

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 9 December, 1884.

Question.—Petitions.—Recruiting Natives in New Guinea.—Supply—resumption of committee.—Message from the Legislative Council.—Crown Lands Bill.—Divisional Boards Agricultural Drainage Bill.—Maryborough and Urangan Railway Bill.—Jury Bill.—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

QUESTION.

Mr. MACFARLANE asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. Is it true that the bargemen employed on the Brisbane River had to work seventy-four hours for the six days ended 29th November?

2. What hours are the men supposed to work in the week?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) replied—

1. The hours worked by the bargemen on the Brisbane River during the week ending 29th November, allowing for meal-hours, were as follows:—

Nautilus ...	57 hours	15 minutes
Schnapper ...	58 "	20 "
Dugong ...	56 "	35 "

2. The dredges work from fifty-eight to sixty hours per week, and dredgemen from fifty to fifty-two hours per week, and the barges and bargemen as near these hours as possible to suit the work of the dredges.

In cases of emergency, men are required to work additional hours when necessary and provide watchmen for Sundays and holidays.

As compared with local and coasting steamers these hours are very favourable.

PETITIONS.

Mr. ARCHER presented a petition from certain residents of Rockhampton in reference to the title of certain lands purchased by them which had since been claimed by a member of the firm of Smith and Burnet, of Rockhampton, after an absence of seventeen years from the colony, and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read at length by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. ARCHER, the petition was received.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH presented a petition from residents of the Laidley district, against the construction of the proposed Laidley Creek Branch Railway, and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read at length by the Clerk.

On the motion of the HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH, the petition was received.

RECRUITING NATIVES IN NEW GUINEA.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH, in rising to give notice of the following motion—

That there be laid on the table of the House, copy of all correspondence between His Excellency and the Imperial Government last year on the subject of recruiting kanakas in New Guinea and adjacent islands; and also all telegrams and letters on the same subject between the Colonial Secretary and the various ports—said: In order to save time in regard to this matter, I would point out to the Premier what correspondence exists, that I think it is important that

the House should be in possession of. Lord Derby last year sent a telegram on the subject of recruiting kanakas on the coast of New Guinea and the adjacent islands. Consequent on that telegram, action was taken by the Colonial Secretary's Office to prevent recruiting at those islands, and information was asked from, and instructions were given, at the various ports that no such recruiting should take place. That, from my recollection, was done by telegram under my direction. Then there was a communication from the Colonial Secretary's Office to his Excellency the Governor, who wrote a despatch to Lord Derby, embodying the views of the Government, and saying what had been done up to that time. Now, at the present time, in the interests of the cause of justice, it is necessary that those facts should be placed before the public; and the Colonial Secretary can expedite the matter by speaking to His Excellency, and getting the papers placed on the table sooner than they otherwise would be by making my resolution to-morrow.

The PREMIER: The papers cannot possibly be produced until next week.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Why? The instructions given can be obtained by telegram; I can give the dates. I hope the Colonial Secretary understands what correspondence I mean. There is the first telegram from Lord Derby, inquiring whether recruiting had taken place, or was likely to take place, on the coast of New Guinea. Then there is the action taken by the then Colonial Secretary—myself—consequent on that telegram, ascertaining by inquiry at the various ports whether recruiting had taken place; the instructions that no recruiting was to be allowed on the islands mentioned; and also a *résumé* of the information given by me to His Excellency, who wrote a despatch home on the subject. I presume that I need not now give the notice of motion for to-morrow.

The PREMIER: You may as well place the motion on the paper.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I will do so.

SUPPLY—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House go into Committee of Supply, further to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said: Can the Colonial Secretary give us any information with regard to the length of the recess that we are likely to have after Christmas? Hon. members who live in the country ought to have their time and convenience studied; and I believe the Government have now made up their minds as to the recess we are to have after Christmas.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—What the Government propose at present is to sit during the whole of next week. What they desire is that next week will finish the business, but we cannot decide what we shall do, if the business is not finished, until that time arrives. The future course of business will depend entirely upon the state of business at the end of next week.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Will we sit after Christmas?

The PREMIER: I cannot say until the end of next week. If there is only one week's business to be done the Government will take a very different course to that which they would pursue if there were three weeks' business to get through. I hope there will be very little to be done at the end of next week.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The country members will not be able to get home before Christmas.

The PREMIER: Yes, they will, every one of them.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Next Saturday week will be the 20th December.

The PREMIER: Every one of them will get home before Christmas.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am very glad to hear it.

Question put and passed, and the House went into Committee.

Question—That there be granted for the service of Her Majesty, for the year 1883-4, a sum not exceeding £222,490 to defray the expenses of the Southern and Western Railway.

Mr. NORTON asked whether the Minister for Works could explain the large increase in the number of employes. There were put down on the Estimates 65 station-masters, 40 clerks at stations, 52 guards, 200 porters, points-men, signalmen, and watchmen, and 100 gatekeepers. The increase was very large—about 180. It seemed a very extraordinary increase in one year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member would remember that there was a considerable increase in the lines open for traffic; and provision had to be made for the Brisbane Valley and Passifern branches. Besides that, some of the men had been working very long hours—as much as eighteen hours.

Mr. NORTON asked whether they were to understand that the object in putting all those men on the Estimates was to enable the Minister for Works to reduce the hours? If that was the object, then he could understand it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the men would not all be employed at once; but they would be required, and it was necessary to make provision for the completion of new lines and extensions.

Mr. BEATTIE said he would point out that on the last Estimates there were 56 gatekeepers, costing £2,000. For 1884-5 there were 100 gatekeepers, and they got £2,500. Were those 44 extra men employed simply for a few hours at night to relieve the 56? The Estimates showed that those 44 men only entailed an extra expenditure of £500 a year. Were they intended to relieve some of the others of some extra hours at night, so as to enable the permanent men to have less hours? He presumed that was the object.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the number had been increased because it was necessary to make provision for the branch lines he had mentioned.

Mr. FERGUSON said there seemed to be a good many station-masters. The Minister for Works told them last night that he selected the most intelligent men in the department as station-masters. The average salary they received was £2 15s. a week, and last night it was proved that the hours they worked were from sixteen to eighteen a day. He did not think the remuneration was sufficient for such hours, especially when they were told that the best and most intelligent men were selected from the Railway Department for those positions. Then he noticed that there were five assistant station-masters who received £3 a week, which was more than that received by the station-masters. The station-masters had very particular duties to perform. They had to prevent accidents, for instance, and therefore they must be men well capable of performing their duties; but it could not be expected that capable men

could be got to perform the duties for such a salary as that. There were clerks, young boys, in the department getting more than the station-masters. They could not expect anything else than that accidents would happen, for a better class of men could not be expected to undertake the duties for such a salary.

Mr. SCOTT said that he noticed that eleven extra station-masters who had been appointed got about £91 a year each; while five assistant station-masters cost £800, which was very much in excess of £100 a year. Perhaps the hon. gentleman could explain that.

Mr. BLACK said he could not understand the item for gatekeepers, which had been several times referred to. He found that 56 gatekeepers had been receiving up to the present time £2,000 a year amongst them, which was an average of £36 each. They found now that in future 100 were to receive £2,500 amongst them, or an average of £25 each. He would like the Minister for Works to explain whether the gatekeepers had hitherto been over-paid, or what was the reason of the average reduction from £36 to £25.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said they were paid under the head of "Subdivision," and he presumed the schedule would show how it occurred. He was not then in a position to say exactly what was the actual salary each gatekeeper received, because sometimes the gatekeepers were the wives of men on the line, and in many cases they were allowed a house to live in as remuneration for their services.

Mr. SCOTT said he did not know whether the Minister for Works heard what he said before, or whether the hon. gentleman did not intend to give an answer. Eleven extra station-masters were appointed this year, and received £91 each, while there were five assistant station-masters who received £180 per year — nearly double. Could the hon. gentleman explain how that occurred?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he presumed that officers received little salary where there was but little work for them to do. They could hardly expect a station-master at Brisbane or Toowoomba to receive only the same salaries as station-masters on some of the branch lines where there was little or nothing to do.

Mr. SCOTT said the explanation was not satisfactory. He did not think that a station-master could live on £90 per annum. It was not fair to pay simply labourer's wages to men in such responsible situations, while at the same time assistant station-masters received £180.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the Minister for Works could inform the Committee where those five assistant station-masters were posted?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said they were at no particular stations. One of them would probably be at Oxley; and where the others were he was not in a position to say. They would relieve those station-masters who were on duty for very long hours.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that explanation would hardly apply; because, if the station-master at Oxley had long hours, the station-master at Indooroopilly had also long hours, and the station-masters at all the stations between there and Brisbane had the same. They were on duty from the time the first train passed in the morning till the last train at night. There could be no difference that he could see.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the first train left Brisbane at half-past 5 in the morning, and the through passenger train from Mitchell arrived somewhere at about half-past 10 o'clock

at night; and he had come to the conclusion to place assistant station-masters at the stations where the hours were longest.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that was quite true. He was not asking that those men should have long hours; but if the argument applied to Oxley it would also apply to Indooroopilly, as the station-master must be there to receive and despatch trains. There was a train later than that mentioned by the Minister for Works. There was a train which left Brisbane for Ipswich at a quarter past 11 o'clock at night, and the station-master, or his assistant, had to be on duty to receive and despatch that train. If the hon. gentleman was going in for shortening hours, he would be with him; but he did not see how he could do so with five assistant station-masters. It would require more than that number to shorten the hours of station-masters between Brisbane and Ipswich even.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH asked how the Minister for Works proposed to shorten the hours of the station-masters, when he had exactly the same number of station-masters on the Estimates this year as he had last year, and a greater length of line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that wherever it was found that the hours of station-masters were too long, it was intended to give them an assistant.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said he wished to know how the hon. gentleman intended to manage shortening the hours, with only five assistant station-masters, when there was exactly the same number on the Estimates this year as last year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, of course, their places would be supplied by others. They were continually training young men to enable them to take the position of assistant station-masters.

Mr. SCOTT said he would call the attention of the Minister for Works to the Milton station. A train left Brisbane at half-past 5 in the morning, which the station-master had to attend to, and there was a train leaving Brisbane at 11.15 p.m., and he had to attend to passengers by that train also. That was eighteen hours a day the station-master had to be on duty, and it was too long to expect any man to attend to his work. If there was to be any relief, that station-master should get relief as well as any other. There were people constantly getting out and getting in at the Milton station, and the station-master was at work eighteen hours every day.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there were two station-masters at Brisbane; and at Indooroopilly, Toowong, and Oxley there was a porter in each case to relieve the station-master and reduce the hours he had to work. The station-master at Oxley had, he believed, to work some fourteen or fifteen hours a day.

Mr. SCOTT: What about Milton?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was no assistant at Milton. The station-master had to be on duty long hours; but there was very little traffic, and very little for him to do. It would be hardly possible to have two station-masters, or a station-master and an assistant station-master, at Milton.

Mr. SCOTT said he saw trains stopping constantly at Milton, and there was scarcely a train that someone did not get in or out of. It did not matter whether one or twenty passengers got out; the station-master had to be there and attend to the trains as they came in. The hours ought to be reduced; they were a great deal too long.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked to how many hours a day the Minister would reduce the time the station-masters had to work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought it was for the Traffic Manager to regulate the hours of labour. He himself could not attend to the regulation of the hours of labour of all the employes in the Government Service; he did not know whether the hon. gentleman did when he was in office. The Traffic Manager would inquire fully into the matter, and see that officers were not kept too long on duty so as to endanger the travelling public.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that if the hon. gentleman considered it a great deal of work to say with a stroke of his pen whether station-masters should be employed ten, twelve, or eighteen hours, he must be getting very lazy indeed. It was not necessary for the hon. gentleman to inquire into the case of every station-master, porter, pointsman, signaller, and watchman, but simply to say what he considered to be a fair day's work, and let the Traffic Manager manage the department according to that rule. If he left it entirely to the Traffic Manager, that gentleman would try to work the lines as economically as possible. Hitherto it had been left to the Traffic Manager by the various Ministers, and that was the reason why the men worked so long hours; because there was pressure on the Commissioner and Traffic Manager to work the lines cheaply. The same pressure existed still, and it was for the hon. member to make up his mind and say how many hours be considered a fair day's work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought that, for men whose duties were very light, ten or twelve hours a day would not be too much. The work was not laborious; but he would freely admit the hours had been too long, and he would have the matter inquired into and see if it could be better arranged.

