

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY 1879

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 23 July, 1879.

Assent to Bill.—Joint Library Committee.—*Hansard*.—
Appropriation Bill.—Tooth Estate Enabling Bill.—
Public Revenue and Expenditure.—Electoral Rolls
Bill.

ASSENT TO BILL.

A message from the Governor was received, informing the House that His Excellency had assented to the Bill to provide a Pension for Lady O'Connell.

JOINT LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

On the motion of Mr. GREGORY, for and in the absence of Mr. Murray-Prior, the report of the Joint Library Committee was adopted.

HANSARD.

Mr. WALSH moved—

1. That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the feasibility of issuing a more frequent or earlier issue of *Hansard* in connection with the proceedings of this House.

2. That said Committee consist of the Postmaster-General, Mr. Hart, Mr. Sandeman, Mr. Heussler, and the mover, with power to move from place to place, to send for persons and papers, and have leave to sit during any adjournment of this House.

In offering this motion to the House, he said he was actuated, in the first place, by what he considered the gross injustice of the Press of the colony in stating the facts of what occurred in another Chamber in its own peculiar way. Before a Daily *Hansard* was established for the Assembly it was the practice of the Press of the colony, especially of the meaner portion of it, to put into the mouths of members, who were not friendly to the proprietors or editors of certain papers, words and sentiments which those members never uttered, and then to found upon them scurrilous and libellous leading articles. But, happily, by the establishment of the Daily *Hansard*, conducted upon the most rational and honourable principles, that state of things had ended, and the Press had ceased to misreport the debates; and now Queensland had reason to be proud—he knew that in other colonies they were pleased—as he was proud, of that official journal, which enabled the world, so far as the world took any interest in the proceedings of the House, to see what the representatives especially of the colony said and did, and which enabled the people to understand exactly what transpired in their cherished Assembly, and to judge men, not upon the coloured construction put on their statements or upon false reports of their speeches, as unfortunately had been too frequently done heretofore in this colony, but to judge them upon their merits. He knew the beneficent effects which had resulted from the issue of the Daily

Hansard in another place, because he saw that those literally dirty attacks which used to be made upon members of the Assembly, especially by misreporting them, could not now be made in the presence of that publication; and because he saw that the same persons apparently that did the dirty work of the Press, now necessarily confined their observation and misrepresentation to the Council, he felt it his duty to make the remarks which he made on a previous occasion. He more particularly referred, at the same time, to the dilatoriness with which, and he took exception to the way in which, the Council *Hansard* was issued;—he could see no reason for it, and he could not comprehend that there was any necessity for such dilatoriness. He adduced as a fact that honourable members' words were being misrepresented, probably, being criticised, five or six hundred miles distant, before the report of them was in the possession of the Brisbane public or even in the hands of honourable members. Proofs he gave to the House in support of what he said. What was the result? What was the improvement that had already taken place? Instead of the Rockhampton journal anticipating, as formerly, the *Hansard*, and being first before the public with the utterances, or supposed utterances, and sentiments of honourable members, he found that their own *Hansard*—the longest one issued this Session—was actually ready for publication on Friday, instead of the following Wednesday, as heretofore. So far, he had done a certain amount of good, by calling attention to the matter. He believed that their *Hansard*, small and unimportant as the proceedings of the Council might be, would prevent the misleading of the public; and he was inclined to think that if he gained the object he had in view now, further advantage might be secured. At once, he would disabuse the Postmaster-General's mind, that he did not want to impose any lavish or extravagant expenditure upon the country. He mentioned that to satisfy the honourable gentleman. Still, he maintained that, from the information which he possessed—did he wish to make use of it—if it was thought necessary for the public—with a very little extra expense, with a little more energy insisted upon, the Council should be able to have, if not a Daily *Hansard*, at any rate, a *Hansard* more correct or accurate than the present one was, and issued in more becoming or speedier time. If honourable gentlemen would look at their *Hansard*, they would see what a very small amount of reporting there was in it. They would know that the business of the Council seldom or never detained the House more than two hours in the afternoon. There should be no insuperable difficulty in

issuing a Daily *Hansard*; and there could be no justification for its costing much more than at present. What was the actual expenditure he was not aware; but he should learn the cost of *Hansard* if the House would appoint the Committee. It might be costing too much, now—he did not say it was;—it might be, for the good of the country, costing too little. At any rate, if the Committee worked, as he was inclined to think they would, honestly—he intended to do so—he trusted that they would be able to show that whilst the House were able to put the public in possession of facts on an earlier date than they had been given heretofore, and probably more correctly given than they had been up to this moment, and at a not appreciable increase of expenditure, they would be justified in doing it for the benefit of the country. That was what he wished to enforce upon the attention of the Council. He contended that the public at this moment, owing to the suppression of the proceedings of honourable members of the Council—owing to the suppression entirely of the speeches made either by his honourable friend, the Postmaster-General, or any other honourable gentleman—was not aware of what occurred in the House; and that, owing to that suppression of everything almost, the Council had allowed themselves to be blotted out. The value of their services to the country would not be known so long as they allowed themselves to be ignored. They had really cultivated that feeling which had been too long prevalent amongst the people. He did not wish to discuss the question at all; but so long as honourable gentlemen were members of the Council, so long as they took the trouble to attend in their places in the Chamber, so long as they occupied the high position given to them in the country, it was their duty to make known to the country what transpired in the Council, even at a little cost to the public. He did not want to disturb any officer of the House. He trusted that one result of his committee would be to enable the *Hansard* to be brought out, not only much earlier than it was before, except probably last Friday; but a little more correctly. Now, to show positively how incorrect it was, he was able to tell of a little episode that occurred in the House when he was discussing the present matter before. He was referring to the great value of the *Hansard* in another Chamber, as it enabled the people to know what was going on in the Legislative Assembly, and to know what those who were their representatives were doing, or what those who had been their representatives, and who were obliged to go before them ere they could return to the other Chamber, were doing. He was showing that by the Daily *Hansard* being placed in the hands of the people they

were enabled to form a more correct opinion than ever before of what their members or their late representatives did in the Chamber; and mention was made of a friend of his own who told him that wherever he went on Darling Downs canvassing, he was met with *Hansard*:—"It is no use your talking—no use your saying—so-and-so: there are the Government you support; there are the sentiments they enunciated; here is your *Hansard*. By them you are condemned, and we condemn you." That he lost his election, to a certain extent, through the *Hansard*, was a conclusion fairly to be drawn from the publication of that valuable document. Well, an interruption of the matter, in some sort of way, took place while he (Mr. Walsh) was addressing the House—the Postmaster-General, he thought, wanted to know if he was not referring to himself—if he was not the unfortunate individual concerned;—and then some other interruption occurred, which necessitated his saying that he (Mr. Walsh) was not defeated by the present Government. But he wished to point out, that the expression he used was not correct in *Hansard*. He wished to point to that as a specimen of its incorrectness. He distinctly pointed to his honourable friend (Mr. Mein) at his side, and said he had been defeated by the Government of which he had been a member. He did not wish to cast a stain upon the present Government;—his fidelity, his gratitude, forbade it. Notwithstanding, it did appear in *Hansard* that he was maligning the present Government. He merely showed that, so far as correctness, there was room for improvement. Then, again, he had very good information for stating that, small as the *Hansard* was, with a very few suggestions—probably it might be in the power of the President himself to make them—and he was sure the honourable gentleman would see them carried out—it could be made less bulky—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Hear, hear.

