises now occupied by her, the Government approve of an allowance of £100 per annum, as house rent, to Mrs. Barney, in lieu of quarters.

“It is also thought desirable that the money order business and sale of stamps should be placed under Mrs. Barney's charge as a distinct branch, under such arrangements as may be approved by the Honorable the Treasurer—Mrs. Barney retaining her present salary.

“I have, &c.,

“W. L. G. DREW,
“Under-Secretary.

“The Postmaster-General.”

Now, it was clear to his mind that the Government did adopt the views of the Postmaster-General on those two points, namely, the separating of the Money Order office from the town delivery room, and the removal of Mrs. Barney. As to the Money Order business and the sale of stamps, the letter did not say who was to make the arrangements, but only that they were to be such as would be approved by the honorable the Treasurer. Now, if the arrangements were to be made by the Government, he would like to be informed if they were ever made; or, if they were to be made by the Postmaster-General, and submitted for the approval of the Treasurer, were they ever made and submitted to him for approval? There was nothing in the evidence to shew that any arrangements were ever made and submitted for the approval of the Colonial Treasurer. Well, it was distinctly stated that those arrangements were to be made,

and were not to be acted on till they received the approval of the Colonial Treasurer. If it was the duty of the Postmaster-General to make those arrangements, the Colonial Treasurer was at fault for not seeing that they were made, and, therefore, the Colonial Treasurer was bound to take part of the responsibility for the mal-arrangements in connection with the Money Order department. If the Postmaster-General was to blame, the Colonial Treasurer must participate in that blame for not seeing the arrangements were made and carried out as they ought to have been. Now the honorable member for the Burnett, who was the chairman of the committee, had sought to impress the House with the opinion that no responsibility was to be attached to Mrs. Barney, as having charge of the department; but he did not know himself how the honorable member could properly come to that conclusion. The honorable member had certainly cited the evidence of the honorable the Colonial Secretary on that matter. Well, they could go, if not to a higher authority, at least to a prior authority, and shew that responsibility did attach to Mrs. Barney. A memorandum (G) in the appendix was as follows:—

“The Postmistress, in charge of the Money Order Branch and sale of postage stamps, is requested to name, for the approval of the Postmaster-General, two responsible persons willing to become her sureties—bond required being personal surety of £500, and two sureties of £250 each.”

Now he should like to know, and if he had been on the committee he should have inquired, by whose authority such enhanced bond was demanded. If it was by the Colonial Treasurer, then it was clear that he did attach increased responsibility to Mrs. Barney, as her personal security was raised from £250 to £500. Now it did not appear who required the increase of this. If it was not the Colonial Treasurer who suggested this, but the Postmaster-General, it was clear the Postmaster-General from the first did affix to her increased responsibility as he required increased sureties. He might go a little farther than that. The chairman of the committee, had himself referred to that matter, and had stated that Mrs. Barney was not to be responsible, and that her exemption from responsibility was confirmed by the honorable the Colonial Secretary. But what did they find? Who were the sureties provided by Mrs. Barney? Mrs. Barney returned a note to the memorandum of the Postmaster-General, saying “Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Thornton will be my sureties for the above;” and, with reference to this note, the Postmaster-General adds, “Approved—bond to be made out.” Now would the honorable the chairman of the committee, after that, report to the House that no responsibility was to be placed on the head of that