Mr. NORTON said the station-master at Milton always seemed to him to have a very sleepy look. Since the new time-table was framed, he had to get up earlier and get to bed later; but he had never had any assistance. He had to be on duty to receive the first train at 5.33 a.m.; and the last train, according to the time-table, stopped at Milton at 12.49. No man should be expected to remain on duty all those hours. He had heard that on one occasion the station-master had to be waked by a passenger who walked to the station from the train before the signal was given that the line was clear. That showed the necessity for having a porter, or someone to relieve the station-master.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said from 5 to 12 was certainly too long for a man to be on duty, and he would see that an alteration was made. It struck him as very curious that the hon. member had not discovered it before. The two ex-Ministers for Works seemed to know all those little weak points. One got up and fired a shot, and then up got the other. He was surprised that the hon. member for Port Curtis had not found out about those long hours before. He would see that the matter was rectified.

Mr. NORTON said that there had been a change in the circumstances since he was in office. Since the hon. member's new time-table came into force, the station-master had been occupied a great deal longer hours than before. It was since that time too, or about that time, that he heard from a passenger by one of the trains that he had to get out. The train could not go up to the station as the signal was not up, so he got out and volunteered to walk

to the station and wake the station-master. The hours now were longer than before. In regard to the assistant station-masters, there were five last year, and five this year. He presumed they were stationed somewhere. He knew that one was at Brisbane, and another at Ipswich, and he thought there was one at Toowoomba. They were just the men who had been employed all along, and not new men whom it was intended to put on to relieve station-masters.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought they had occupied a considerable time in discussing station-masters and gatehouse-keepers, and he wished to draw the attention of the Minister for Works to the Sunday traffic. He saw that there was £1,000 increase for Sunday traffic. He did not complain about that increase, for he believed it was put down for the purpose of paying the station-masters and gatehouse-keepers for attending to the Sunday trains. But he wanted to ask the Minister for Works whether it would not be well to confine the running of Sunday trains to the plan contained in the original resolution passed by the House. Most members would remember that, when the resolution was passed authorising the running of Sunday trains, it was to run only morning and evening trains each way.

Mr. NORTON: Does the resolution say that?

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought so, but he was speaking from memory, and had not referred to the resolution.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: Quite right.

Mr. MACFARLANE thought they were tending now to force the Sunday traffic rather more than at first. He did not see the necessity for that. It was sufficient to provide accommodation for one train each way. That was all that they should be asked to do, for the sake of the station-masters and gatehouse-keepers. It would give them a little more time to think of what they were doing, and a little more rest to the mind, if they had only a morning and an evening train to attend to. They would then have some rest through the day, and that would possibly be the means of preventing accidents during the week; for a man who did not get his Sunday rest could not be expected to attend thoroughly to his duties during the week. If the Minister for Works were just to adopt the old plan of running excursion trains on Saturday with return tickets to Monday, a great deal of Sunday traffic might be prevented. It was well known that the principal Sunday traffic was down to Sandgate. A good many people had not the privilege they used to have of a return ticket to Sandgate from the Saturday to the Monday. They could have a return ticket on Sunday, but they must return on the same day. If the Minister for Works would do as he suggested it would answer the purpose very well. He could charge full fares on Sunday for those who wanted Sunday travelling, and by that means reduce the Sunday traffic a great deal, and yet bring in, perhaps, as great a revenue as now. It would secure two things: it would not hurt the revenue, and it would give the station-masters and gatehouse-keepers a rest. And he must say that he thought it would also tend very much to the comfort of the people who wanted to have a day's outing at the seaside. At present they had to go down on the Sunday morning and must come up in the afternoon, and all they could do was to have a run on the beach and have a sniff of the sea air for a few hours. They could not remain all night.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, previous to the accident on the Sandgate Railway, there were few station-masters on duty on Sunday trains, and the consequence was that they were not paid. Since that time the station-masters were on duty the same as on other days, and they had to be paid accordingly. That would account for some portion of the increase. The traffic was much more than formerly. He could assure the hon. member that he would endeavour to meet his views. At present they prevented all season ticket holders from travelling on Sundays. If they did travel on Sunday they had to pay their fares as other passengers did. Surely that would satisfy the hon. member! As to return tickets, the hon. member must remember very well that when return tickets were done away with the fares were reduced considerably. Surely he did not want the fares reduced, and yet have the return tickets issued again!

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked how the Sunday traffic was getting on—whether it was increasing, and increasing to a profit?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was a slight increase in the Sunday traffic, and that it was about paying working expenses. It had done a little better lately.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that the hon. member for Ipswich said he wished to assist the Sunday traffic considerably, not by giving better inducements to run more trains, but to run fewer and make the passengers pay as much as possible. Did the hon. Minister for Works think he could succeed in making the Sunday traffic more profitable that way?

Mr. HORWITZ said he hoped there would be no alteration in the present system of conducting the Sunday traffic. It would be a great shame to prevent the working classes getting down to Sandgate on the Sunday. That was the only day they could go down to have a smell of the sea breeze, and they should not be denied the privilege of enjoying themselves the same as other people who had plenty of money and could go down at any time.

Mr. NORTON said the member for Ipswich wished to reduce the number of people who were employed on Sunday, but he was going the wrong way to work to secure that; because he was quite sure if the Sunday trains were reduced there would be an enormous number of omnibuses and cabs run on Sunday, which not only employed men, but horses. They could not prevent people going out on Sundays. If they could not go one way they would go another. If they could not go by cheap trains, those who could afford it would go by cabs and omnibuses. It was a great mistake to say that people who used those Sunday trains only went down to Sandgate. He lived near the Toowong station, and saw that the Sunday trains on that line were crammed as full as they could hold. The people travelling in them were not going to the seaside: they were mainly people who had been working in town all the week, and who were going into the country for a sniff of fresh air. The leader of the Opposition had just handed him a return showing the receipts from Sunday trains on the Ipswich line and on the Sandgate line, from which it appeared that the former amounted to £1,800 and the latter to £2,100, the difference between the two being comparatively trifling. Hundreds of people went by train to the cemetery every fine Sunday afternoon, as the hon. member might easily see for himself. It was the greatest mistake possible to suppose that the curtailment of those trains would lead to a

smaller employment of labour on Sundays than at present. As to the station-masters, they were always paid extra for Sunday work, and it was optional with them whether they did the work or got others similarly competent to do it for them. If they remained on duty they were paid; if not, they had the day to themselves. Numbers of people came by train to church, many twice a day.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that from what he had observed at Ipswich very few people who arrived there by train on Sundays went to church. They generally visited at people's houses, and he must say that very few of them went to the public-house. He did not object to people paying visits on Sundays, but to their compelling station-masters and gatekeepers to work long hours for seven days in the week. Hon. members complained very much whenever an additional sitting day was proposed, and even at the outside they only sat four or five days a week. If they were asked to sit seven days in the week they would have more sympathy for the railway officials who had to work on Sundays as well as all other days. The hon. member for Port Curtis said that stopping Sunday trains would compel people to travel by cabs and omnibuses; but it was not likely that people would hire cabs to go from Ipswich to Brisbane, or from Brisbane to Sandgate. His complaint was that they were forcing Sunday traffic by reducing fares on that day. If people would travel on Sundays they ought to be made to pay the regular fare. It was to the benefit of the working classes that they should be allowed cheap return tickets from Saturday till Monday. The hon. member for Warwick seemed to imagine that the working classes could not get on any other day to the seaside. His opinion was that the working man, if he had the chance, would rather go on Saturday, and stay there until Monday morning. It was only the minority who travelled on the Sabbath day, and the majority had to pay the piper for it. By such a plan as he had suggested, there would be such a rush of people that the revenue would not suffer, and the railway officials would get a little more time to themselves on the Sabbath day. He hoped the Minister for Works would give the matter his careful consideration.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that, whatever the hon. member's experience might be with regard to passengers by train to Ipswich not going to church, it certainly did not apply to Brisbane. There were two trains from the Racecourse every Sunday morning crowded with church-goers, and if the hon. gentleman were to watch the return trains leave the platform, at 1 p.m. and 1.15 p.m., he would find them crowded mainly with people who had come in to attend church. Even if, at Ipswich, the passengers visited their friends' houses, they might have been less innocently engaged if they had stayed at home. He wished the Minister for Works to reply to the question put by the hon. member for Port Curtis, as to the remuneration of the railway officials employed on Sundays. When he was in office he made a regulation that no one, whatever his wages might be—even if they were only 5s. a day—should receive less than 10s. for working on Sunday; and where the wages were more than 10s., the ordinary day's wages, whatever it might be, should be given. Was that regulation still in force?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that the same regulation was still in force.

Mr. NORTON asked for information respecting the numbers of porters, pointsmen, and others, which had been increased from 65 to 200,

Had the extra number been appointed to relieve those who had been working such long hours?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the information he had was that a number of men had been paid from an extra labour fund, and the amount did not appear on the Estimates at all. Provision was now made for them on the Estimates.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman had just stated that the Sunday traffic paid expenses or a little over. Referring to last year's Commissioner's report he found that the amount received was £4,299, and the working expenses £2,150, leaving a balance of about £2,150; so that the traffic not only paid but was paying a great deal better than the week-day traffic. Did the hon. gentleman not see that he had made a mistake?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not give the exact receipts. Possibly the traffic would still further increase if the fares were reduced.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he advised the hon. gentleman not to take the counsel of the member for Ipswich. If by reducing the fares the traffic would increase, by all means reduce them. Sunday trains were the greatest blessings the people of Brisbane had.

Mr. NORTON said no provision was made for electric lighting at the station. Would the hon. member explain how that was provided for?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said a sum was put down in the Government Printer's Estimates for electric lighting.

Mr. NORTON: Not for the station?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not know whether that provided for the railway station or not, but he should rather think it did not. He believed the lighting was paid for out of Contingencies, which were very handy for all sorts of purposes.

Mr. NORTON said he wanted to know something about the railway reserve at Toowoomba. It was taken back from the corporation. Might he ask if any portion of it was let at the present time?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Mr. NORTON: To whom was it let, for how long, and for what purpose?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said at the time the reserve was taken over the corporation had leased part of it, which brought in £130 or £140 a year. The Railway Department purchased the same from the corporation for £3,000. The leases were then in existence, and as the department did not require the land they still continued in existence. If the hon. member imagined that the Government made a bad bargain, he (the Minister for Works) might say that he would willingly give the Government £3,000 for what remained, and give them all the land required for the railway station.

Mr. NORTON said that, as the land was a railway reserve that had been handed over to the corporation, he did not think that the Government had made such a good bargain. He wanted to know whether the reserve had got into the hands of the Government, and if any portion of it was let to any person. He was informed that portion of it had been let as a paddock, and he would like to know if there was any truth in the statement?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the portion not required was let.

Mr. NORTON: Who is it let to?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there had been no new leases, but the existing leases at the time of purchase were taken over from the

corporation. The tenders for leasing the land were sent in to the corporation, and parts of the land had been let.

Mr. NORTON asked if anyone had got the use of part of the land without a lease. He was informed absolutely by a gentleman, who wrote to him on the subject, that portion of the land resumed by the Government was let as a paddock. There might have been a mistake, and perhaps somebody had been allowed the use of the land without paying any rent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, as he had already informed the hon. member, no land was leased to anyone except those persons who were the original lessees under the corporation. He might tell the hon. member that it was not wise to listen to all the tittle-tattle that persons came to him with.

Mr. NORTON said that little lecture did not come in very well after what they heard last night about a certain partnership.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did not believe it.

Mr. NORTON: If the hon. gentleman did not believe it, he had no business to repeat it then. He believed that somebody had been allowed to make use of the reserve as a paddock. He had no reason to disbelieve the statement he had heard. There was nothing very improper about it if anyone did so; but he wanted to know if it was the case. The hon. gentleman told them no leases had been issued since the Government got possession of the land, but he did not say positively that no one had been allowed to use the reserve.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, not with his authority. He knew nothing about it.

Mr. NORTON: Can you find out?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he hoped the hon. member did not expect him to go about and impound everyone's stray cattle that got on the Government reserve.