MR. WALSH: And it might contain much more information, and need not be more costly than it was at present. He was glad to find he was right. He hoped that what was suggested would be carried out. All he could say, now, having explained so much, was that he hoped the *Hansard* would be circulated amongst the people, who should be able to know what was the true character of the proceedings of the Council; and that he wished it to be circulated more speedily than it had been hitherto.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: His honourable friend, in bringing forward his present motion, had adopted the correct mode of procedure, from his point of view. At the same time, he must confess that nothing which had been said by the honourable gentleman in support of his motion sufficed

to alter in any way the opinion he held, that it was undesirable for the Council to adopt the plan which was followed by the representative branch of the Legislature. He saw by the terms of the motion that the honourable gentleman merely asked for "a more frequent or earlier issue of *Hansard*;" so that he presumed the mover did not intend that the Council *Hansard* should be incorporated and issued simultaneously with that of the Legislative Assembly. The House must see that to carry out that object a very large increase of expenditure would be incurred. He observed that last Session the question was brought forward by the late lamented President, and although that honourable gentleman argued it with great skill, and exhaustively, the House did not approve of it. Not a single member of all who spoke on the question, the then Postmaster-General included, spoke in favour of it; and the arguments in opposition to it were so conclusive, that the President very reluctantly was compelled to withdraw his motion. The honourable Mr. Walsh erred in the wish for reports to be given so fully as he seemed to expect. He (the Postmaster-General) did not think it was desirable that full reports of the speeches in the Council should be printed in *Hansard*. He would much rather see the substance of their proceedings produced without verbiage. He had been reading *Hansard* for some weeks, and found that there was a great deal too much of what he called surplusage. Why, an honourable gentleman could not open his mouth to say, "Hear, hear," but he would find it recorded. So far he agreed with the honourable Mr. Walsh, that he appeared in the last issue of *Hansard* to have uttered "Hear, hear," when he did not intend to do it. He believed he might have been mistaken for some other honourable member who had said it; because what he was supposed to have applauded was directly opposed to the sentiments which he had expressed—though it might have been uttered by him by way of sarcasm or satire. He did think, with that single exception, that the reports in *Hansard* were correct; that they were too full, he firmly believed; also, that the speeches would be improved in every way by being condensed. With that exception the *Hansard* of the Council now published was all that they desired. Last week, the publication was accelerated, and it was distributed so early as Saturday. He thought that if honourable gentlemen could get *Hansard* distributed so early as Saturday morning, they had very little to complain of. At the same time, referring to the form in which the motion was now presented, he did not oppose strongly the reference of the question to the Select Committee;—in fact, if the House wished the Committee to inquire into it and report

upon it, he should consent to the motion. But he was not sanguine that the investigation by the Committee would result in any material alteration in the *Hansard*. With regard to the opinion of the late President, who, no doubt, had obtained correct information on the subject, and who had stated that the additional expense of a daily *Hansard* would be about £1,000—

Mr. WALSH: Hear, hear.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He did not know whether his honourable friend contemplated so large an expenditure as that. But he was quite sure that in the present position of the colony, it would be very hard to get that sum passed through the other House. The necessity for retrenchment on all hands, and for avoiding any such increase of expenditure for an object which he did not think could be considered necessary, was of very great importance; and such expenditure would be very strongly opposed. On days when the Council rose before six o'clock, he acknowledged that the expense incurred for a daily issue of *Hansard* would not be a very serious item; because, perhaps, the Council could get some help from the reporting staff of the other House. But when more work was required to be done, and when the Council sat after dinner, as well as the Assembly, a second and complete staff of reporters would be required, and that staff could only be obtained by employing reporters per annum. Shorthand writers could not be got for the Session, to do one or two days' work a week; they must be paid a sum which would be remuneration for the whole twelve months. So that, he concluded, if the *Hansard* was to be issued each morning after the debates occurred, the expense would be very great. He did not think it would be done for an additional £1,000 a year. But if the object was merely to accelerate the publication of *Hansard*, he thought that had been already obtained. So long as honourable members could get *Hansard* on Saturday, he did not see what more they required. He did not wish to oppose his honourable friend, because he knew that the honourable Mr. Walsh felt strongly: whether or not the honourable gentleman had any reason to complain that he did not get fair play from the Press he did not know. It might be that, sometimes, the honourable Mr. Walsh, like other speakers in Parliament, did not get fully or fairly reported; but that was not from any desire or design to send forth false statements. He thought his honourable friend was a great deal too hard on the Press; and that his belief that any public journalist or any reporter in the city connected with any newspaper would deliberately distort the language uttered by any member of the House was un-

founded. There would be occasional distortions and incorrect reports; but he (the Postmaster-General) was quite sure that any newspaper proprietor who would deliberately descend to that practice would find that it did not pay. That was a very strong inducement, at any rate, for maintaining impartiality in recording the utterances of public men. It seemed that the House having decided almost unanimously, last Session, that they would not authorise the daily publication of *Hansard*, his honourable friend had scarcely shown sufficient reason for them to alter their opinions upon the present proposition.

Mr. MEIN said, that having been present during the discussion of a somewhat similar question in the Session of last year, perhaps it might not be out of place for him to venture to make a few remarks. He hardly thought the Postmaster-General had placed before the House accurately the nature of the discussion that took place on that occasion. The honourable gentleman appeared to be of opinion that an unanimous expression of opinion adverse to the issue of a Daily *Hansard* had been given by the Council. He (Mr. Mein) recollected the discussion, and he had referred to the report of what took place in *Hansard*, and the impression that he gathered of the proceedings of the House was, that instead of their being unanimously opposed to the issue of a daily *Hansard* the majority of honourable gentlemen who took part in the debate expressed the opinion that it was desirable to have a daily issue, but that in the peculiar position of affairs, at the time—the fact that the Legislative Assembly, not to put too fine a point on it, had discourteously treated the recommendation of the Council with regard to a sum of money proposed for their official establishment—they considered it highly improbable that, in the temper of the Legislative Assembly, that House would be inclined to assist in getting a Daily *Hansard* for the Council. There was a very strong expression of opinion that it would be desirable, in the interests of the Council themselves, in order to preserve their proceedings from misinterpretation, and to present them correctly before the public, that the expression of honourable members' opinions in debate should be given to the colony as speedily as possible in *Hansard*. It could not be denied that, so far as the outside public were concerned, it had the minimum of evidence as to what occurred in the Council. The reports of the newspaper Press, doubtless for reasons sufficient to the proprietors of journals, were very limited, indeed. Only one journal of the colony sent a reporter at all to the House, and, even when very important matters came on for discussion, the reference to the remarks of honourable members of the Council were of the most limited