department, or that he himself was not aware of it? Was the asking for those increased sureties a mere formality, and not meant to impart responsibility, but only to give a coloring, to it? For his own part he could only come to one of two conclusions; either that enlarged responsibility attached to Mrs. Barney, on taking the charge of the Money Order office and the sale of stamps, as she had to give enlarged bonds, or that this proceeding was a mere pretext to ensure to her the sum she had previously been in receipt of. He could come to no other conclusion; and he did not think it would be right of him to infer that this was a mere formality to secure to Mrs. Barney her previous salary. He thought the other conclusion was the right one—that those increased securities were required in consequence of increased responsibility, and such increased responsibility was to be measured by the increased amount of the bond. Now Mr. Prior did not deny his responsibility altogether, but he still maintained that Mrs. Barney had responsibility as the head of her particular branch. He did not think it was right to say there was an additional officer, for the officer who was there now was there to do the work that Mrs. Barney should have done. There were no more officers now than formerly, and while the accountant was responsible the Postmaster-General was also responsible for the way in which the business of the accountant's department was carried on. Now as to who it was that discovered the defalcations, he did not think there was anything clear in the evidence on the subject. The despatch of the Secretary for the Colonies had reference to remittances to the Home Government, and Mr. Parsons had nothing to do with that branch, for it was entirely under Mrs. Barney's control. So far as he (Dr. Challinor) was acquainted with the circumstances, all the defalcations were connected with the colonial, and not with the home branch, and there was nothing to shew that the credit of those discoveries was not due to Mr. Prior and to Mr. Nightingale. He saw nothing in the evidence to lead him to a contrary conclusion, and so far as dates are concerned, the priority of attention, as appeared by the evidence, was all in favor of Mr. Prior. He thought he was correct in stating that there was nothing to contradict the statement of Mr. Prior, that the discoveries were due to him and Mr. Nightingale. The honorable member for the Burnett, Mr. Mackenzie, had wished to shew that the office was now in an efficient state, and that it always was in an efficient state; and the way the honorable member proceeded to prove that, was by assuring the House that the persons who were in the office now were there originally. Now he must say that did not prove to him that the office was formerly in an efficient state because the same persons were in the office now. Besides, the honorable member admitted that something went

wrong in the absence of the Postmaster-General, notwithstanding the Postmistress was present, and they had seen sufficient of the way in which the business was conducted in his absence to deter them from recommending that the Postmaster-General should continue the work of postal inspection. He did not think it was right to throw on the Postmaster-General the onus of the appointment of that individual, and of one of the individuals complained of, for such an influence had been brought to bear upon him in reference to that appointment as to exonerate him from blame. He must say he thought that very much of the difficulty which had arisen was to be found in a statement of Mr. Prior's, which had not been questioned, but which he thought he ought to read. It was contained in a long statement made in answer to a question by the chairman—page 3, question 30—and was as follows:—

“The honorable the late Treasurer and myself both saw the delicate position in which we were placed. Mrs. Barney was highly respected; she had been at the Post Office a long time, and had a very great deal of interest, being known to nearly all—and not only known, but intimate with nearly all—the principal persons in the colony. I therefore did not wish to make formal complaints against her, and it was arranged that a departmental change should take place.”

Now, he thought the whole origin of the difficulty rested in that simple fact, that there was a delicacy on the part of the late Colonial Treasurer, and on the part of the Postmaster-General, to make complaints; that they were to a certain degree, if he might say so, hampered—that they did not feel at liberty to deal in the matter according to their judgment, but had to deal according to the circumstances of the case, and from expediency rather than from a consideration as to what was the right thing to be done. Reference had been made to the work that was sought to be imposed on Mrs. Barney, in reference to this matter. It did not appear that the accounts she had to keep were very intricate, or that they were of such a nature that they might not have been easily mastered by a female; but it appeared to him that the same dislike to figures and to calculations manifested itself in Mrs. Barney as characterised the most of her sex. He considered there was nothing at all imposed on Mrs. Barney that she might not overcome with inclination and determination, and which, he considered, she was bound to do, as she was second in rank in the Post Office department, and second as regarded salary. As he had already said, his feelings, when the matter was first brought before the House, were in favor of Mrs. Barney, and against the Postmaster-General; but a perusal of the evidence brought him to a different conclusion. He took a different view from that of the committee,—that the postal inspector should be the inspector of telegraphs. He totally disagreed