Mr. PALMER said that at last he could compliment the Minister for Works on his economical—otherwise his happy-go-lucky expenditure. There were two items there—storekeeper and stores. The storekeeper got £325 a year, and he had actually to look after stores worth £27,000. If that was the case, he must be a very deserving officer indeed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member would see that there were two clerks attached to the stores department.

Mr. BEATTIE said that the Traffic Manager was set down at £600 a year, and the clerk in charge of trains at £325, which was an increase of £25. He understood from the Minister for Works, when he spoke on that subject on the previous evening, that it was his intention to remove the present Traffic Manager and the clerk in charge of trains. Would he inform the Committee whether, in his opinion, there was any officer in the department fit to take the position of clerk in charge of trains; or did he intend to allow Mr. Thallon to select the clerk in charge of trains? There was no doubt that the work had increased, and the hon. gentleman could, perhaps, say whether the new clerk in charge of trains would get the increased salary of £325.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the Traffic Manager would select his own men. They talked about long hours! The clerk in charge of trains had to reside in the neighbourhood of the station, and to be there at all hours ready in case of emergency, and therefore he (the Minister for Works) did not think £325 a year was too much. The Traffic Manager would have every opportunity of conducting the

business in a satisfactory manner, and if he did not do his duty, then someone else would have to do it. He thought the office of clerk in charge of trains was a very important one, and he hoped, therefore, the hon. member would not object to £325 a year.

Mr. BEATTIE said that was just the reason why he put the question; he did not object to such a salary; on the other hand, he thought it was not enough. He knew very well the many hours the officer was at work, and, looking at the next officer on the list, he saw that a clerk, whose hours were the usual ones from 9 to 4, got almost as much—namely, £300. The clerk in charge of trains had very important duties to perform, and there were plenty of officers who had very few duties who got very big salaries. He thought the Traffic Department was about the worst department in the whole Government Service. He knew officers who had been there seven and eight years, and he was ashamed to think of the ridiculous salaries they got. New chums who were brought into the department were getting good salaries—whether by political influence or not he did not know; but certainly he hoped that the system would be altered, and that if a good officer was worthy of promotion the hon. gentleman would see the desirability of improving his salary. He did not object to the £325.

Mr. ISAMBERT said that the station-masters were also telegraph operators and postmasters, and for each of them they had separate pay. They had, therefore, to pay three times the stamp duties of other public officers, some of whom got £600 a year. That was absurd.

Mr. T. CAMPBELL said that he noticed that there was an increase in the number of station-masters from forty-four to sixty-five. That was an increase of eleven, but the emoluments had only been increased by £1,000. That sum divided between eleven men did not appear to him to give a sufficient salary. There must be a decrease somewhere.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had explained that twenty times that afternoon.

Mr. T. CAMPBELL said he must apologise; he was not in the House at the time.

Mr. BEATTIE said he thought the hon. member for Rosewood did not understand the system in connection with station-masters who were also postmasters. He talked about station-masters having to pay stamps three or four times. Well, the revenue received the advantage of that; but there was another phase of it. Many of the station-masters sold stamps, and upon that they got 5 per cent. commission. They were in the habit of contracting small accounts, deducting 5 per cent. discount, and then sending payment in stamps, and so that they got 10 per cent. When they adopted such a system as that, he did not think they had anything to complain of. One of them once tried it on him; he took the discount and paid him in stamps; and he got 5 per cent. on the stamps. But he did not think the man would try it on him again. He (Mr. Beattie) did not know what to do with the stamps; he had to pay 5 per cent. to sell them. Station-masters got paid sometimes three or four times over.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £36,717 be granted for the Maryborough and Gympie Railway. There was an increase of £100 a year to the Inspector of Permanent Way; and the other additions were forty-four men, bringing the amount up from £29,158 last year

to £36,717 this year. There was only one increase in salary, and that was to the Inspector of Permanent Way.

Mr. NORTON said there seemed to be a big jump in the salary of the Superintendent of Maintenance, as he was now called. He used to be called Inspector of Permanent Way. It was often asked "What's in a name?" but in this case the difference seemed to be £100 a year, or 25 per cent. upon his salary. Could the hon. gentleman explain the special reason why he should have given such a large increase in this particular case?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the gentleman in question was a very good officer.

Mr. NORTON: Who is he?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. McGhie was his name, and he was very fairly and justly entitled to that increase, especially as he had now additional work to do.

Mr. FOOTE said there was a matter that he had forgotten when the previous vote was going through, and it was one that ought to be brought under the notice of the Minister for Works. It was a little out of place just now, but still it had to do with the Railway Department. It was in reference to the walking of the lengths. He had been informed that the lengths had to be walked every Sunday morning, and the men were not paid for it. On the other days of the week the men took turns at it; but on Sunday mornings the "gaffer" had to walk it, and he was not paid for so doing. He did not think that was necessary upon lines where there were no trains running on Sundays; but if it were the men ought to be paid. He wished to know from the Minister for Works whether he would take the matter into consideration, and hoped that he would either not compel the "gaffer" to walk the length upon Sundays, or else pay him for it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not think they were paid.

Mr. FOOTE: I know they are not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would take the matter into consideration, and if he found the men were not paid and the work was necessary, he would see that they were paid. He did not think the work was necessary, but if the men had to do it they should be paid for it.

Mr. NORTON asked if the Minister for Works could inform them whether all the engine-drivers in the colony were paid in the same way now? Some of them used to be paid per day, and others in a different way. Also, did the hon. gentleman allow them to be paid overtime, or anything beyond their usual salary? He believed there had been some change made.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the engine-drivers throughout the whole of the colony were paid equal salaries. There was no difference made between one line and another. He believed that on the Central line they used not to be paid in the same way that they were upon the Southern lines; but now they were all paid alike.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Are they paid extra time—overtime?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As a matter of course, if they work overtime they are paid for it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman said "of course," but he had better be certain and ask the Commissioner for Railways about it. He was afraid they were not paid.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the only line at present upon which there was a difference was the Northern line, and he intended to put that in the same position as all the others.

Mr. BEATTIE asked if the men worked overtime were they paid in cash, or had they so many hours allowed them? If, for instance, they worked seventeen hours on one day, were they allowed to take so many hours' spell on the next?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They are paid in cash.

Mr. FERGUSON said hon. members would recollect that he called attention to a matter when the Estimates were going through last session, and that was in reference to the mechanics on the railways in the colony. The estimate of last year showed that the men on the Southern and Western Railway received an average of 7s. a week more than on all the other railways in the colony. The Minister for Works then said that he would look into the matter, and if it were true he would have it rectified during the recess. He had waited this year until the Estimates had been printed, and on looking into the matter he found that the Minister had carried out his word in that respect. He saw that the men on the Central Railway had had their pay increased at an average of between 6s. and 7s. per week, and were now on the same footing as those employed on the Southern and Western Railway; so that the Minister for Works deserved credit for having made the alteration. If the hon. gentleman had not done so he should have called for a return showing all the wages paid on the different railways in the colony, which would have shown how things stood. However, as the hon. gentleman had carried out his promise he was satisfied.

Mr. BUCKLAND said that during the debate of yesterday reference was made to the way in which Mr. Smith, the Engineer in charge, had treated many of the contractors. It would be in the recollection of hon. members that Mr. Smith disagreed with the contractors for the South Brisbane line, and that the Engineer in charge took over and finished the line. He wished to call attention to the condition of part of the line; he had had occasion lately to inspect a portion of the fence, which he found in such a condition that a calf could jump over it. Hon. members would be aware that parties who had occupation gates were liable to a penalty in case of their stock getting on the line. The fence he spoke of was a two-railed fence with two wires below the bottom rail; but both wires were run through the top hole. He had been called in to make a valuation, and he pointed that fact out in his report to the railway arbitrator. The gentleman for whom he acted had received no consideration at all for a fence of that kind, and still he was liable to a penalty in the event of his stock getting on the line. The fence was such that no private individual would pay for. Another thing he could mention in connection with the same line was that water had been diverted so as to flow over what had been good dry arable land, and now in case of such rain as they had last Sunday it became a complete bog; yet the gentleman for whom he acted did not receive a shilling compensation for it. Reference had been made the previous night by, he thought, the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, to the amounts paid to traffic managers and others in the old country. He had in his hand a pay-sheet of the London and North-western Railway. The traffic manager on that line, Mr. Finlay, received £4,000 per annum; the assistant traffic manager, Mr. Houghton, £1,500 per annum;

the accountant, £1,000; the chief auditor, £900, and eight other assistant officers £500 each. The income from that line was from £8,000,000 to £9,000,000 per annum, and the chairman received £5,000 per annum. He quoted these figures because he was certain the hon. member for Fortitude Valley was under a misapprehension as to the amount of remuneration traffic managers received as a rule on those lines. He was merely laying these matters before the House in order that they might receive attention in the proper quarter.

Mr. GRIMES said he would draw attention to a matter in connection with the South Brisbane line, which was a source of great inconvenience. A gate had been placed near the Logan Junction station just where the first switch commenced, so that when trains were being shunted the gates had to be closed. Persons had had to wait at the gates as long as twenty minutes, and it would be worse when the Logan line was opened. If the gate were twenty or thirty feet further away, or perhaps a little more, the engine would have room to shunt without the gate being closed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would have inquiries made about the matter, and if it inconvenienced the public the gate would be moved.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked why the cost of maintenance of the permanent way on the Maryborough and Gympie Railway had increased £2,500 this year over last year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Burrum line has been included.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: When was the Burrum line opened?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed that the vote last year was far too low, and was considerably overdrawn. The hon. member knew perfectly well that it was not a good thing to cut the maintenance down to too low a figure; the line should be kept well maintained.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he quite agreed that it was not a good thing to keep the maintenance at too low a figure; but he could tell the hon. member that if he gave the engineers twice the amount they would spend it. He must not take everything for gospel that the engineer whispered in his ear. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) had a great deal too much of that when he was in office. He considered the item was a great deal too high as compared with the maintenance of the Northern and Central lines. He could see no reason either why there should be such a great increase in the locomotive department—from £10,450 to £13,333. Had the line opened increased in length so as to require more engine-drivers, firemen, fitters, and cleaners—there were nearly double as many as there were before—or had the traffic increased so considerably? Then again for extra labour, fuel, and contingencies, there was an increase of £1,000—25 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the traffic had increased considerably. It was one of the best paying lines in the colony.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said it had been so from the beginning; but it was the reason for the increase that was asked. The line did not pay any better now than during the first year of its existence.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the cause of the increase was that there were more trains running, and it required more men to run them.

Mr. NORTON asked whether the whole of the coal used for the engines on that line was got from Burrum?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If it is, it is very recently.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It ought to be.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that he was informed that all the coal used on that railway was from the Burrum coal-mines. Some time ago they were using Newcastle coal, and he thought it was a most extraordinary thing. An engine-driver had told him that the Burrum coal burned so badly that they could not use it; but he understood that they had got down to a much better coal now, and that it was giving great satisfaction. They not only used Burrum coal on the Maryborough line, but on the Central line.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that perhaps the hon. gentleman could inform the Committee the difference in the cost between the Burrum coal and Newcastle coal. The Ipswich coal he knew was a little more, because it was handicapped by carriage.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the Burrum coal cost 2s. 6d. per ton more than Newcastle coal. He had called for tenders for the supply of 6,000 tons of coal; and the lowest tender for Queensland coal was 2s. 6d. per ton more than for Newcastle coal. He had given each of the contractors an order for 2,000 tons as a trial, and to encourage them to try and see if they could not deliver the coal at as low a rate as the Newcastle coal. The fact was, they had not got the appliances for despatch of the coal, and they could not control the shipping, so that it actually cost them more for freight than the freight from Newcastle. But he thought that by giving each of them orders for 2,000 tons they would get into the way of supplying coal as cheap as it could be got from Newcastle.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Who are the contractors?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the tender of the coal company of which Mr. Hurley was manager was accepted for 2,000 tons, and the tender of Messrs. Brydon, Jones and Co. for 2,000 tons had also been accepted. 2,000 tons he had taken from Newcastle, for he did not think it was safe to depend entirely on Queensland coals, in case of the contractors not being able to get shipping to carry it.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that seemed to him an extraordinary statement. He was a member of a committee of the House appointed to inquire into and report on the Urangan Railway scheme, and part of the evidence brought before the committee was that they could sell their coal so much cheaper than the Newcastle coal; that they could compete successfully with Newcastle all over the colony.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They have not commenced operations yet.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: But surely if one company could do it, or professed to do it, another company could do the same. He always understood that the Burrum coal was produced very cheaply. Of course he could understand the statement in regard to Ipswich coal, because they had to compete with Newcastle after paying railway carriage from the mines to South Brisbane. But with the Burrum coal he could not understand why they could not compete successfully with any other coal; because they were on the spot, and had simply to add the cost of carriage to Maryborough—which was

only sixteen or eighteen miles—to the cost of getting it. How it was that they could not compete within 2s. 6d. per ton of the Newcastle coal seemed very strange to him, and he could not understand it.