character, and the cream of the statements of members was not often given, but some remarks which were not pertinent to the question were. There was a difficulty, he knew, in the reporters hearing accurately what took place; but at the same time, it could not be denied that, at present, the Press did not appear to consider their proceedings of sufficient importance to warrant it in noticing what was going on, with any marked degree of attention; and the result was, that persons at a distance were liable to be misled by *ex parte* and perverted statements addressed to them. An instance of that was brought before the Council, last week, by the honourable Mr. Walsh. If instances like that were repeated, he (Mr. Mein) conceived that the House would be bound, in self-defence, to take action, and resolve that their expressed opinions should be placed more often than now before the public. However, honourable gentlemen had suffered no injury in the instance which had been brought under the notice of the House, as the attention of the proprietor of the journal in which those slanderous remarks had been made having been directed to them, there would, doubtless, be an amendment for the future. He could see no danger in passing the motion. It was admitted that there would be inaccuracies in their reports.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: There would be, always.

Mr. MEIN: And as the Postmaster-General now ejaculated, there would always be. He would here say that their reporter laboured under great disadvantages. He had the whole work of the Council thrown upon his shoulders; the acoustic properties of the Chamber were very imperfect; and honourable members, instead of assisting him to overcome its defects, very often increased them. He saw some of them engaged, and in default, at the present moment;—instead of according to a member, when he was speaking, the courtesy of listening to him, they indulged in conversation all round the table, and very often the member addressing the House could not hear his own voice; and, if a member could not hear himself talking, it was absolutely impossible for the reporter to catch the words that were said. He thought the honourable Mr. Walsh was too severe altogether on their reporter. Taking into consideration the difficulties surrounding him, and the fact that all the labour of the sittings of the House fell upon him, he turned out his work in a remarkably accurate and good manner.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Hear, hear.

Mr. MEIN: He thought the Council would have to go very far before they could get a more accurate reporter. He was almost inclined to think that the discussion was rather premature. All that the honourable Mr. Walsh asked was, that

a committee should sit for the purpose of investigating the subject of his motion. The House had before them the fact that their late President, who had had more experience of their deliberations than any other member, had been strongly convinced of the desirability of issuing a daily *Hansard*. There was a possibility—there was something in the facts that had occurred elsewhere—that a condition of affairs might arise here similar to what had arisen elsewhere, when it would be absolutely necessary for the Council to have their conduct and transactions put before the public speedily and fully. They need not go to an extraordinary increase of expenditure to secure that result. His honourable friend seemed to be sanguine that great good would ensue from what he proposed; and for the reasons stated, he should give the motion his support.

Mr. TAYLOR said he thought this was hardly the time to bring forward a motion for the expenditure of a single shilling more than could be helped. The colony was now in such a state, and things would be much more disastrous, he thought, that honourable members should watch every shilling that was spent. As far as the proposition before the House was concerned, he could not help thinking that the present *Hansard* reports might be issued to honourable members at their residences much earlier than they were distributed to the House; because he noticed when he did come down to the Council, which was not very often, that honourable members, on Wednesday, were entirely taken up with the pamphlet, instead of attending to the debates going on; and that, he thought, was worse than any conversation that an honourable gentleman might engage in with his friends. The honourable Mr. Mein was very ready to take members to task for talking, and to speak hard about them, but no one was oftener engaged in conversation than he was. As to the Daily *Hansard*, he did not see that it was mentioned in the motion. The honourable gentleman only asked for a select committee; and, if they were appointed, as named, they would bring up such a report that a Daily *Hansard* could not be allowed—that the colony could not afford it at present. He (Mr. Taylor) trusted, therefore, that his honourable friend, if Mr. Walsh would allow him to call him so, would withdraw the motion; because he did not wish to be seen sitting opposite to him, knowing the honourable gentleman's services, virtues, and merits, and so on. He trusted that the pamphlet would be issued more frequently or earlier than now to honourable members, or that instructions would be given to that effect. He did not know why, after the debates were reported, they were not placed in the hands of honourable members before

Wednesday, when they came to the House. The thing was perfectly absurd. He did not see why *Hansard*, when printed, could not be sent round to honourable members' private residences the same as other Parliamentary papers. Probably if that was done, it would attract the attention of honourable members to the reports before they came to the House, instead of their attention being occupied with *Hansard* in the House while other debates were going on. He must say that he should vote against the Committee now, and, if they should be appointed, and if they reported in favour of a Daily *Hansard*, he should vote against the expenditure. The country and the people were now crushed pretty well. Every man had as much as he could do to keep himself up. Honourable members might laugh. He was not in the law; but he knew that his business was very much affected.

Mr. MEIN: Poor fellow!

Mr. TAYLOR: He hoped the honourable Mr. Walsh would withdraw his motion, so that he and the honourable gentleman should not vote on opposite sides of the House.

Mr. SWAN said, he intended to support the motion. He had been a practical printer nearly all his lifetime; and he thought that if the proposal went before a Select Committee, he could make suggestions to the effect that the sum now expended on the *Hansard* would suffice to bring it out twice a week, or to make the publication one-half cheaper than it was now. If the Committee would take him as a witness, he would show that it could be done cheaper than at present; and he should like the letter of the reporter, Mr. Byrne, to be laid before the Committee.

Mr. HEUSSLER said he could not allow the motion to pass without a few words, because on various occasions he was averse to the publication of so expensive a thing as a Daily *Hansard* at all. However, there seemed to be a good deal of light thrown on the subject during the debate, and, so far, he was very glad that his honourable friend, Mr. Walsh, had asked for the Committee. The Committee would only have to ascertain what was best in their opinion for the House to do; and, in the course of their inquiry, they would ascertain the cost in general of *Hansard*. That was the stand he wished to take. At the present time there was a Daily *Hansard* issued for the Legislative Assembly. It struck him, as a common-sense man, that the few things, or the small matters, that had to be reported for the Council, very little expense would be incurred if their Daily *Hansard* was attached to the other publication. All the material was there, and was in working order. He had not the slightest doubt, from the

remarks of the honourable Mr. Swan, who had been a printer for a long time, that the honourable gentleman would show that the additional publication or speedy issue would cost very little extra. He thought that if a *Daily Hansard* was to come out at all, the Council should stand on the same footing as the other House. So far, it would be just as well that the honourable Mr. Swan should be one of the Committee, to assist them in their inquiries and deliberations.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Hear, hear.