with that recommendation, for a person might be well qualified to take charge of the inspection of the Post Offices and postal lines, and wholly unfitted for the duties of inspector of telegraphs. To be competent to fill such an office as the latter, the person must be a good electrician, and perfectly at home in respect to telegraphic operations, &c. Now it might not be possible to find a person qualified to fill the two offices, and he questioned whether the duties of the two offices were compatible. Though it might appear, at first sight, to be a saving to the country to have a person to do double work, he must say that, for his own part, he did not think it would be found in the end to be so. He, therefore, held that till they could find a person capable of performing the duties of the two offices, so long must they keep the two offices separate. He did not mean to say that such a man might not be met with, but only he did not think it was likely. He did not know that he had any more remarks to make, but he felt he must, so far as he could judge, free and exonerate the Postmaster-General from blame; at any rate, he could not think that that officer could be more culpable than the late Colonial Treasurer, judging by the evidence, and they must go by the evidence, and there was nothing in it to shew that the Postmaster-General was wrong in his recommendations, but, on the contrary, there was everything in it to shew that he was right; and if the arrangements for carrying out the Money Order department were not satisfactory, the late Colonial Treasurer was to blame, seeing that the arrangements were to be approved of by him.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: As the member of the Government whose department this branch of the service is in, I may be expected to make a few remarks on the subject, and, in doing so, I would say that the Government, in viewing this report as it is presented to the House by the committee, cannot feel any objection to its adoption. On the contrary, there is much in the report which, in the opinion of the Government, and which, I believe, will be admitted by the House, will justify the remarks that fell from the Government at another stage of the proceedings during an early part of the debate in this House. It may be remembered that, on the part of the Government, I expressed an opinion at the period of the passing of the resolution for the appointment of the committee, that there seemed not to be that great reason for the committee which some honorable members seemed to think existed; and, as I said before, I think this report in a great measure justifies the remarks that were then made. I think it will be seen that, as it was then said, there did not exist at that time, and there does not exist now, any great irregularity, or great want of system, or any disorganised state of things in the department, which requires great improvement at the hands of this House.

The Government, I may say, feel much relieved by the labors of the committee, and believe that, the subject being fully ventilated, the House will feel satisfied in the reception of this report. In making the few remarks I shall have to make, I shall only refer to the latter portion of the remarks made by the two previous speakers. The honorable member for the Burnett referred to, and put much stress on, the last clause of the report, in which it is said that much difficulty existed in arriving at conclusions on many points, in consequence of the numerous discrepancies in the evidence taken before the committee. Now I think it is quite possible, and the honorable member will perceive, that in an inquiry of this kind, into a subject that arose in consequence of a misconception—in consequence of a clear want of appreciation—of the relative position of each of the heads of the departments of that branch of the service, it is possible discrepancies would creep into the evidence, not only of the heads who were examined in connection with this question, but also in the evidence of others. And I will go so far as to say, that the evidence given, and opinions expressed, by witnesses before the committee, are totally opposed to that which is conceived to be the correct state of things by those who are not connected with that department. With reference to that particular point, as to the difference of opinion of the Postmaster-General and of the honorable member at the head of the Government, of that which brought to light the defalcations, I will go so far as to say that it has been stated another gentleman in connection with the civil service of the colony claims the right of the discovery of those defalcations—not that I know the civil servant to whom I allude did discover them—but it only shews that those discrepancies are likely to arise in connection with the subject, which in the first instance arose from misconception. Now, as to the concluding remarks of the honorable member who spoke last, to the effect that the late Colonial Treasurer was to blame in consequence of his not having made the arrangements more clear—in fact, that his responsibility was directly, and in a degree greater than that of the Postmaster-General, as regarded the Money Order branch of the office under Mrs. Barney—it is impossible that the late Colonial Treasurer could be held responsible for the working and superintendence of an office which was under the supervision of two responsible officers. It is impossible the blame can be taken from those two officers and placed on the back of the late Colonial Treasurer. It is impossible the civil service can be conducted, if civil servants are not to be responsible for the acts which they are responsible, from their office, to fulfil. And in reference to the action of the Government after the board of inquiry as to the affairs of the Money Order office

was appointed, that action carried out the principle I hold to be involved in the question I mooted. It is this, that the Government felt the responsibility rested on the shoulders of the two officers whose duty it was to see their subordinates carried out their duty—first, the Postmaster-General, in respect to the mail service, and the Postmistress, in the Money Order branch. The result was, that in the opinion of the Government, in order to mark that responsibility, they placed to the discredit of those two officers the whole weight of those defalcations, as they each, separately and collectively, permitted a system to continue that did not afford a sufficient check to prevent those defalcations. And, I think, the principle is a good one; though I do not say that it was the duty, or lay on the Government with any particular stress to do so, and so I deny the position taken up by the committee. I do not mean to say that much may not be said in favor of the report of the committee, which purposes to take away from those two officers the blame of the defalcations that occurred in the Money Order office; but while I say so, I also hold the Government were right in the course they adopted in regard to those two officers of this department. If honorable members of this House, by adopting this clause of the report, admit—which I hope will not be the case—that officers at the head of branches of the civil service of the colony are not responsible for the acts of their subordinates, in cases where clearly they have neglected to conduct their portion of the office, as the head of the department, to the full extent their position requires them, there must be an end to the responsibility the heads of departments have hitherto held. But I do not object to this, as there may be circumstances which I am not prepared to lay down fully to the House,—that is, to say what the circumstances really are, but that I may say there was a misconception, a want of proper understanding between the heads of the department in that service. But leaving that clause of the report, I hold the Government assumed a proper and sufficient attitude, and not too strong a position, when they called on the two officers to pay for the amount of those defalcations. Now, sir, I think, perhaps there is very little for me to remark upon in connection with this report; indeed, I might admit, on the part of the Government, that this report may be allowed by them to pass without much comment, for there is not in it much which the Government can see cause to object to. In principle they have, with the exception of the last clause, already adopted every part of the report. They have attempted in some instances, and made in others, the changes that this report says were necessary in the Post Office department. The checks that were wanting in the Money Order department have been made, which this report admits; and I think there is only, perhaps,