Mr. FOOTE said he knew that the common price of coal sent out from Ipswich mines for a number of years had not exceeded 11s. per ton, and the additional rate was caused by the cost of the shipping from Brisbane to Rockhampton. That was where the difference in price came in, and why the coal from that port was put out of the market. There was another thing. It was very difficult to load ships here. They had gone to great expense in constructing a railway to South Brisbane, where they had also put up a crane. But notwithstanding all that there was very considerable difficulty in shipping the coal. In order to be able to do business in coal and to compete with other coalfields such as Newcastle and others down south, it was necessary that the coal proprietors should be able to load vessels in a short time. That could not possibly be done at the present time. The only thing to do, even after all the money that had been spent, was to load a punt and convey it down the river; unless it might be a very small steamer that went to the wharf. He had been told that it was even dangerous for punts to unload at low water, for there were rocks within 2 feet or 2½ feet of the wharf. Whether those rocks had been removed latterly he did not know. He spoke from a knowledge of the coal interest of Ipswich and surrounding districts when he said it was languishing in consequence of the very bad facilities they had for shipping coal. In fact these facilities were so few that some coal-masters did not trouble themselves with the shipping trade, but attended to local supply. That was clearly shown by the last tenders called for about twelve months ago, when the price at the pit's mouth was put at 12s. per ton. If they could get facilities for shipping, the difficulties about developing the trade would be removed. They wanted to be able to load the ships in a few hours—not in a few days, or, if anything happened, in a few weeks. They must be able to put the coal on board in a given period, and until those facilities were afforded the coal-masters could not possibly enter into contracts to supply either the Government or any other party. There was plenty of room for a very large coal trade to spring up, and it would spring up if they had facilities for shipping. But at present they could not reach the market owing to the great difficulties they had to contend with notwithstanding the great outlay the colony had been put to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the coal-masters had informed him that they could not possibly deliver coal at less than 2s. 6d. per ton in excess of the Newcastle price. They had not complained of the want of facilities for putting the coal on board the ships, but of the difficulty of procuring shipping to Rockhampton. Newcastle being a port where there was always a quantity of shipping available, coal could be supplied at a cheaper rate. It would be a good thing, even if it cost a little money, to give more encouragement to the Queensland coal trade.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked what was the amount of the tender for coal from Newcastle?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that he could not give the precise figures, but he believed the price for Newcastle coal was 22s. 6d., and for Burrum and Ipswich coal 25s., for the Central Railway.

Mr. BEATTIE said that, although there was a difficulty in procuring shipping to carry coal, it could be easily got over. Supposing the Government wanted 10,000 tons of coal at Rockhampton, to be taken from Burrum or Brisbane, let them charter a steamer for the purpose. That would be a simple way of getting out of the difficulty, and it would result in a considerable saving. It seemed preposterous to pay 11s. a ton for Burrum coal delivered at Maryborough; and to pay 14s. a ton freight from Maryborough to Rockhampton was a piece of imposition. If the Government would let the coal-masters know that they intended to use nothing but Burrum coal at Rockhampton they would very soon find the necessary shipping to carry on the trade. It would pay a vessel remarkably well to get 8s. a ton freight from the Burrum to Rockhampton. The present rate of freight simply meant that the shipowners were making a very good thing out of it. The selling price of Ipswich coal was 11s. or 12s. a ton, and if the Government decided to send a certain proportion of Ipswich coal from Brisbane to Rockhampton, ships to carry it would very soon be forthcoming. There was a lot of vessels now lying idle in Sydney harbour, the owners of which would be only too glad to find profitable employment for them; and that profitable employment might be found in our coal trade. The executive head of the department ought to make the necessary inquiries, and not accept the tender of the first ship-master who offered to carry coal at 15s. a ton. They had been paying through the nose for a lot of their freight. He did not blame the ship-masters for that, for it was their duty to get as much for their owners as they could; but the head of the department, who ought to have a knowledge of those things. He was under the impression that the Minister for Works had said that for the Burrum coal used on the Gympie Railway they were paying 2s. 6d. a ton more than it could be supplied at from Newcastle.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. BEATTIE said he was very glad to be corrected, for he did not think the people at Burrum would adopt such a suicidal policy as to allow Newcastle or Brisbane to compete against them for the supply of that railway. Unless they were fortunate enough to find coal on the Central or Northern lines, there would be a constantly increasing supply of coal required as those lines were extended; and it would be to the interests of the coal-masters at the Burrum and Ipswich to endeavour to keep it in their hands. The Government ought to encourage that trade by all legitimate means, and the carrying capacity for the purpose would very soon be provided.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said most members of the Committee would agree that the Minister for Works had done quite right in giving preference to the Burrum and Ipswich coal, even at a slightly increased cost, and they would endorse any action the hon. gentleman might take in expending money for giving facilities for the shipment of coal, so that complaints like that made by the hon. member for Ipswich might be done away with. Some such system as that referred to by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley might easily be adopted, and they would be able to supply the Central and Northern districts with coal much cheaper than it could be supplied from Newcastle. He was under the same impression as the hon. member for Fortitude Valley with respect to the increased payment for Burrum coal over that from Newcastle; but it could scarcely be correct, because a witness who was examined before the Select Committee on the Maryborough and Urangan Railway Bill

stated that the cost of coal delivered at the Urangan wharf would be 8s. 6d. per ton. If so, it could be delivered at the same cost per ton at Maryborough, where it was simply carried by rail to the terminus and left there. The Minister for Works would be justified in going to any expense in giving increased facilities for carrying on the coal trade, which they should do their best to develop. The coal trade would be a very important industry. They were in the habit of looking at the gold and tin fields as something very grand, but the coalfields were equally grand, and if they were developed properly they would give employment for a large number of men. The Government would, therefore, not do amiss in spending any amount of money in trying to encourage the coal trade as much as possible.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was most willing to undertake the conveyance of coal to the northern districts, and if his hon. colleague the Treasurer would hand over to him the two war steamers that were coming out he would turn them into coal-carriers for that purpose.

Mr. FOOTE said he wanted to draw attention to the fact that the answer the hon. gentleman had got in reference to the supply of coal was consequent upon the difficulties of the coal-masters in getting the coal to port. Some time ago the mail steamers were getting their coal from Newcastle, and paid 22s. 6d. delivered alongside the ship in the Bay. He wished also to call special attention to the fact that the demands of the Government were not sufficient to induce any coal-master to enter into large contracts and charter vessels and keep them going; but if further facilities for shipping were given, the coalmasters would be able to enter into large contracts with the Government and other parties to ship coal to Batavia, Melbourne, or any other ports. Under existing circumstances, however, it was impossible that that could be done profitably.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was aware of what the Harbours and Rivers Department paid for coal in Townsville and Rockhampton. The Burrum coal cost 22s. 10d. a ton in Rockhampton; at Townsville it cost 28s. The freight to Rockhampton was 10s. 9d., and to Townsville 16s. There were quite sufficient facilities for the shipment of coal at Maryborough. Only last Monday a steamer came alongside the wharf and commenced loading at 11 o'clock, and she took in 150 tons by the same hour on Tuesday. The arrangements on the wharf were very good, except that the crane might be improved. The member for Fortitude Valley remarked that greater facilities should be given for the shipment of coal, but he thought every facility should be given for taking the coal away from the mines. That was the great drawback at Maryborough. At the present time the coal sold in Maryborough was taken from a depth of 210 feet from the surface, and he had heard the opinion expressed by engineers that that coal was far superior to the Newcastle coal. Such being the case, he thought every facility should be given so that the workmen employed at the mines might be retained in the district. What they were doing and had done in the past had not had that effect, and workmen had been driven away from Queensland.

Mr. NORTON said he believed there were a great many difficulties in connection with the coal traffic on the railways, but he believed they were greatly exaggerated. The hon. member for Bundamba quoted an instance where he saw a tender for coal sent in at 12s. per ton. He (Mr. Norton) thought he saw that tender too, but no excuses could be made on the score of want of facilities, for the tender was 12s. per ton for coal at the pit's mouth.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that a sum not exceeding £13,900 be granted for the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway. There was an increase in the case of maintenance caused by the second section of the line having been opened. That had been done since the Estimates were framed. There was only one increase of £5 to the Inspector of Permanent Way. He thought there must be some mistake about that, as other officers received increases of £25 and £50 each.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would like to know the reason for the increased cost of maintenance to the extent of £1,800. He did not think the second section had been in the hands of the Government a sufficient time to cause such a large increase.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the second section had just been taken over, and that involved the cost of maintenance of thirteen and a-half additional miles in length.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the maintenance of thirteen and a-half miles of railway did not entail a cost of £1,800, seeing that there was only one man to every two miles. Would the Minister for Works make inquiries why the increase was so great? There was not a man per mile on the Bundaberg line; the number of men on maintenance on that line was less than on any other line in the colony. He thought it was one man to every two miles, or two men to every three miles. The cost of maintenance would, therefore, not account for the increase.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said an increased length of line could not be maintained for the same cost as the first section only.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said any schoolboy could understand that, but he wanted to understand why £1,800 was required. How many additional men were required for thirteen and a-half miles? When the Minister for Works ascertained that from the Engineer, then they could easily arrive at the correct cost. The men got 6s. 6d. or 7s. a day, and only about six or seven men were required. Surely they did not get £1,800 between them! He thought there must be some other reason for that cost of maintenance; the explanation given did not account for it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed that the tenders last year did not cover the amount.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked what was the total length of the line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Sixty-six miles.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Does that mean that it takes thirty-three men to maintain it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there were forty men on the line—a little over one man for every two miles.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman must know that the wages of these men came a long way short of £6,000. There must be some other way of spending the money. It was simply a question of arithmetic—£6,000 divided among forty men gave £150 a year each.

Mr. JORDAN said he would just like to refer to the subject mentioned by the hon. member for Bundanba. It appeared that something like £50,000 or £60,000 had been expended in making the branch railway from Oxley to South Brisbane. The line was made as a cheap line; but, in consequence of the many mistakes, it had proved a costly line after all. Then a wharf had been erected at a

cost of £13,000, and it had been found to be totally inadequate for the purpose. It was melancholy to consider, after all the expenditure on the line, and when even a wharf had been built, that a vessel could not get alongside, and the coal trade of that part of the colony could not, as a consequence, be developed. Six or eight months ago some of those interested in the matter saw the Minister for Works, who then promised that the wharf should be altered—that there should be a projection carried from it into deep water so that vessels could go alongside. It seemed a remarkable thing that although the question had been stirred up ever since the matter had not been attended to. The hon. gentleman also promised that the wharf should be extended towards the dock. He (Mr. Jordan) could not conceive why the wharf was not projected from the centre as promised, so that vessels might have been allowed to go there for the last six months, or at all events by this time. The hon. member for Bundanba had said that the coal trade would have received a very much larger development—

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he thought the hon. member was out of order. The question before the Committee was the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway, and there was no wharf there.

Mr. JORDAN: I may say—

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order. The question before the Committee is the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway. The question the hon. member is speaking to is the wharf at South Brisbane.

Mr. KELLETT said he always understood that on the Estimates hon. members could talk about anything under the sun. That had been the practice ever since he had been in the House. On any vote, hon. members had always been allowed to wander away from the subject.

The CHAIRMAN: I know that has been the custom in times gone by, and for that reason I have not felt bound to check hon. members when they wandered away from the question. But when I am appealed to, I am obliged to say that my hon. colleague is out of order.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he did not think it had always been the practice to allow hon. members to wander from the question. He said that in defence of the gentleman who preceded the present Chairman.