MR. HEUSSLER: As far as the remarks of the honourable Mr. Taylor went—that honourable gentleman very seldom came to the House—

MR. MEIN and MR. WALSH: Hear, hear.

MR. HEUSSLER: They reminded him very much of a very odd thing that he saw in the Great Exhibition of 1851:—There was a certain box, which contained a piping bullfinch: he came out and sang his song, beautifully; after which he went in, and was seen no more until he had to come out to sing again;—he was in and out. His honourable friend, Mr. Taylor, was up and down, and he sang as a piping bullfinch for the Council: his song was either retrenchment or extravagance—the greatest ups and the greatest downs. The last time the honourable gentleman was in the Council, he told honourable members that he had made £100,000 in the north, or somewhere else. He (Mr. Heussler) wished that his honourable friend had given the House a wrinkle, or that he could get the one-tenth part of what had been made by him! The honourable gentleman then said he had actually made a quarter of a million of money. This time he sang quite a different song; he was quite subdued now.

MR. MEIN: Poor fellow!

MR. HEUSSLER: He had not the slightest doubt his honourable friend had made that quarter of a million.

MR. TAYLOR rose to a point of order. He did not see, he said, why his private affairs should be brought before the House. He did not think the honourable gentleman knew what he was talking about.

MR. MEIN did not object to the point of order, but an honourable gentleman who raised it should not take advantage of it to make offensive remarks upon another honourable member.

MR. TAYLOR persisting,

THE PRESIDENT said, perhaps the honourable gentleman would be good enough to state his point of order.

MR. TAYLOR: His private affairs were brought before the House, which was not right.

THE PRESIDENT: He must say that he had not heard anything that was unparliamentary.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. HEUSSLER: He only made allusion to a statement which the honourable Mr. Taylor himself had made, on the last occasion that he visited the Council, or at one of his recent visits; and he congratulated him, now, if he could do so, upon the extraordinary result of the trip. If the honourable gentleman had only allowed him to go on, he would have said that at the time he fully believed what the honourable gentleman then stated, but that he did not believe what he stated to-day. That was all. He (Mr. Heussler) wished some honourable gentleman was in a position to make remarks to himself upon his management of some such little business, and he should feel most grateful. There was no offence or harm whatever meant in what he said to the honourable Mr. Taylor. He came again to the question, whether the Committee should be appointed or not. He, for one, should like to see the mysterious question a little more ventilated.

MR. WALSH: Hear, hear.

MR. HEUSSLER: He, therefore, with all his heart would support the appointment of the Committee; and he hoped to see them bring up a proper and good report, and the House would find, upon the reception of the report, that the time was proper for the discussion of the question. He did not say that there was or was not an absolute necessity for a *Daily Hansard*. All that he contended for was, that as a *Daily Hansard* was issued by the Assembly, the proceedings of the Council might as well go forth to the country along with those of the other House—if that could not be, none should go forth;—and that the people should be able to see for themselves what they wished known about the Parliament. He only contended for what was fair. He wished to see if the deliberations of the Council had not a similar value to those of the other House. The greatest speeches were not always the best, or those by which the greatest difficulties in legislation were overcome. He hoped that every honourable gentleman would vote upon the motion without fear or favour.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Hear, hear.

MR. WALSH, in reply, said he must express his great astonishment that any honourable member, at the commencement of the Session, when the House had so much spare time on their hands, should object to the appointment of a Committee to investigate any subject that was short of its being a pernicious one.

MR. MEIN: There had not been one Committee this Session.

MR. WALSH: There was not enough work, really, to engross their time. It was an extraordinary thing that the spirit or influence of the Postmaster-General—he would not say of the Government—was so

strong, now, that there was the possibility of an investigation being burked, on the question whether the Council should improve certain matters in connection with their own proceedings—not on a question of something injurious to the country, but for an investigation which would cost the country not a penny except for printing. He should take care of that, so far as he was concerned. If the Postmaster-General had any supporters at all, they were not justified, if their intention was to do so, in allowing it to go forth to the country that they were afraid to examine into what vitally affected the proceedings of the House. Probably the inquiry would prove that the Council were spending more money than they ought to spend; that a *Hansard* more accurate or more correct could be brought out at less cost to the country;—he did not say it would;—but that would come within the scope of the Committee's duties. For some occult reason that he could not fathom—whether it was that the Postmaster-General thought that any thing which emanated from the opposite side of the House should not succeed, or whether the honourable gentleman had such supporters as utterly dreaded that anything should be done—objection was taken to the inquiry. All that he asked for was that the House should ascertain whether or not some improvement could take place in their proceedings. It seemed to be a foregone conclusion that wrong would be done, and that money would be wanted. He protested against that interpretation being put upon his motion or his conduct in the Chamber. He was very glad to find that, so far in his short experience of the Council, he had induced honourable members to see that their *Hansard* need not take from Thursday until the following Wednesday for publication; that, somehow, now, it could be brought out about Friday or Saturday. He was glad that the honourable member (Mr. Taylor) suggested that it should be placed in their hands oftener or more expeditiously. Even that was some good he had done. He proposed to do a little more, not by relying upon his own judgment, but by taking the evidence of their own reporter, or other persons, such as the honourable Mr. Swan, and putting all the information he could get together for the common benefit, as far as the House were concerned, and for the benefit of the country. There was one observation made—he did not think honourable members should misunderstand one another—as to the remarkable labours of this reporter. He must decidedly say that so long as they allowed an officer of the House to think that if he did four hours' work a week—so long as they left their reporter to think that he was over-worked, that he was doing something very meritorious in doing so

much for the Council—so long should they fail in getting anything like what he (Mr. Walsh) considered a fair amount of duty from such officers. Now, if honourable gentlemen would remember that this Session, so far, they had not actually sat four hours a week—if his memory served him, they met during the earlier part at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon and invariably closed their sittings before six o'clock—probably the average of their sittings, on two days, was four hours a week—they had no business whatever to talk about any officer of the House who had so little to do being over-worked, if by so doing they were misleading the public. He did not want to oppress any officer of the House. He would protect their officers as far as he could. But he had a higher duty, and that was to protect the country from fallacies being put forth, or other injustice being done. He should be very happy, with the sanction of the House, to add the honourable Mr. Swan to the Committee; or to take any other name that the Postmaster-General would suggest. All he cared about was to have a Committee that would really attend to duty, and really assist him in bringing up a fair statement on evidence—a fair statement of facts.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, with the permission of the House, said he should like to add a word or two in explanation:—One as to the point made in regard to the work of an officer of the House. He desired to remind the House that, although the Council sat only two hours a day, or four hours a week, as stated; yet each hour represented six or eight times as much time engaged in work, besides the actual hours of sitting. Another word more because of what had been advanced. What he wished to say was, that he had no intention of dividing the House against the honourable Mr. Walsh; but he did not think any honourable member was out of order or guilty of a breach of etiquette in expressing opinions in opposition to the motion.