one portion of it that at all interferes with the action of the Government taken in connection with it. That is a matter of detail, and refers to the appointment of a postal inspector. Now, a mere difference in the position taken up by the committee, as set forth in their report, as to the appointment of that officer, and that taken by the Government, is not correct, in my opinion. It was the opinion of the Government, and of the committee, as set forth in their report, that another officer was necessary; but there is a difference between the position in which the report would place that officer, and the position in which the Government would place him. The Government, on the whole, has no great occasion to complain of the difference of the result if the appointment, as proposed by this report, and the appointment as it would have resulted had it been placed in other hands. I think the Government would have found that in appointing the Postmaster, with a secretary to the head of the department, they would have brought about the full requirements, at this stage of the colony's existence, for the postal service. I think the Postmaster must be known to most of the honorable members of this House to be a man peculiarly fitted, from his antecedents, for the office of Postal Inspector of the colony; and he has not been indisposed to accept the office; but he was well prepared to take it in connection with the work which might fall to his lot to do as Postmaster-General, assisted by a secretary or postmaster. That clause in the report which alludes to the system of promotion, and which is sketched out, as has been said by the Postmaster General, is one which the Government cannot have any objections to; and it is one that has in a great degree, if not in a full degree, been adopted in that branch of the service, and, I have no doubt, in the whole service; but, however, in that branch of the service it has been fully adopted. In most instances the Postmaster-General has promoted his own subordinates, and I hope he has done so on the principle of merit. I think those are the principal points in the report to which I need refer, and to which I see no great objection. There is no objection, I may add, on the part of the Government, to the adoption of the report, and I, for one, shall be happy to support its adoption.

Mr. FORBES said he did not think the chairman of the committee had given equal justice to both parties concerned in his remarks. However honestly the report might deal with principles, he thought the honorable member had only taken such passages of the evidence as supported his case, leaving untouched the mass of evidence that did not support the report. He thought it would be better, on the present occasion, to throw aside any interested evidence that had been taken, and deal with the question entirely on the disinterested evidence of gentle men not connected with the postal

department. He referred to the evidence given by Mr. Nightingale and by Mr. Glanville; and he considered there was sufficient in the evidence to support the report as it stood. It had been asserted several times that no responsibility could attach to Mrs. Barney in the management of the Money Order office. Now, he would quote one or two passages from the evidence of Mr. Nightingale. That gentleman was asked a number of questions by Mr. Walsh, and he would quote a few of those with the answers:—

“Was it any part of your business to be aware of any errors in that department? No; I consider not, I had nothing to do with that branch.

“Who do you consider had charge of that department?” Mrs. Barney.

“And that it was not your business to inspect the accounts of that department without her request? Not without the instructions of the Postmaster-General.

“Then if Mrs. Barney simply requested you to do so, you would not have done it? Certainly not.

“I imagine it is because you consider the branch was so distinct from the rest of the Post Office? Yes.

“All the accounts of the General Post Office, besides that branch, you do inspect? In fact, I have the books under my control in the safe.

“But that branch was so distinct that it was not your business to interfere? I certainly considered so; the books were away.”

He might say that that gentleman was authorised by the Postmaster-General to hand over the books of the department to Mrs. Barney, and, as a proof of the manner in which the department was conducted by Mrs. Barney, he would also refer to another portion of Mr. Nightingale's evidence.

“Now, as you are an accountant, is it your opinion that those mistakes ought to have been discovered by the person in charge of the department as soon as they were made? I think that they should not have gone on so long. I think that in a month they ought to have been found out—in the monthly examination, perhaps not the daily.”