Mr. GRIMES said the question before the Committee was—

Mr. FOOTE: Coal.

Mr. GRIMES said there was an item in the vote for fuel, and there was no doubt that the question of the wharf at South Brisbane had a good deal to do with fuel. He thought, therefore, that the hon. member for South Brisbane was quite in order.

Mr. JORDAN said that whether he was in order or not he did not wish to prolong the discussion; he had said what he wanted to say, and he had no doubt, now that attention had again been directed to the matter, that something would be done.

Mr. BEATTIE said he thought they ought to have some reply from the Minister for Works to the charges that had been brought against the Government. It had been stated that, the Government having thrown obstacles in the way, persons had been unable to supply the Northern ports with coal. He had seen that persistently stated in the papers as an accusation against the Minister for Works. It was said that he promised to extend the wharf at South Brisbane to

give greater facilities to vessels to take in coal; and it was desirable that the Committee should know whether he had made such a promise. He (Mr. Beattie) knew that the hon. gentleman denied that he ever made such a promise; but the hon. member for South Brisbane had now reiterated the charge.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he paid no attention to what the hon. member for South Brisbane said. He knew he was only speaking to his constituents.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not wish to delay the passing of the vote, but he would point out that the increase in the expenditure on that line seemed to be nearly as much as the whole—he would not say profit, because he knew there was no profit at all—but as much as the whole receipts for the year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he always believed in making ample allowance for the maintenance of lines to keep them in proper working order. It might have been very convenient for the Treasurer if he had cut down that expenditure considerably. If the vote were not required it would not be expended. It did not follow that because the money was voted it would be expended extravagantly or thrown away. He could assure the hon. gentleman that he would take very good care to keep the expense as low as possible; but he always thought it advisable to make ample provision for the maintenance of the line.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he agreed with the hon. gentleman that ample provision should be made, and that, as far as he was concerned, the money would not be extravagantly expended; but it would be spent without his knowledge.

Mr. JORDAN said the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had stated that he (Mr. Jordan) reiterated an accusation against the Minister for Works, the accusation being that he failed to proceed with the extension of the wharf at South Brisbane after promising to do so; but he did not intend what he said as an accusation at all; he simply referred to the fact that his constituents understood from the Minister for Works that the wharf would be extended; he did not say that any promise had been made. After the remarks of the hon. member for Bundamba, he thought it a favourable opportunity to call the attention of the Minister for Works to the fact that it had been designed by him some time ago to carry out a projection from the existing wharf into deep water, so that ships might lie alongside and load with coal. He was reminding the hon. gentleman of that fact; he made no accusation at all. And he now took the opportunity of acknowledging the fact that the people of South Brisbane had received ample attention on the Loan Estimates. The question of extending the wharf was a great national question involving to a large extent the development of the mineral wealth of the colony in connection with mining for coal.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, with regard to the wharf, it was not a question of finding deep water, but of removing some rocks which were near the wharf; and arrangements had already been made to remove them. The jetty would allow vessels to be loaded from both sides. Cylinders for the foundation had been ordered, as well as a steam crane for the purpose of loading and unloading vessels. The present crane was capable of lifting only a small load, but the new one was a 15-ton crane. When application was made to him for an extension of the wharf, he said that the cost would be £14,000 or £15,000, and that he could not undertake such a work till provision was made for the work by Parliament. The hon.

member for South Brisbane could see that provision was now made on the Loan Estimates, and both he and his constituents ought to be satisfied.

Mr. BLACK said the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway had been established for several years, but the receipts were not increasing in proportion to the expenditure. The working expenses on the estimate were £13,940 as against the receipts last year of only £7,688; and that showed a very heavy loss on the working of the line. He asked the Minister for Works to give the Committee any information he could as to the probable increase of revenue likely to be derived from the line, and whether it was likely to continue to be a burden on the people.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that there was now an additional length of thirteen miles open for traffic, but the traffic was not very great. It was one of those lines which required nursing for a time; but he hoped it would turn out better than it had hitherto. The Mount Perry mines were now being worked, and he anticipated a considerable amount of traffic from them.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving that there be granted a sum of £117,377 for the Central Railway, said there had been two extensions—the Clermont branch, thirty-one miles, and from Pine Hill to Alpha, twenty miles, making a total of fifty-one miles of additional railway to provide for. In the Engineer's Department there was an increase of £100 for the Superintendent of Maintenance, and £50 for a clerk; and the Maintenance vote amounted to £57,800. In the Traffic Department an increase of £100 was put down for the Traffic Manager; there were nine additional men—station-masters, clerks, booking-clerks, and boys—requiring an addition of £2,165 to the vote, and nineteen men—guards, porters, pointsmen, watchmen, and sailmaker—making an increase of £3,024. £250 was down for extra labour, clerical assistance, and contingencies. In the Locomotive Department there was an increase to the foreman of £50, and to a clerk of £25. There were eighteen additional enginemmen, firemen, and cleaners, causing an increase of £2,694; and twenty-six additional fitters, turners, machinists, smiths, strikers, boilermakers, etc., with an increase of £4,143. In the Store Department there was an increase of £30 to a clerk, and £4,140 for stores and contingencies. The increase to the Superintendent of Maintenance was well deserved. He was a very old officer, and it was a considerable time since he had had an increase. The Traffic Manager also was an old officer, having been in the department, he thought, since the railway was first opened. He was originally storekeeper, then he was station-master for a considerable time, and for some years past he had been Traffic Manager on the Central line. The Locomotive Foreman was also down for an increase, and one or two clerks. He might mention that last session the hon. member for Rockhampton and other hon. members had called his attention to the necessity of giving those officers increases, which he promised to do.

Mr. PALMER said there was an item of £1,500 in the estimate for the Southern and Western Railways, and £1,000 in the present estimate for cartage. That item was not charged in the Estimates for the Maryborough or Bundaberg lines. Would the Minister inform them what the item was?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Railway Department undertook to deliver goods from the station to the owner's stores, and the

item was to meet the necessary outlay. The goods were conveyed at the cost of the department, and the owners paid higher rates.

Mr. KELLETT said he knew that great quantities of goods came by the railways on which the owners had to take delivery and pay cartage. They were not delivered by the Government. On all goods consigned to him he had to take delivery, except in the case of wool.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the department attended to the cartage of the goods they charged for it.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving that a sum of £45,316 be granted for the Northern Railway, said there was an increase on the salary of the Superintendent of Maintenance from £350 to £400, and an increase of £10 to a clerk. The Locomotive Foreman was down for an increase from £250 to £350. He might inform hon. members that the Locomotive Foreman some time ago gave the Commissioner for Railways a month's notice to leave. Inquiry was made as to his reason for doing so, when it transpired that he had had an offer from a private firm of the same salary it was now proposed to give him. He was an exceedingly good man, and it had been thought better to increase his salary by £100 than lose his services, as they could not very well replace him. The additional increases were for additional men.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had no objection to offer to the salary of the Superintendent of Maintenance, nor of the Locomotive Foreman, for both were first-class officers. But he should like to know why there was no increase in the salary of the Traffic Manager, and also no increase in the salary of the storekeeper. Comparing the salaries received by those gentlemen with the salaries received by the corresponding officers of the other lines, it was found that the storekeeper on the Central Railway received £300 a year, and the storekeeper on the Southern and Western line received £325 a year. Now, although it was a fact that there was not so much work done on the Northern line as on the Central line, or the Southern and Western line, still the gentleman employed on the former had less assistance, and he had a great amount of work to do, and had had no increase scarcely. He had received one increase since he started at the small salary of £150 a year. The time had now come when his salary ought to be increased. Then, as to the Traffic Manager: if they compared the salaries received by the traffic managers on the other railways with that for the Northern, it was found that the Traffic Manager on the Central Railway had £350 a year, and on the Southern and Western £500; while the salary of the Traffic Manager on the Maryborough and Gympie line was the same as that of the Traffic Manager of the Northern. There was no comparison between the two lines in the amount of work and the number of miles of railway. On the Northern section there were 170 miles, perhaps more, including Ravenswood; and the number of miles open on the Maryborough and Gympie line, including the Howard branch, was just one-half of that on the Northern line. Then, as to the amount of work that was done, the hon. Minister for Works could easily satisfy himself on that point. The one had a return of between £50,000 and £60,000 a year, and the other had a return of under £40,000. Then the interest which the two railways paid on the cost of construction was also very different. In fact, looking at the Commissioner's report for the year, he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) found that the Northern

line paid the highest interest of all the lines they had got. The line from Brisbane to Mitchell and from Gowrie Junction to Stanthorpe yielded an interest of 4·107 per cent.; the Sandgate branch was still higher, for it paid 4·901, or nearly 5 per cent.; the Maryborough and Gympie line, owing to the loss on the Burrum branch, only produced 2·782 per cent.; the average of the Central line was 4·795 per cent.; whereas the Northern Railway produced 7·862 per cent., or above 2½ per cent. of a clear profit upon the cost of construction. But upon that line, which paid so well, the Minister for Works had actually put down the smallest salaries. There should be some explanation given of that. He thought the gentleman in charge of that line had reason to complain of being overlooked by the department. Whether it was the Minister that was responsible, or whether it was the Commissioner for Railways that was responsible he did not know, neither did he care; but one of them must be responsible for this overlook of the salaries of the storekeeper and Traffic Manager. He should like the Minister for Works to take the matter of those men's salaries into his serious consideration.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he freely admitted that the Traffic Manager on the Northern Railway, under all the circumstances, should have an increase. But there had been complaints—not of a very serious character—against him, and he (the Minister for Works) did not see his way clear to put down an increase this year. He was quite prepared to admit that the people were in that locality rather inclined to be pugnacious, and not easily pleased, and whether it was altogether the fault of the Traffic Manager he did not know. He was trying to find out. The other day at the opening of the Ravenswood branch he gave great dissatisfaction in some way or other. He (the Minister for Works) hardly thought he was to blame, for they all knew that people who went to picnics were apt to take more than was good for them. However, that matter was under consideration, and if the Traffic Manager continued to manage the traffic to the satisfaction of the department he would be prepared to recommend an increase next year. He also admitted that there had been an increase in the number of miles open, which now amounted to sixty-two miles. But the line had paid a great deal better on the shorter length than now. He, however, anticipated that it would show better results in the future. If he had the opportunity of framing the Estimates next year, he would take care the officer of that department would not be forgotten.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that there be voted, for the service of the year 1884-5, a sum not exceeding £11,908 for salaries connected with the Chief Office of the Postmaster-General's Department. There were, he said, only two changes of importance—and one of these was apparent only—in the salaries of the department. The superintendent of mails and the superintendent of the money order office both apparently got an increase of £50, which raised their salaries from £500 to £550. In respect to the latter he had previously been receiving £50 from the contingencies for extra services in connection with postal notes. They proposed to abolish that allowance, and put it on the salary, which was a far more satisfactory way. He believed the total revenue derived from postal notes was about £60. The other officer had been longer in the department than almost anybody else in it; he was a most efficient officer, and it was proposed to put him on the same footing as his junior, who had recently got the £50 additional for looking after

the postal notes. The mechanician in the telegraph branch was also down for a small increase of £25.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £88,667 be granted for Post and Telegraph Offices. There were no changes in the vote, except in the increased number of officers rendered necessary by the increased number of post and telegraph offices in the colony.

Mr. PALMER asked whether there was any probability of a minimum rate of 1s. being established for messages between Queensland and New South Wales? A message could be sent as far as Kimberley for 1s., and yet 2s. had to be paid if it was sent over the border. The question had often been mooted before, and the time seemed to have come when the system should be put into operation.

The PREMIER said he did not remember to have heard the question mooted before. Such a system could not be established without the consent of the other colony; and he did not think it likely they would agree to it. Messages were sent within Queensland at remarkably low rates—much lower than in any other colony or country, considering the enormous distances.

Mr. BUCKLAND asked whether it was the intention of the Government, on the opening of the Logan railway, to continue to carry the mail to Beenleigh *via* Loganholme and Waterford, as at present?

The PREMIER said that, without making any inquiry, he felt justified in saying that the Government would never run a mail coach alongside a railway.

Mr. BUCKLAND said the railway, which ran across Cooper's Plains, would miss a large portion of country at present supplied by the coach. Mount Gravatt, for instance, without the mail coach, would have no mail at all.