MR. MEIN: That was not an explanation. He did not object to the Postmaster-General explaining; but he objected to his lecturing.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He had done.

By permission of the House, the name of Mr. Swan was included in the motion, which was then put and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

A message from the Legislative Assembly was received with the Appropriation Bill for 1879-80, No. 1, which was, on the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, read a first time.

There being an absolute majority of the whole Council present, as required by the 141st Standing Order,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will permit of the passing of this Bill through all its stages in one day.

He said the Bill was of great urgency, and it was of pressing necessity that the House should pass it before the end of this month, in order that the salaries of the public servants should be paid.

Question put and passed.

The Bill was ordered to be printed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving the second reading of the Bill, informed the House that it provided for the payment on account out of the Consolidated Revenue of the sum of £100,000 towards the public expenditure of the year ending 30th June, 1880. The amount would doubtless suffice for the payment of salaries of the Government servants for July and August.

Question put and passed.

The Bill was committed and advanced through all its remaining stages, and passed; and was forthwith ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly.

TOOTH ESTATE ENABLING BILL.

A message was received from the Legislative Assembly, transmitting a Bill to enable the Trustees under the Will of the late William Butler Tooth, to dispose of certain property, accompanied by a printed copy of the report and proceedings of the Select Committee to whom the Bill had been referred.

MR. MEIN, is the absence of the honourable gentleman who had charge of the Bill, produced a Treasury receipt certifying that the sum of £20 had been paid into the hands of the Colonial Treasurer in respect of the Bill, as provided by the Standing Orders. On his motion,

The Bill was read a first time and ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

The PRESIDENT read a letter addressed to him from the Auditor-General, accompanying the Preliminary Report upon the Receipts and Expenditure of the Consolidated Revenue and other Public Moneys for the financial year ending 30th June, 1879.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the paper was ordered to be printed.

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that, before moving the second reading of the Bill in his hand, he should prefer explaining its objects. Under the present law, as was well

known, the electoral lists for the Legislative Assembly were collected by the police and by other persons, who received remuneration for their services. The police, however, received no remuneration; they were expected to do the work as part of their ordinary duty. The experiment was introduced in 1874. It had now had a sufficient trial; and it was acknowledged on all hands that it had not realised the anticipations of those who first proposed the adoption of the present system of collecting the electoral lists. It had been found that the police often performed their work in a perfunctory way, and that the collectors who were employed outside the police were often incapable men who seemed to care very little how they did their work so long as they could obtain the remuneration paid in virtue of the provisions of the Act. No doubt, were the system of collecting the electoral lists carried out by men properly educated and thoroughly trustworthy, it would produce the most complete electoral rolls the colony could have. But, at the same time, it was quite impracticable for the Government to find men to do the work in the way that they required to have it done—accurately and faithfully. Under the present law the collectors ought to take the existing rolls, and, after examining them carefully, make them the basis of the new lists to be compiled; and they should leave off no name until they had satisfied themselves that it was that of a person who had died or become disqualified. But, in the majority of instances, the collectors did not do anything of the sort; they seemed to set about the work of collecting the lists altogether without regard to the existing rolls. Hence a very large number of freeholders, leaseholders, and householders had found themselves disfranchised, when from the fact of their being on the existing rolls by virtue of any of those qualifications, their names should have remained, at any rate, until they had removed or disposed of their qualifications. The Government, on introducing the Bill to amend the Act of 1874, had come to the conclusion that, if the work of collecting the electoral lists was to be done at all, it must be done well, and that the existing system of engaging the police to collect the electoral lists would never work well. They thought that, perhaps, therein was the principal reason of the non-success of the law. As the Bill was originally placed before the other House, therefore, it provided for a more expensive and complete system of collection; one which, he believed, if it had been adopted by that House, would have proved to be as efficient a system of collecting electoral lists as could be provided. The object of the Bill was to enfranchise every man in the colony who held any of the qualifications pre-

scribed by the Act of 1874. It had not been introduced as a party measure. The desire of the Government was simply to improve the existing system of compiling the electoral rolls and to make it as efficient as it could be made. However, the other House of Legislature, on consideration, did not approve of that particular proposal. They found that the expense of compiling last year's rolls was something like £3,500, and that, under the system proposed by the Government to improve the existing one, the expense would probably amount to something like £6,000 a year. The general feeling on both sides of the House being that the existing system did not answer the expectations formed of it, and, in fact, did not work well, and, even if made complete, was not worth so heavy an expenditure, it was resolved to do away with that system altogether and to leave qualified persons to enrol themselves. Self-registration he thoroughly approved of always, but he did not altogether approve of the system as it had worked in this colony before the Act was introduced which was now in force. Formerly, the only plan of self-registration was for a man, once a year, to send in a written application to be enrolled as an elector. By the Bill, it was proposed to give the opportunity of sending in a written application, or of going personally before the registration court to prove his qualification. It was, moreover, proposed that, instead of only preparing the rolls annually, there should be registration courts in the various police districts in January, April, July, and October, so that there would be four such courts in the year. At those courts all the written applications which had come in in the interval between the sittings of the courts would be considered, and all applications made orally before the courts would also be considered, and the names of all persons who had proved their qualifications would be included in the electoral lists, which would be then exposed outside the court house and the post office in each police district for the period of nearly three months. At the next registration court the lists would be revised—the court except in January, also sitting as a revision court. After the holding of every quarterly registration court, the clerk of petty sessions would have the duty of compiling what was called the quarterly electoral list of all the names registered at such court; and, fourteen days after the sitting of the court, the list, so prepared, would be exhibited to the public view. As already mentioned, the persons whose names were contained in such list would be placed on the quarterly roll, and have the same privileges as if they had been placed on the annual electoral roll. That provision was eminently suitable to, and conferred an important privilege on, persons

who had previously been disfranchised. He did not think that, with the precautions contained in the Bill, any improper applications would be passed, or that any persons, who were not properly qualified, would find themselves registered. He might also state that, as soon as the names of applicants were proved before the registration court, they would be entered in what was called the electoral register book, and the presiding magistrate would there and then put his initials against every name which had been so entered. So that, once a man's name got on the register, it could not be removed without his being able to ascertain very easily who was to blame. There was another provision which was an important one as giving protection to electors who sent in their claims by written application but were unable to attend to prove their qualifications. The 7th clause of the Bill provided a certain form in which claims should be made:—

And the clerk of petty sessions shall produce every such notice at the next following sitting of the quarterly registration court aforesaid.

The declaration contained in any notice of claim shall be taken as *prima facie* evidence of the qualification claimed.

And then followed the provision that no claim should be “rejected for informality”—

And if any such claim be rejected by such court, the presiding justice shall endorse on the notice the cause of rejection, and the clerk of petty sessions shall forthwith transmit the same by post or otherwise to the person from whom such notice was received.