“Do you consider, from the experience you have had of her as accountant, that she was capable of performing the duties entrusted to her in connection with the Money Order Office? I do not.”

Now, that evidence all tended in the same manner to shew Mrs. Barney's unfitness for the duties of the head of the Money Order department. Other questions were:—

“Then you think that she ought to have discovered the errors? I think those errors ought to have been discovered by her.”

“Has the work of that department increased since you first took charge of it? Yes, it has increased since Mrs. Barney left.”

That shewed that if Mrs. Barney was unfit for the office when the business was smaller, she must be more unfit for it under present circumstances; and, therefore, her removal must be regarded as a proper step towards making the department efficient.

Then, as to the conduct of Mr. Parsons, and to shew that there was every confidence placed in the clerks of the department, Mr. Nightingale was also examined:—

“Had you received private information which would lead you to suppose that Parsons was a dishonest man, would you have considered it your duty to have acquainted your superior officer? I certainly think I should have mentioned it to the head of the department—certainly to Mrs. Barney.”

So that shewed there was every feeling to assist Mrs. Barney to carry out the business as head of the department. Then came the questions:—

“You would not do it in obedience to any order on the subject, but from a sense of duty? I would, from a sense of duty.

“And if the daily statements had been examined, the defalcations must have appeared? If they had been examined thoroughly, I think they would.”

So there must have been a great many of the daily statements not examined, and others that were not taken care of when they were examined. Another question was:—

“Then do you think that course advisable—the former system, when they went back to Mr. Parsons' hands? No; I think they ought not to have gone into Mr. Parsons' hands again.”

Because, it appeared that when they went back into his hands he altered them as stated, and began to increase the amount. Then, with regard to rendering Mrs. Barney assistance, in going into the office, Mr. Nightingale was asked,—

“Was it at Mr. Prior's suggestion that you rendered her any assistance? In the first instance, he asked me to do so, as she was taking fresh duties. I considered it in explanation of the duties; shewing her what was to be done.”

And here was the memorandum of the Postmaster-General to Mr. Nightingale:—

“During the absence of the Postmaster-General, Mr. Nightingale, as senior officer, will take charge of the General Post Office Department, with exception of the Money Order Office.”

Now that shewed that the Money Order department was entirely under the control of Mrs. Barney. In looking at the matter in that light, he thought it could not be contended that Mr. Prior had any pecuniary responsibility placed on him for the supervision of the department. He did all that was necessary for his part of the supervision of the Post Office department; and he did not feel it necessary for him, considering the positions he and Mrs. Barney occupied, to interfere with the Money Order department; and, besides, he felt a great delicacy in entering into details. If Mrs. Barney had used the most common precaution, the defalcations that had given rise to this inquiry would never have occurred. The Postmaster-General left the Money Order branch of the office entirely in Mrs. Barney's hands. In the other colonies, the money order branch was entirely separate from the other departments of the post office, and was managed

and conducted separately from them; and it therefore required a head, and the Postmaster-General could only be responsible for the general supervision, without being responsible for pecuniary defalcations. If Mrs. Barney could not have kept the books, she could have kept the money, and if she had kept the money and compared the amount with the vouchers, she would have been able to check the amounts. He would not have gone so far into the question, as regarded Mrs. Barney, only, as the chairman of the committee alluded so strongly to the case as affecting the Postmaster-General, he thought it necessary for some member of the committee to take the course he had taken. Looking at the whole matter, he must say he did not think the Postmaster-General had any responsibility cast on him; and with regard to Mrs. Barney, he thought, with all due deference, that the mistake had arisen from a lady having had charge of the department. He thought that, looking at all the matters connected with this inquiry—looking at the evidence that had been adduced, and next taking the evidence of the parties that were interested—he thought the House could come to no other conclusion than that stated in the report—that the Postmaster-General was efficient in the discharge of his public duties, and that he performed them well and for the public good; that Mrs. Barney deserved the thanks of the colony, and that the Legislature could not shew their feelings better to their public servants than, in the case of an error in judgment, such as had allowed this to occur, by exonerating them; particularly as honorable members knew that this inquiry did not arise with respect to this lady or gentleman, but that it was wholly as to defalcations. For his own part, he could not see what other purpose the committee was appointed for; and though the chairman, at the commencement of the inquiry, urged upon the other members of the committee to endeavor to keep clear of all other matters, yet they could not do so. He thought the conclusions the committee had come to, and had embodied in their report, were correct; and he thought the country would not be alarmed at the position of the Post Office, which was now as efficient, if not more so, than before this inquiry took place. The inquiry was of a public nature, the proceedings and the working of the whole of the Post Office department had been brought before the public; and he thought there was nothing that tended more to the stability of the public service than that every department should be open to the criticism, not only of Parliament, but of the public of the colony at large. One of the recommendations in clause 5 of the report was, that a new Post Office be erected. He hoped that recommendation would be complied with, as the necessity of a new building was very apparent to the committee. Then the same clause recom-