The PREMIER said the Government would take the necessary steps to secure the delivery of the mails, but they could not possibly engage to run a mail coach in competition with the railway.

Mr. STEVENS said that at present the coach ran one day on the upper road, and the next day on the lower road, thereby providing postal communication for both. The railway would provide for the upper road, and he trusted the Government would not do away with the coach on the lower road, otherwise the settlers there would be entirely without postal communication.

The PREMIER said he did not think the ingenuity of the Post Office would be unequal to the task of supplying the lower road with postal communication without running a mail coach from Brisbane.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he had heard that the Government had accepted a contract for carrying the mail to Beenleigh *via* Loganholme and Waterford.

The PREMIER said mails would continue to be carried by coach until the railway was opened. All contracts for coach mail communication were made subject to the condition that as soon as the railway line was extended to certain places the coach mail would be stopped.

Mr. PALMER said he was a little disappointed with the answer the Premier gave him. He was certain that a great many more messages would be sent over the border if a minimum rate of 1s. were fixed. The tendency of the age was towards rapidity and cheapness of communication, and in some countries they were already talking about sixpenny telegrams. There was

nothing outrageous or wild in the plan, and he hoped the Premier would promise to give some consideration to it.

The PREMIER said he would promise to bring the matter under the notice of the Postmaster-General. At present the suggestion did not commend itself to him, especially in consideration of the fact that they spent a great deal more on their posts and telegraphs than they received from them. The total revenue from telegraphs last year was £80,000, and from both posts and telegraphs was £165,000. They certainly spent a great deal more than that. But as he had said before, an arrangement of that kind could not be carried out without the assent of New South Wales, and he did not know what their views were. He believed in reducing the expense of communication of that kind as far as possible, because, the cheaper the rate within certain limits, the greater would be the business done and the profits derived from it. But if they had double the number of messages at half the price at present charged, the expense would be greatly increased while the income would be the same. It must also be remembered that the line, for three-fourths of its distance, ran through New South Wales, and they would have a good deal to say on the subject.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that a sum not exceeding £196,697 be granted for the Conveyance of Mails and Contingencies. The amount put down for the conveyance of inland mails was only £2,000 more than last year. In consequence of the very unfavourable seasons, and the Estimates having been framed some time ago, it was possible that that amount might have to be somewhat exceeded. The amount for the conveyance of mails coastwise was increased by £1,800. For the conveyance of mails *via* Melbourne and San Francisco, including the service of the Orient Company, the amount was doubled. That was in consequence of the arrangement that had been made of sending mails by every steamer that left Sydney. Letters now went by the Orient line, the P. and O. line, and the San Francisco line; and Queensland paid the same rates by the P. and O. steamers as by the Orient line.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he wished to bring before the Committee, under the head of "Conveyance of Inland Mails," a grievance of a late member of the House who once represented Ipswich—Mr. Francis. It was known to some members that some two years ago Mr. Francis posted a letter in Roma to Ipswich. That letter was registered, and contained £120. During the transit of the train from Roma to Ipswich it ran off the line at, he thought, Chinchilla, and the travelling postmaster left his post. During his absence the mail-bag, containing Mr. Francis' letter, was stolen; then Mr. Francis thought he had a good claim against the Government, because had not the officer deserted his post the bag would not have been stolen. A claim was made to the late Government, and it was entertained to a certain extent; but the department did not know from what fund the money should be paid. Mr. Francis had since made a claim against the present Government; but the money was still unpaid, because there was no authority to pay it. Under the circumstances, it was well to have an expression of opinion from hon. members as to the justice of paying a claim like that, which he thought very reasonable. Mr. Francis, although he was in the House when he lost the money, did not want to make a personal matter of it. He appeared to be too modest; but he frequently talked to him (Mr. Macfarlane) of the case, and he knew that both the Premier and

the leader of the Opposition knew of it. Therefore he brought the matter before the Committee to get an expression of opinion as to the justice of paying the claim, which he thought was a reasonable one. He hoped something would be done to make good the loss.

The PREMIER said he remembered hearing of the claim some time ago, and he confessed he thought it had been settled in some way. The claim appeared to be a good one, but he did not know what course had been pursued. The facts were exactly as the hon. gentleman had stated them; but he would inquire as to what were the Postmaster-General's views upon the matter. He knew that gentleman mentioned the case to him once, and he was under the impression that something had been done to meet the claim. He remembered expressing the opinion himself that the claim was a just one from the information he had received at the time.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said, how could the hon. member for Ipswich get an expression of opinion from the Committee when the facts were not known? If the hon. member had asked for the papers connected with the case, hon. gentlemen would have had the facts before them. He did not remember the facts, but he remembered the claim being made and that it was thoroughly sifted several times. He did not know whether the modesty of Mr. Francis stood in the way or not, but at any rate he kept the claim before the Government repeatedly, and there was every disposition to examine it. The decision arrived at was that it could not be entertained without establishing a precedent that would be a very bad thing for the country. The facts were not so simple as the hon. member had said; for, if he remembered rightly, a compliance with the request of Mr. Francis would leave the door open for similar claims to be put in at a future time. A man having registered a letter that did not turn up, the Government could not be made responsible for the amount of money it contained. The difficulty was that it was hard to say what the letter did actually contain. It was not through any want of examination on the part of the department that the claim had not been settled, but because the Postmaster-General was of opinion that the claim could not be entertained.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that about fourteen or fifteen days ago a deputation of residents of Fortitude Valley waited upon him and stated as follows:—That they had written to the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Beattie, and made an appointment for the following day for the purpose of getting him to ask a certain question in the House about the Valley Post Office. They waited on Mr. Beattie by appointment indicated in a letter which had been posted the day previously, and not finding him at home it was suggested by several leading residents that they should wait on him (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson), as he was a resident of Fortitude Valley, and would probably take some interest in the question in regard to which they desired to have an interview. On hearing them on the subject he stated that he would represent the matter to Mr. Beattie; that he believed some misapprehension had occurred on the part of Mr. Beattie, and for that reason the appointment had not been kept. He stated that he believed Mr. Beattie had no objection to asking the question to obtain the information desired; but that if Mr. Beattie had any objection he (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) would ask the question himself. Subsequently he met Mr. Beattie, and explained the matter to that hon. member. He had not then made up his mind, but he afterwards said that he did not

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intend to ask the question—for what reason he (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) was not prepared to state. At any rate, he did not in any way wish to disturb the harmony that subsisted between Mr. Beattie and his constituents; but at the same time he had promised to ask the question if Mr. Beattie would not. He had hoped before this to have had an answer from the Postmaster-General himself, to whom he handed the written memoranda of questions that he took from the deputation. Speaking from memory, he thought the information sought was to this effect: First, why did the Government abandon the original site purchased by them in Ann street; and secondly, was it true that the Government had purchased a site in Brunswick street? He thought that in view of the fact that that part of the city would extend right down to Bulimba on the south-east and along the bank of the river to New Farm, and that the whole of the vacant paddocks there would in a few years be built upon, the Government should have fixed upon a site that would be suitable to the expected increase of population—a site which would have been more central. He did not deny that both the sites referred to were very good ones at present; but having regard to the increase in population, to the cutting-up of the land, and the traffic arrangements by the tramways, it would have been better to have gone a little further down Ann street; the Government should either have stuck to the original site, or gone a little further the other way.

The PREMIER said he understood that the reason why a site was purchased in Brunswick street was that, after full consideration, it was thought it would be more convenient than the site previously purchased in Ann street, because it was common to all parts of the Valley. There was not a great distance between the two, and it was thought that a great many people would have to go a good deal out of their ordinary way to get to the site in Ann street. The site in Brunswick street was exactly the site now occupied by the post and telegraph office, or it was adjoining—he was not sure which; at all events, there were not many yards between them.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £400 be granted for the Meteorological Observer, Brisbane, and the purchase of instruments for country stations, and contingencies. He regretted that he was unable to move a larger sum on that occasion, but the Government had not yet had time to deal with that very important branch of the Public Service, in order to see exactly what should be done to put it on a better footing. He hoped before long that they would be able to take the matter up, so that the public might get fuller information about the state of the weather in all parts of the colony.

Mr. PALMER said he did not think the Colonial Secretary was aware that the report of the Meteorological Observer was not obtainable in the statistics. The only place in which it could be found was in the *Government Gazette*, and it was not everybody who was in a position to keep a copy of that periodical. A report like that ought to be easily obtainable, and obtainable as far back as it had been published. He was looking for it the other day to find out the rainfall on the coast and in the interior. He was quite certain that it had only to be mentioned to make it easier for the public to get the information.

Mr. JORDAN said it was to be regretted that the Observer's report was not published earlier. It was usually bound up with the vital statistics published by the Registrar-General. The

Registrar-General had no control over the Meteorological Observer, who was under the Postmaster-General; but year by year he had taken a good deal of trouble to remind him that it was desirable that his report should be ready so as to be bound up with the statistics of the colony. He (Mr. Jordan) thought the report should be published in that way; and the attention of the Postmaster-General had been called to it. Last year the Registrar-General had been unable again, for the second time, to obtain the report in time to be bound up with the vital statistics. It happened in 1882, and it occurred again last year. The vital statistics were published about June or July in each year. The hon. member for Burke asked him the other day where the Observer's reports were to be found, and he turned up the vital statistics and showed the hon. member the Registrar-General's remark on the subject.

The PREMIER said he was surprised to hear that the report had not been published. He was informed that every year it was laid before Parliament. He attached great importance to the meteorological reports, and he thought the information should be given as early as possible. He would bring the matter under the notice of the Postmaster-General, and ask him to take such steps as would effectually prevent the delay complained of.

Mr. JORDAN said he did not say that the report had not been published. What the Registrar-General called attention to was that it was not published in time to be bound up with the statistics. That occurred the year before, and the report was published as a parliamentary paper.

Mr. PALMER said there was one more matter he would call attention to, and that was the necessity for providing rain-gauges at the different telegraph stations in the interior. Some telegraph stations complained that they had nothing but a pickle-bottle to take the rainfall in, and he was sure that a pickle-bottle was not accurate enough for scientific purposes.

The PREMIER said he was under the impression that rain-gauges were provided at all stations. He agreed that they ought to be, and had assumed that they were.

Mr. PALMER said he had applied for one for Hughenden about a month ago.

The PREMIER said he was afraid that that branch of the department would look after. He was informed that the Meteorological Report for 1883 was received at the Printing Office yesterday, which was rather late—nearly twelve months behind time.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving that £5,545 be voted for the Auditor-General, travelling inspectors and contingencies, said there was an increase of £485 upon the amount voted last year. There was a new appointment made with a view to extending the audit to the Lands Department. Up to the present time the Lands Department accounts had been audited by one of their own staff, but it had been found desirable that the Auditor-General should specially audit the register of the Lands Department, and to do so effectively this new appointment had to be made. There was an increase of £50 in the salary of the accountant, which had been given with a view of compensating him for being deprived of private business—which he had had occasion to refer to before—in connection with the statements which were occasionally required to be framed by that gentleman in connection with the marine insurance. The Government notified to that gentleman that it was