So that, if a man once sent in his claim to the registration court, either his name would appear in the electoral register book and be included in the next quarterly list, or his notice would be endorsed by the presiding magistrate of the court and returned to him. At present, he (the Postmaster-General) knew that a very large number of claims did not come to the surface. Unless claims were sent in between the 16th September and the 10th October, the clerk of petty sessions incurred no responsibility on their account. The public was under the impression that electors might send in claims under the existing Act at any time; but the section bearing on the subject merely provided that they should be sent in as he stated, or, after the electoral list had been prepared and exhibited. He had now explained the preparation of the quarterly rolls and shown that when the name of an elector was placed on the quarterly roll he would be in the same position as if it had been placed on the annual roll. The object of the quarterly list was this:—Under the present law the electoral lists were prepared annually in August. No man who had not been a resident of an electoral district for six months previously was entitled to have his name

placed on the list by the collector. Section 16 of the Elections Act of 1874 said—

All collectors appointed as aforesaid shall between the first and the thirty-first day of August in every year make out alphabetical lists of all persons qualified to vote within their respective districts—.

Then, in the first sub-section of section 7, referring to electors' qualifications, it was provided:—

If at the time of making out the list in any electoral district he [the elector] shall be resident in such district and during the six months then next preceding shall have resided therein.

So that it was quite clear that a man who had not resided in the district from the preceding February had no right to his name being placed on the electoral list for that district until the following year, which left such a man, who might have lived in the colony a long time and held large interests in it, but who might have moved from one part of it to another, disfranchised, so far as residence was concerned, possibly for the period of twenty-two months.

Mr. MEIN: He did not see that.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He did not say it always occurred. But, if a man changed his residence after February—say, in March—he could not get on the electoral list of the district to which he moved until January, twelve months afterwards. That was unavoidable, unless the residence qualification was altered, or unless the time for the preparation of the electoral rolls was shortened by such an expedient as was adopted in the Bill before the House. As the Bill stood, any man who applied to have his name registered in April would be entitled to vote in the month of July, and so on, after each quarterly registration court. There was a difference, however, in the practice, after the October registration court, because it was provided that all the names then registered should be compiled in a supplementary list and afterwards included in the annual electoral rolls revised in November.

Mr. MEIN: That was a farce.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The annual roll would be compiled in this way:— Clause 10 provided that

The registrars of births deaths and marriages in every police district shall during the month of August in each year furnish to the clerk of petty sessions thereof a correct list of all deaths which shall have been registered by them during the twelve months then last past.

That very important information the clerks of petty sessions would require in carrying out the duties imposed upon them by the next following clause of the Bill, which provided that

Between the first and thirty-first days of August in each year the clerk of petty sessions

in every police district shall examine the electoral rolls then in force and also the quarterly electoral list for July then last past and after inquiry of the residents in such district and the inspection of maps rate-books lists of selectors lists of pastoral tenants and any other documents accessible to him shall place the word *dead* against the name of every elector whom he shall have reason to believe to be dead the word *left* against the name of every elector whom he shall have reason to believe to have left the district and the word *disqualified* against the name of every person whom he shall have reason to believe to have no qualification or to be disqualified.

So that the clerk of petty sessions was entrusted with the duty of revising and marking the names on the roll in force as set forth; but he had no power to remove a single name from the roll. He must transfer every one of the names from the existing electoral rolls and from the July list to the annual electoral list, which would be exhibited in September and revised in November. Any elector going to examine that list would see placed against the name of every one supposed to be disqualified or known to have no qualification in the district the ground thereof; and the attention of the court would be called to each case, and the court would decide upon the removal of the name or otherwise as the evidence before it warranted. After the lists were exhibited in the month of September, time would be allowed for persons objecting to names therein. In that respect, the Bill simply followed the present law. Those objecting could send notice to the clerk of petty sessions, and the objections would be exhibited to the public, and would be adjudicated upon by the annual registration court just the same as at present. Clause 14 provided that—

In every police district the quarterly electoral list compiled in the month of October in each year as hereinbefore provided shall be the supplementary electoral list for such police district.

That list would be exhibited in the same way as the annual and other lists, but between the 10th and the 25th of October; and objections would be received and also exhibited until the sitting of the court of revision in November. Annual and supplementary lists would be revised together; and, when revised, would be transmitted to the returning-officer, who would prepare from them the general alphabetical roll for the electoral district. He (the Postmaster-General) would point out that there would be more than one revision court in an electoral district. The present plan of police districts was adhered to in the Bill. It was, at first, proposed that there should be only one revision court in each electoral district; but it had been found, since,

that the existing plan would be more convenient, in large districts, leaving the principal court of petty sessions in every police district to revise the electoral lists. When the lists were revised, the clerks of petty sessions would send them to the returning-officer for the electoral district, whose duty it would be, as already stated, to prepare the alphabetical roll for his electoral district. He (the Postmaster-General) had given a general sketch of the provisions of the Bill. He thought that the facilities offered to persons qualified to become electors were such as left no reasonable ground of complaint to anyone who might hereafter find that his name was not on the electoral roll. It was unreasonable that the colony should be put to the expense of £5,000 or £6,000 per annum, in order that collectors should be sent round to gather names of electors who otherwise would not take the trouble to register themselves. Surely, if a vote was worth having, it was worth a man's while either to write or to go personally to the registration court for the purpose of getting his name placed on the roll. He (the Postmaster-General) did think, therefore, that when the Bill would effect the saving of an amount varying from £3,000 to £6,000 per annum, it might be considered a very important reform. It was not a disfranchising, but an enfranchising measure. The desire of both sides of the Legislative Assembly was to endeavour to make it an enfranchising measure, and an improvement on the law now in force. There was one other point which he might mention. Near the end of the Bill, clause 32 provided that clerks of petty sessions, for performing the duties with which they would be charged under the Bill,

shall be entitled to such remuneration as the court of revision shall annually recommend and the Governor in Council approve from moneys to be hereafter appropriated by Parliament for that purpose. Provided that no such remuneration shall be paid except on receipt by the Colonial Secretary of a certificate from the chairman of such court declaring that such clerk of petty sessions has performed his duties to the satisfaction of such court.

The following clause rendered such officers liable to a penalty for neglect :—

Every such clerk of petty sessions who shall be guilty of any wilful misfeasance or wilful or negligent act of commission or omission contrary to any of the provisions of this Act shall for every such offence be liable to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds to be recovered in a summary way before any two justices.

When formerly the duties of compilation of electoral rolls were performed by the clerks of petty sessions they had no remuneration.