mended "the appointment of a postal inspector, as well as a chief clerk in the office, which latter would obviate the necessity for the appointment of a postmaster, as now proposed by the Government." He thought that recommendation also, if carried out, would be of great service. There were some other matters of detail referred to in the report for ensuring further efficiency in the department. The 7th clause, which referred to discrepancies in the evidence, he thought, might very well have been left out, as it was only calculated to give rise to acrimony and ill-feeling. It might have the effect of throwing the apple of discord, not only among the officers of the department, but among members of the House. If there had been any discrepancy in the evidence, he did not think it could be traced to any desire on the part of the witnesses to evade the truth, but rather from a misapprehension of the direction which the inquiry was intended to take. He supported the motion for the adoption of the report.

Mr. TAYLOR said he had no doubt the report would be adopted pretty unanimously by the House. He wished to bring one matter under the notice of the House. In his opinion, the present Postmaster-General was a very efficient officer, for he found, in the part of the country in which he lived, that the Post Office arrangements were very satisfactory. He confessed to having had rather a prejudice against that gentleman when he was first appointed; but that prejudice had been entirely removed. He had also spoken very favorably of Mrs. Barney, knowing the services she had previously rendered, and he thought it was a pity that steps were not taken at the time of Separation to make some provision for her. The question of defalcations was a very difficult one to deal with. He thought, however, it was a most dangerous principle to lay down in the House, that the heads of departments were not to be held responsible. It was strange that in the very same department—in the Treasury—defalcations had also taken place not very long ago, which he believed had not yet been made up. It was a serious matter to think, that in two instances defalcations had occurred in public offices, and no one was to be made responsible. It had been proposed that the amount of the defalcations in this case should be made up equally by the two persons in charge, and he thought that was a very good way of meeting the difficulty. And, as Mrs. Barney had given ample securities, he did not see why such a course should not be adopted. One of her sureties was the honorable member for the Burnett, who, he was sure, would not hesitate one moment in such a matter. For his part, he had no hesitation in stating that if he had been Colonial Treasurer when the defalcations occurred in that department, he should have given his cheque for the amount. He quite concurred in the

opinion which had been expressed by one honorable member, that the proper postal inspector was the Postmaster-General. If an additional inspector were employed to inspect the offices throughout the country, he would be liable to bribes, and would be likely to listen to all sorts of suggestions in reference to new postal lines and other matters, which the Postmaster-General would be above doing. He knew, for a fact, that the Postmaster-General had been very firm on one or two occasions of this kind. He thought it would be better to have a postmaster to manage the Post Office in his absence, and to make him postal inspector. He believed the great mistake which had been made by the Postmaster-General was, in considering the Money Order branch as not under his control—he thought that was a great error. He believed the state of things which had ensued, had not been caused by any person at present in office, but had arisen from circumstances which the committee could not take in evidence, to which he would not further allude. There was one matter which he particularly wished to bring under the notice of the Government. There was the sum of £375 now placed on the Estimates for Mrs. Barney. He believed that sum would not be voted, and he hoped the Government, if they desired to do that lady justice, would withdraw the item, and place a sum on the Estimates as a reward for her past services. If the sum of £1,000, or £2,000 were placed on the Estimates for that purpose, he believed it would be granted. If not, and the sum now set down were not voted, she would be in such a position that she would get nothing at all.

Mr. MACKENZIE said, in reference to the remark made by the honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Taylor, that he was surety for Mrs. Barney—that he was surety for her personally, but not for any of her subordinates. If it had been proved that Mrs. Barney had herself been concerned in the defalcation, he should have been prepared to come forward at once. But as that was not the case, it would be absurd for him to come forward with a cheque—as the honorable member had suggested—which would not benefit that lady at all.

The question was put and passed.