desirable that he should relinquish all work outside his departmental duties, and they deemed it only fair compensation to give him an increase of £50. There had been a readjustment in the office in consequence of the new appointment, for the purpose of conducting the audit of the Lands Department; and the number of examiners had been reduced. One of them had been transferred to the inspectors' staff, so that the number of inspectors was increased to three. The other increases were to two inspectors and also to the senior inspector. There was also an increase in the vote for forage, caused by the increased prices that had to be paid by the officers visiting various outside stations.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER, in moving that £11,160 be voted for Pacific Island Immigration and contingencies, said that the vote was paid out of the Pacific Island Trust Fund, which was established under the Pacific Island Labourers Act. The first item was unaltered—£100 a year for the Immigration Agent—for superintending that branch of the department. The next item was an allowance to the Acting Immigration Agent, which he proposed should remain on the Estimates. He proposed, however, to appropriate that sum somewhat differently to what was intended when the Estimates were framed, and to divide it between the officers who had supervision of that branch during the absence of the Immigration Agent. There was a new item, the Chief Clerk at £400. Formerly, the Chief Clerk in the Immigration Office received £75 as an allowance in respect of the Pacific Island branch. As he had already explained, the work of the two branches of the department could not be carried on by one officer. The result had been that the supervision of the Polynesian branch had become extremely defective; and it was considered absolutely necessary to appoint an officer to take charge of that branch. He believed, now that an officer had been appointed, that he was the hardest worked officer in the Public Service, although he had three clerks to assist him. The amount of correspondence and work in connection with labour vessels and islanders in the colony was very great indeed. However, he was very glad to say that the department was at present on a tolerably satisfactory basis. Hon. members would observe that it was proposed that there should be an additional inspector at Mackay, and that there was an increase to the salary of the present Inspector of £50. The Inspector of Polynesians at Mackay had an enormous amount of work to do. There were a great many more islanders in that district than in any other; in fact, almost as many as there were in all the other districts of the colony put together; and he thought, considering the amount of work that officer had to do, that he should receive a larger salary than the other inspectors. It was also absolutely necessary that he should have an assistant inspector, because an inspector should not be merely an officer who stayed in his own office and corresponded with the head office. He ought to be an inspector in reality as well as in name; therefore the Government had placed that extra amount upon the Estimates, and had also appointed an assistant. Hon. members would see that it was proposed to appoint a clerk to the inspector for Townsville and the Burdekin. That was because the Inspector of Polynesians in those districts lived at Townsville, while the Polynesians were on the Burdekin; and as the inspector at Townsville was also immigration agent, it was impossible for him to attend properly to both offices; therefore, the Government proposed to appoint a clerk who would also act

as assistant inspector. The same observations applied to the inspector at the Ingham district, Herbert River, but the necessity for appointing an assistant inspector there had only been apparent since the Estimates had been framed. The intention was that those assistants should inspect the plantations more frequently. With respect to Government agents, they remained, as before, at £200 a year, while the amount for supernumerary agents was reduced by £800. For contingencies, forage, etc., the amount was nearly the same as last year. The amount for Polynesian hospitals was increased. They were only just begun when the Estimates were before the Committee last, and only a half-year's salary was voted to the medical officer at Mackay. Now there was a salary of £500 a year for the resident surgeon, and £350 for an assistant surgeon. The assistant surgeon was absolutely necessary, because it was impossible for the surgeon to visit the plantations; and it was far more beneficial for the islanders that, except in cases of emergency, they should be treated upon the plantations rather than taken to the hospital. The salary for the resident surgeon at Maryborough was for the full year instead of for the half-year, as it appeared on the last Estimates. Forage allowance was given to both surgeons, and an allowance in lieu of quarters to the assistant surgeon at Mackay. The estimate for maintenance and so on was the same as before.

Mr. BLACK said he was glad to see that the Premier had sent an assistant inspector to Mackay. It was a matter he brought forward some time ago, though it was only very lately that any attention had been paid to it.

The PREMIER: I never heard of it. I thought I deserved credit for that myself.

Mr. BLACK said he referred some time ago to the absolute necessity for such an officer, and he was glad to see that the necessary provision had been made. The planters were anxious that the Polynesian inspectors should be inspectors indeed, and not compelled, as the officer at Mackay had been, to attend to the whole of the immigration, European as well as Polynesian. In connection with the hospital at Mackay, he wished to point out—and no doubt the Premier was already aware of the fact—that there had been an enormous expenditure incurred on the building; and he hoped that, as the expenses of the hospital were entirely contributed from the Pacific Islanders' Fund, due regard to reasonable economy was being practised. He had an opportunity of inspecting that hospital within the last two months, and he must say that the medical officer in charge deserved every credit for the splendid condition not only of the buildings, but of the grounds also. Everything connected with the place was in an unexceptionable condition. At the same time, with a large trust fund, over which the department, apparently, had unlimited control, he wished to point out that the expenditure was extremely excessive, and he trusted that the Premier would see that the expenses were not unnecessarily augmented. The capitation fee levied on the Polynesians at the present time would be altogether insufficient to carry on the hospital on the scale on which it had been inaugurated. There were several items of expenditure contained in a return for which he had called which he hoped the Committee would not see again. Horses and vehicles, £227 12s. 6d.—that was, he thought, a very luxurious appendage in connection with a hospital; in fact, the cost of that hospital up to the present time appeared to be £8,500, and he thought for a sum of money like that they

should have a hospital equal to anything in the colonies. That hospital had not been open twelve months yet.

The PREMIER: The amount of £8,500 is for a year and a quarter.

Mr. BLACK: If that basis of expenditure were continued, he was quite sure that the sum on the Estimates would not be found sufficient. He would now refer to what he thought was a great piece of injustice—that was, compelling the planters to pay £550 to Hensheim and Company for the destruction of property, an act caused by the neglect of the shipowners, and which should rightly have been paid by the shipowners. The planters of Queensland were not in any way whatever to blame in connection with the transaction: and it was only right that the shipowners should have been compelled to pay the money and not the planters. The Polynesian Trust Fund was a very convenient fund; and that was the first time the Committee had been able to ascertain what had been done with the large amount of money placed in the hands of the department. He found from the return to which he had alluded that it was as good as a vote for contingencies for the department. If there was any question as to what fund an item of expenditure should be charged, he could quite understand the Minister saying "Oh! put it down to the Pacific Islanders' Fund." That appeared to be the system on which it was worked. A sum of £22 for survey fees was charged to the Pacific Islanders' Fund, and there was an amount set down which was expended by the Inspector of Distilleries.

The PREMIER: That was for stopping the sale of grog to islanders at Mackay.

Mr. BLACK: Why should it be charged to the Polynesian Fund? Was there any other expenditure which properly belonged to the Police Department charged to the Polynesian Fund? Then there were the expenses in connection with the return of the "Jessie Kelly's" islanders—£505 3s. 5d. He understood that in that case the Government had enforced the bond given by the shipowners. That was a case exactly similar to the case of Hensheim and Company; the shipowners were in fault—and though the Government paid the amount out of the very convenient Polynesian Fund in the first instance, he understood that they did enforce the bond against the shipowners. Why, then, was not the same course adopted in the case of Hensheim and Company? Expenses attendant on inquiries and court cases, amounting to £395 4s. 10d., were also charged to the Polynesian Fund. What he particularly wished to know was, why the forfeiture of the bond was enforced in the case of the "Jessie Kelly," while the planters were made to pay for the neglect of the Government agent in the case of Hensheim and Company?

The PREMIER said he originally directed that the bond should be enforced against the owners of the "Stanley"; but it really appeared to be such a hard case—they had lost their ship, which was wrecked, had sustained very severe loss, and the injury complained of was really done by the captain by the direction of the Government Agent, who was the officer of the Government—that it really seemed to him inequitable to insist on them bearing the loss of their bond. Therefore he retraced his steps, and did not insist on the payment of the bond, because they had already sustained extremely heavy loss, and because the transactions from which Hensheim and Company suffered were really occasioned by the act of the officer of the Queensland Government. The hon. member also talked about the amount

having been excessive. Now, the hon. member must have read the papers in the case of Hershheim and Company, laid on the table of the House on the motion of the hon. member for Mulgrave.

Mr. BLACK: I did not say they were excessive.

The PREMIER: He must have read what had been persistently denied to exist, both in the House and outside—the report of Deputy Commissioner Romilly, which the Government obtained before they entertained the claim. The claim was for £1,000. He (the Premier) asked Mr. Romilly, the Deputy Commissioner for the Pacific, who had been at the place and had conducted the inquiry, to favour the Government with an estimate of the damages. He would read Mr. Romilly's report. It had been said over and over again that the money was paid without inquiry; even the young gentleman who presided over the Supreme Court at Fiji took the opportunity of expressing his wonder that the money should have been paid when there was no evidence before him to show that it ought to have been paid. He (the Premier) pointed out, in a letter to the Governor, which would be found amongst the papers, that it was no part of his business to decide whether or not the money should have been paid, and that it was not exactly pertinent to the question before him. He would read the letter he got from Mr. Romilly:—

“Brisbane, 2nd April, 1884.

“SIR,
“I beg herewith to return you the documents having reference to the proceedings of the ‘Stanley,’ during her visit to the Lachlan Islands.

“I have endeavoured to form an estimate of the damage done by the master of that vessel in burning certain buildings containing island produce, which belonged to Mr. Hershheim, Imperial German Consul in the Pacific.

“The only man who is qualified to speak as to the amount of copra, bécho-de-mer, pearl-shell, etc., which they contained, is a German, Carl Tetzlaff, who at the time they were burnt was in charge of the station. He has sworn before me that sixty tons of copra, two tons of bécho-de-mer, two bags of pearl-shell, and eleven pounds of tortoise-shell were burnt.

“This would probably represent a loss of some £800, valuing the copra at £10 per ton, and the bécho-de-mer at £100 per ton.

“The man Gerrans guesses the amount of copra destroyed to have been about twenty tons, but it is a most difficult thing even for an experienced man to make such a guess. Copra till it is shipped is piled loosely in the shed, and an estimate, such as Gerrans seems to have made must of necessity be incorrect. I do not imagine the value of the trade goods destroyed could have been very great.

“The German had been so long on the island without supplies that his stock must have been nearly if not quite exhausted.

“The value of the buildings is probably too trifling to be taken into account. As far as I could see they were merely sheds erected by the natives under the German's supervision.

“I should say, therefore, that if Carl Tetzlaff's statement is to be believed—and he is the only man who can be possessed of any knowledge on the subject—that the loss sustained by Mr. Hershheim must be at least £800 or £850.

“I have, etc.,

“HUGH HASTINGS ROMILLY.”

His (the Premier's) minute upon that was as follows:—

“Memo.—With reference to the claim of Messrs. Hershheim for loss sustained through the action of the master and Government agent of the ‘Stanley’ at the Lachlan Islands, offer Mr. Henssler, without prejudice, £550 in full discharge of the claim.—S.W.G.—10-1-84.”

That was his answer to the statements which were made, in the House and out of it, that the claim was paid without any inquiry.

Mr. BLACK said that if the hon. gentleman had wanted to read that letter he might have done it without commencing with the statement

that he (Mr. Black) had said the claim was excessive. He had not said the claim was excessive.

The PREMIER: I thought you did. You have said it so often that I thought you did this time.

Mr. BLACK: I will go so far as to say I never said it.

The PREMIER: I thought you did.

Mr. BLACK said he did not think he had ever referred to the case before. If he had known the hon. gentleman was going to read extracts from that report he would have worked it up, and he had a very strong opinion that he would have found something which would justify him in saying that the claim was excessive. Notwithstanding the hon. gentleman's sense of justice, although Mr. Romilly's statement put the value of the copra destroyed at from £800 to £850, he only paid £550. He evidently thought the claim was excessive. What he (Mr. Black) complained of was that the planters, who had not in any way been implicated in the transaction, should be made to pay. The hon. gentleman had explained that, out of commiseration for the misfortunes of the shipowner—misfortunes he was sorry to say the hon. gentleman did not usually commiserate—the money was taken out of the Polynesian Trust Fund. In fact, the planters were compelled to pay for the neglect of the Government officer in charge of the ship; that was what he complained of. If hon. gentlemen would take the trouble to study the Polynesian Trust Fund, they would find that notwithstanding the very heavy expense—over £8,000 for one hospital, and the Maryborough Hospital in addition—the fund had actually increased during the last twelve months. The natural inference from that was that the poll-tax levied on the planters was excessive and should be reduced. It was not a good thing that a large fund like that should be locked up in any of the Government departments, and operated upon in the mysterious way it had been dealt with. The House had no control over the expenditure, and whatever charitable purpose the Premier wished to contribute to, the money was taken from the Polynesian Trust Fund. By doing that he was acting unjustly towards those who contributed the fund—the planters of Queensland.

The PREMIER said he was sorry to have done the hon. member an injustice by saying he had accused the Government of paying the money without inquiry. He thought the hon. member had said so, and the accusation had certainly been made very often. With regard to the increase in the amount of the expenditure for hospitals, the expenditure for last year, as he had pointed out in moving the vote, was for a very small part of the year; a very large portion of the expenditure on the Mackay Hospital, which the hon. member had alluded to—over £5,000 of it—was for the building.