Mr. MAIN: Hear, hear,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: They had to go to an immense deal of trouble, and they were in many cases very hard-worked officers. He thought, therefore, that the House would hold that the reasonable remuneration which was to be given to the clerks of petty sessions was such as they would cordially approve of. It would amount to a very small sum in comparison with the expenditure at present incurred. He felt assured that the result would be to make the clerks of petty sessions take a real interest in the work, and do it as accurately as possible. The 34th clause was one on which there might be a difference of opinion. When the Bill was under discussion in the other House, it was pointed out that the present Act did not define whether a person who had become naturalised required to have been naturalised six months before the electoral roll in which his name was included was prepared, or whether having been resident six months in the colony and having been naturalised, say, to-day, he was entitled to have his name placed on the roll to-morrow. He believed that legal opinions were taken on the question, and that they were given on both sides. On the one hand, it was held that a person must be naturalised as well as a resident of six months' standing in a district before he would be entitled to be registered as an elector. On the other hand, it was argued that so long as he had resided in the district for the proper time, and so long as he had been naturalised at some time or other, he should be placed on the electoral roll. An hon. member of the other House complained that he had been put to very large expense in ascertaining what was the proper course to take, and he desired that the question should be placed beyond dispute; and so he moved, with the concurrence of both sides of the House, the 34th clause, which followed :—

And whereas doubts have arisen as to the right of naturalised British subjects to become electors. Be it declared and enacted that it shall not be necessary that any person claiming to have his name inserted on an electoral roll as a naturalised subject of Her Majesty should have been so naturalised for the period of six months before the time of making out the list.

His (the Postmaster-General's) reading of the present Act was, that a man need not have been so long naturalised; but he was aware that the other reading was supported by higher authority than he could pretend to be. It was, perhaps, as well that a clause should be inserted defining what was actually intended by the Bill before the House. He had now generally reviewed the provisions of the Bill; and, in conclusion, he would only say that as under the present Act it was necessary for collectors to be appointed for collecting the annual electoral lists before the 1st of August, it was very desirable that the Bill,

if it was approved of by the Council, should become law as soon as possible. If there should be any delay in passing it, he believed the Colonial Secretary would send instructions to the various courts of petty sessions to appoint collectors in the usual manner, with the distinct understanding that if the Bill became law soon afterwards, the persons so appointed should not discharge the duties. At the same time, it must be seen by honourable gentlemen that, if Parliament intended to abolish the system of collecting the rolls and to introduce the system laid down by the Bill, the new system should come into operation as speedily as possible. The month of August, appointed in the Bill, was the same as under the provisions of the present Act, as it was thought undesirable to disturb the existing arrangement in that respect. It was generally understood throughout the colony, and should remain in force. He might mention one thing further:—If the Bill should come into force, the existing electoral rolls would be those on which the clerks of petty sessions in the several districts would operate. The first registration would be held on the first Tuesday in October. He had no doubt there would be a large number of persons who would apply at the October registration courts, and it was as well that ample notice should be given. That was another reason why the Bill should come into operation early. There would be no collection of voters' names this year. Under the Bill all the additional names on the lists would have to be placed there in pursuance of applications sent in or made orally at the first courts, which would sit in October. If ample notice were given no disfranchisement would occur. At any rate, if any should occur, at the following registration court another opportunity would be afforded to persons entitled to be on the roll to get registered. The courts would sit quarterly, so that any person who had failed to get registered would have to wait only three months. At any time of the year a man might depend upon it, that, if he sent in his claim, he would be registered on the quarterly roll and qualified to vote within three months. He (the Postmaster-General) felt that the measure would receive the cordial support of the House, and he moved, with great confidence—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

MR. MEIN said, he was sure the House must feel indebted to the Postmaster-General for the very careful explanation the honourable gentleman had given them of the details of the Bill. He personally felt under considerable obligations to him; for he had to admit that it altogether escaped his notice that the Bill was down for second reading to-day, and he had not given that attention to it which would warrant his entering into any lengthened

discussion upon it. He should scarcely have risen to address the House had he not an object in informing them that he considered the Bill one of immense importance to the country which should be most carefully considered, not so much upon the second reading, as—having received the approval of the other branch of the Legislature, and dealing as it did peculiarly with the mode in which the Assembly were ultimately obtained, honourable gentlemen would treat their opinions with the greatest respect, though they were not bound to swallow every detail of the measure—in committee. From the explanation of the honourable gentleman, the conclusion at which he (Mr. Mein) had arrived was, that instead of the Bill being progressive, it was decidedly the opposite. The policy of the law, hitherto, had been that every male, free, adult, natural-born or naturalised, subject, was entitled to vote in the election of members of the Legislative Assembly;—but he was now to be handicapped altogether. It seemed to him that the persons who were most affected by the new system proposed by the Bill were those who had the least opportunity of looking after their own interests in the matter of their electoral rights. No doubt it was correct, as had been stated, that experience had shown that the police and others who had been engaged in collecting the electoral lists had not done their work in the manner anticipated. The Postmaster-General was pleased to remark that in that respect the Act of 1874 was an experiment. But the honourable gentleman altogether overlooked the fact that a similar provision had been in force in New South Wales for many years past—precisely the same as the Act of 1874—and no complaint of the administration of the law had been made.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was altered last Session.

MR. MEIN: The police had there done the duty of collecting the lists properly. He could not get over the impression that it was not the fault of the statute, but of the mode in which the statute had been administered, that the collection of the electoral lists was not satisfactory in this colony. If the Government, instead of introducing for the consideration of Parliament a Bill of a diametrically opposite character and principle to the existing law, had introduced an amending measure, providing to a certain extent what the Bill provided for, and, decidedly and emphatically, that the police in collecting the lists should be guided by the electoral rolls then in existence, and that the clerks of petty sessions, as provided by the Bill, should make up the lists for the revision courts, then they would have done good work. He could not get over the impression—but he was open to enlightenment upon further

consideration—that the effect of the Bill would be the disfranchisement of a large number of those electors who had a right to be placed on the roll for only one constituency. He quite agreed with the sentiment avowed by the Government, that every possible facility ought to be given for qualified electors to get their names placed on the roll. At present the law provided for the compilation of only one roll a year for each electorate of the colony. This, he thought, was too limited a provision; but he very much feared, that if the preparation of quarterly rolls were entered into, the way would be paved for all sorts of corrupt practices. In the metropolitan districts there would be, possibly, a minimum amount of danger of the rolls being packed by dummy names; but in the outside districts, some of which were hundreds of miles in extent, the facilities for persons to send in dummy names for insertion in the lists appeared to be much too large, and the restrictions imposed upon persons in the way of making objections were of far too severe a character. He did not know whether the Government intended it or not; but he perceived that the only person who could object to any name in the lists was one who was also down in that list for registration as an elector. In other words, the objector was a person who claimed to have his name on the roll for the first time. He might not, in fact, have any right to vote or interfere in the matter; whereas, the persons who had a real interest in it were those who were absolutely *bonâ fide* electors, and whose names were on the current electoral roll. He (Mr. Mein) saw that the Postmaster-General would like to interrupt him, and he evidently wished to say that the clause was the transcript of a corresponding clause in the Act of 1874. Well, that showed the folly of too slavish copying, which appeared to be a practice of the present Government, of other Acts of Parliament. The Act of 1874 provided, very properly, that the only persons entitled to object should be those on the list, for the obvious reason that the list itself contained the names of the whole of the persons who were entitled, according to the collectors, to vote during the ensuing year. But the present Bill provided that the roll for the time being in force was to occupy almost precisely the same position as the electoral list contemplated by the Act of 1874. Honourable gentlemen knew that the electoral rolls under the Act of 1874 were compiled solely and absolutely from the lists of qualified electors collected by the police and other collectors. Under the Bill they would be compiled from the quarterly lists and also from the rolls then in force. So that the two cases were not analogous at all. When the Bill should get into committee, he

would endeavour to provide that those persons who had a vested interest in the matter—those who appeared by the rolls in force to be electors—should have the right to object to persons coming in surreptitiously and claiming the franchise. In connection with that point, he must further state that, inasmuch as frequent opportunities were offered in outlying districts for persons to send in their names to be placed on the lists, and as the mere statement that they were entitled to vote was to be held *primâ facie* evidence of their being so entitled, greater publicity ought to be given to the lists than was provided for in the Bill. He observed that the publicity provided for was, as at present, the exposure of the lists outside the different police and post offices. It was all very well for persons who went to those places, and who saw for themselves that their names were down in the lists; but the outside public, those who were the real *bonâ fide* electors of every constituency, and who would be affected by improper names being placed on the rolls, were not likely to go to the police or post offices to see whether Jack, Tom, Bill, or Harry had their names included amongst the claimants. The only way to defeat the dummies was by giving greater publicity to the names of persons claiming the franchise. He would suggest in committee that the names of claimants should be published at least once in a newspaper circulating in the district. What the Postmaster-General's views were with regard to the collection of the lists, he confessed himself unable to understand. The honourable gentleman began his observations by a sort of wail that the Bill was not in the same form now as when it was introduced by the Government to the Legislative Assembly; that when it was first presented to the Lower Chamber it was an absolutely perfect scheme, by which the names of voters could be collected. So far as he (Mr. Mein) could ascertain by inquiries during the progress of the honourable gentleman's speech, he learned that the Government had abandoned that principle altogether. The honourable gentleman evidently forgot that at the commencement of his observations; but, at the close of his speech, he recollected it, and implied that on the score of economy the Government had abandoned the idea of collection.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Quite sufficient.

MR. MEIN: That showed the disadvantage of the Government rushing into print and bringing a Bill before Parliament without sufficient consideration. This was not the first time that such a case occurred. It, to a great extent, accounted for his (Mr. Mein's) ignorance of the details of the measure. Under ordinary circumstances, he should have read the Bill shortly after

its introduction in the Assembly; but he had found that the perusal of an original Bill of the Government was absolutely valueless, for experience had proved that when it passed out of the other House it assumed a very different aspect from that under which it had entered. But as in this instance he should not enter into a consideration of the measure with any confused notion of what its provisions were, he should, after the lucid explanation of the honourable gentleman, have very little difficulty in ascertaining what the intentions of the Government were at the present moment. If the matter of expense was the only one to be considered in connection with the necessity for the Bill, he thought the Government were reckoning without their host. It appeared that the compilation of the electoral lists by the police and other persons cost £3,500. Well, he saw that the compilation of the lists under the provisions of the Bill was not to be done without expense. There would be the clerks of petty sessions to be remunerated, at the instigation of the presiding justices. Honourable gentlemen knew how generous a man was likely to be with money that was not his own, especially if it was the Government's. There were all the established benches in the fifty-five electoral districts of the colony—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: No; forty.

Mr. MEIN: At least, there would be about half as many more clerks of petty sessions than the number of electorates engaged in the compilation of the rolls. He thought, taking it at a small amount, the average remuneration would be about £50 each per annum. There would be, in compiling the lists, conducting correspondence, and otherwise, a large access of duties to be performed; and, in view of the generous impulses of human nature with funds not belonging to the disburser, the Government could quite reckon that about £50 per annum would be voted for the remuneration of the services of the clerks of petty sessions. And, according to clause 32, the Government would be bound to pay the money if the chairman of the court certified that the clerk of petty sessions had performed his duties. He (Mr. Mein) presumed that the clerks would be competent, and that in view of the remuneration they would exert themselves to earn it. If there were, say, sixty clerks of petty sessions to be paid, their aggregate remuneration would come very nearly up to the amount that the Government paid for the collection of the electoral lists now. He did not exactly follow the Postmaster-General, with regard to the compilation of the annual roll in connection with the quarterly roll in October; but it appeared to him that the honourable gentleman explained

that the annual roll and the quarterly roll would be compiled at the same time by the court; so that he could hardly recognise the use of the two rolls. Why should the court do the work, to-day, that was to be revised by another set of magistrates tomorrow? When a man's application went through the ordeal of a revision by a bench of magistrates, that man would naturally assume that his name ought to go on the electoral roll; but, if the October revision was to be of any value, why should the list undergo a second revision? The provision was an attempt of the Government to do too much. If they had been content with two lists in the year, they would have done well; but, now, they were over-legislating. They might do some good to wandering electors in the metropolitan districts, but they would do a great deal of harm to the electors in the country and outside districts. How could the Bill be put honestly and fairly in operation in the district of Burke, for instance, which contained probably one-eighth—perhaps, one-sixth—of the whole population of the colony, and which, compared with its extent, contained a very limited population? He could hardly see how it could be satisfactorily managed, if quarterly rolls were to be prepared. In view of the ideas which he expressed at the moment, he must say that he thought the House would be legislating backwards, if they went on with the Bill. The defects in the collection of the electoral lists had become apparent to the electors themselves; but they were defects that time would cure. The presumption in a man's mind, as the Postmaster-General properly put it, when once his name was on the electoral roll, was, that if he had not forfeited his qualifications, his name would remain; but many persons, by the improper conduct of those charged with the collection of the lists, had been removed from the rolls. They had not looked after their interests, and they had been prejudicially affected. That could be easily provided against. The statute called upon persons to do what was no greater burden upon them than what the Bill imposed; but, in addition, the Bill left out of consideration the large number of the community that were assisted now in getting their names on the electoral rolls without any exertion on their own part whatever. With those remarks, he reserved to himself the right to discuss the measure in all its details when it got into committee.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: One word in explanation. The honourable Mr. Mein stated that the names revised at the October registration court would be again revised at the annual revision court in November. Not so. The names revised at the October registration court would be those regis-

tered at the previous July court. The names registered in October would be revised as a supplementary list in the month of November, at the November court.

Question put and passed.