Mr. CHUBB said he saw the Government agents were down for the same salary as had been paid for years past. He thought that past experience, as well as recent disclosures, had shown that £200 a year was not sufficient to attract good men to the service. There were some competent men in the service, but there were many incompetent and illiterate men, and so long as the salary was so low they could not expect to get good men. It might be said that aboard ship the Government agent was found, and that that was worth another £50 a year; but while the vessel was in port he had to find himself, so that the remuneration was worth

very little more than £200. That was quite inadequate to secure men thoroughly competent to fill the very important position.

The PREMIER said the question of the remuneration of the Government agents had been under consideration several times. Some of the men he did not know and had not been able to find out much about. So far as he had been able to learn, those who were now employed were free from blame and trustworthy; though of course it was very difficult to avoid making mistakes sometimes. As far as his experience had gone, they would not be able to get better men if they paid larger salaries. Up to the time the Estimates were framed, he had not been able to get sufficient information to come to the conclusion that it was desirable to increase the salaries. Some men now in the service were, he believed, men of a very superior character indeed. Others he had some little doubt about. He had taken what pains he could in appointing them, and had not made up his mind whether the salaries ought to be increased or not.

Mr. PALMER said he had looked through the papers connected with the trial of McMurdo and Davies, and nothing that he had ever read had more brought home to his mind the fact that truth was stranger than fiction. The trials which those men went through, and the extraordinary amount of perseverance, and, indeed, heroism that was displayed, were truly wonderful. He had also come to the conclusion, in reading through the evidence, that the amount paid to Messrs. Hensheim and Company on their claim was excessive. The hon. member for Mackay had said that he did not state so; but, with all deference to the Premier, he (Mr. Palmer) maintained that the amount was excessive. The evidence given by Tetzlaff had been given only after he knew that his employers had put in a claim. That was the only evidence as to value, and they might estimate what it was worth when they took his character into consideration, and also that he did not think his own place worth defending. For when he saw the people landing from the ship he simply popped off his revolver, and ran away to allow his huts to be burnt down. All admitted that the buildings were valueless. The "Stanley" people who saw the copra and stores there considered them as actually valueless; and in the first letter written by Mr. Hensheim to the German Consul in Brisbane he only claimed £300. It was only after the evidence came to be taken, and when he knew that his employers had put in a claim for compensation, that Tetzlaff put an excessive value on the copra. Tetzlaff's character did not stand high according to his own acts. He commenced by lying, and doing a real serious injury to the owners of the "Stanley," and then he did not think his own goods worth defending. He (Mr. Palmer) was quite satisfied, from looking through the papers, that Messrs. Hensheim and Company must have been very much surprised at the amount which they did receive, and that they in that way got a great deal more out of the goods than they could have done in the way of trade.

The PREMIER said that might be so; but what could they do in dealing with a case of that kind? It was a case in which they could not set up any moral defence. No doubt the Government could not be sued for wrong, but the complainants in the case were the German Government. They admitted at once, and were bound to admit, the moral obligation of the colony to compensate those men for the loss they had sustained. What evidence was procurable on the subject? The only evidence was that of the agent Tetzlaff; and he (the Premier) thought they had made a very good bargain. It was

like claims that were often made for compensation for injury sustained in railway collisions. Frequently the person injured asked more compensation than would cover the loss he had sustained.

Mr. BLACK said he wished to refer to a question in connection with the action of the Polynesian Inspector at Mackay. He had received a telegram from Mackay stating that a certain number of boys who were paid off last week had received certain advice from the Polynesian Inspector at Mackay. They were told to go down to Brisbane and go on board the "Forest King" and were advised not to spend their money at Mackay, but in Brisbane. He could only say that if such instructions had been given it seemed to him to have been interfering very much with the liberty of trade. He would like, before saying any more on the subject, to ask the Colonial Secretary whether he had any further explanation to offer which would put the case in a more favourable light than it appeared in at present.

The PREMIER said that the facts were these:—The "Forest King" had lately applied for a license to go to the South Sea Islands, and she was going to take back a number of boys to New Ireland. The Mackay shipowners had refused to take them back except at double rates. What their object was in demanding double rates he did not know. The "Forest King" had offered to take them, and the ship waited to take them. He thought the owners of the "Forest King" were entitled to some reasonable consideration, for they had had very heavy losses lately. As the ship was waiting for the men coming down from Mackay, instructions were given to send them down at once, so as not to keep the "Forest King" waiting longer than necessary; and he thought the telegram added that there was no necessity for the men to wait till they had spent all their money. He had received more than one telegram last week stating that the Inspector of Polynesians at Mackay had said that the men were not to spend their money there. He was very angry when he heard that. If the thing had been done it was a most unfair and improper thing to do. He had stated in answer to the complaints that no such instructions had been given from the office in Brisbane, and he had called on the Inspector at Mackay for an explanation, and the Inspector had declared in his answer that he told the Polynesians nothing of the kind. He stated that he simply told them that they were to go down to Brisbane, and that they were free to spend their money wherever they liked, either at Brisbane or at Mackay. That was the report which he (the Premier) had got that day, so that the complaint was entirely without foundation.

Mr. BLACK said he admitted that that was a very plausible explanation, but he could only say that the tenor of the telegram sent up to Mackay was such as to fully justify the Polynesian Inspector in acting as he did.

The PREMIER: He says that he did not.

Mr. BLACK said he could only judge from what was the result. The telegram intimated to the Inspector to send down the boys without delay and "do not stop for trade." If the boys were paid on Wednesday last, and they could not leave until that morning, it was quite certain that some influences were undoubtedly brought to bear to prevent them from trading in the same way as the islanders had generally done. Although the Polynesian Inspector might say he did not give those orders, it was perfectly certain that someone did, and the telegram was so worded that the Polynesian Inspector was

justified in advising the boys as he did. He was not a bit surprised that the Mackay shipowners declined to take the boys at £10 a head. What astonished him was that any vessel could be found to go into the trade at all. Neither captain, nor crew, nor Government agent knew what their fate would be until they got back; and no matter how honestly the trade was carried out they would very likely be put in gaol at the end of the voyage. He was glad to find that some shipowners in the South were to be found willing to continue in the trade, but the Northern shipowners were going out of it in self-defence. As long as the Colonial Secretary continued to pay the Government agents the miserable pittance of £200 a year, there would be no reform in the trade; but if the amount were doubled respectable men would enter the service. If the trade was restricted to the older known islands, such as the New Hebrides, where the English language was spoken reasonably well, those outrages of which they had heard so much lately were not likely to occur. The atrocities which they all deplored were consequent upon vessels attempting to recruit at islands such as New Guinea, New Ireland, and New Britain, where white men had hardly ever been before, and where English was not understood; and they would never occur if the trade was confined to the well-known islands in the more southern portion of the Pacific.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked whether there were still twelve Government agents on the list?

The PREMIER replied that there were twelve last week, but that two had since resigned.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Does the hon. gentleman intend to fill up the vacancies?

The PREMIER said there were two vacancies to fill up. Including supernumeraries, there were about twenty Government agents employed.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he took exception to the remark of the hon. member for Mackay, that there were no respectable Government agents in the service. He knew several who were very respectable.

Mr. BLACK said he should have used the word "responsible" instead of "respectable." He had no wish to cast any slur on the respectability of the Government agents, but he did not think the trade could be satisfactorily carried out when Government agents could be got for £200 a year. The risk was too great.

The PREMIER: The risk of what?

Mr. BLACK: Of poisoned arrows and antagonistic islanders.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £4,520 be granted for the office of the Chief Inspector of Sheep. There was an increase of £50 to the salary of the Chief Inspector, who had been in charge of the department for a very long time, and whose work was increasing. There were also sums down for quarantine buildings at Rockhampton and Townsville.

Mr. PALMER said that, with regard to the proposed quarantine buildings at Rockhampton and Townsville, he supposed they had reference to the quarantining of sheep from the other colonies.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. PALMER said it was necessary that a strict supervision should be kept in all parts of the colony where sheep were likely to be landed from the other colonies. Sheep from Victoria had been landed at Normanton lately, and he had never heard of any action being taken with regard to them.

The PREMIER said it had been done without his knowledge; he had never heard of any sheep being landed at Normanton. If sheep from the other colonies were landed there it would be necessary to erect quarantine buildings at Normanton as well as at Rockhampton and Townsville.

Mr. PALMER said the sheep came by direct steamer from Victoria, calling at Sydney and Brisbane.

The PREMIER: Were they quarantined here?

Mr. PALMER: They never left the steamer.

The PREMIER: But there has been no through steamer from Victoria to Normanton.

Mr. PALMER: No doubt I am wrong there. They must have been transhipped at Brisbane.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £4,300 be granted for the office of Registrar of Brands. The only change in the vote was an item of £900 for printing directories—a work which had occasionally to be done.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £3,665 16s. 8d. be granted for Police Superannuation Fund. It was almost a formal vote, the amount being fixed by law and paid out of a special fund.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that £6,369 be granted for the Government Savings Bank. The estimate showed an increase of £485, chiefly occasioned by the increased number of branches throughout the colony, the number having increased from 108 last year to 117 in the present year. The chief increase to salary was one of £50 to the manager at the head office, who had not received an increase in connection with that office for some years.

Mr. BLACK said he would ask the Colonial Treasurer what provision had been made towards securing the Polynesian accounts which were in the hands of the Polynesian inspectors in the various parts of the colony. He had moved for a return of the savings bank deposits of Polynesians, which was laid on the table of the House on the 25th October. By that return it appeared that under the head of "Polynesian Trust Account" there were 3,372 Polynesians, with deposits amounting to £13,869. In addition to that, there were 955 Polynesians who had deposited £3,917, and for which, he understood, they held their own deposit books. What he wished to point out was the great risk that might occur some day in the event of Polynesian inspectors being removed from one district to another. It was very hard to identify those Polynesians. The majority of them held no deposit receipts, and he would even go so far as to say that, supposing some of the funds were misappropriated, what guarantee had the Government or the Polynesians that they would be able to get their money when they applied for it? How was their identity going to be proved? It seemed to him that there was in existence a very loose way of handling the money of the Polynesians; and he wished to direct attention to it before any disaster occurred.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said unfortunately there had been irregularities in connection with the Polynesian Fund, and they were detected at a late audit of the Polynesian Account. The irregularities occurred in the Brisbane office, and that led to an investigation of the whole of the accounts throughout the colony. An improved system had, however, been adopted of dealing with the accounts. The Immigration Agent in Brisbane paid the Polynesians, and

took their receipts in the presence of a witness; and in other parts of the colony the inspectors who held trust funds paid the money in the presence of a witness. There had been several Polynesian accounts opened in Mackay. As much as £400 had been deposited in one day, and the best check they could get was by carrying out the suggestion of the Auditor-General, that the islanders should be paid in the presence of a third party, and that they should be identified as far as possible by issuing to them savings bank books. An improved form of book had been suggested, and was now being kept in the department in Brisbane—a ledger in which every individual account was posted, together with a cash book, so that it was a check not only upon the department but also on the Savings Bank. As far as possible every precaution had been taken to prevent any further abuse in the direction he had indicated. The abuse extended to the amount of £82 15s. 2d., the largest sum being £12 and the minimum £1. Beyond that no further irregularities had been detected. A very stringent search, extending over about one thousand accounts, had been made, and the work of the Savings Bank had been found to be satisfactory.

Mr. BLACK said he was glad to have that assurance from the Colonial Treasurer, and he hoped that he would be able to carry out the reform as he had suggested. He certainly thought that it would be a more satisfactory way of managing the Polynesian accounts; but he maintained that a Polynesian inspector, who was about the only officer who could identify the men, should not be transferred from one district to another, because he was the only officer who really knew the boys, and who knew the amount of their deposits. Each Polynesian depositor should have a book of his own.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is done at Mackay.

Mr. BLACK said he was glad to hear that the reform was going to take that shape; but he knew that at the present time the Polynesian inspectors held large sums of money deposited with them by the boys, whom they alone could identify. If the Government had issued instructions for every depositor to have his book in future, then he could see it would be a very much safer plan than the one which prevailed now. Very few people in the colony had any idea that the Polynesians had deposited the immense sum of £18,000 in the Government Savings Bank, and it was only right that those men, who were to a certain extent at the mercy of those who had dealings with them, should be protected as far as possible.

Mr. FOXTON said he saw in the Savings Banks Estimates there were two increases—one to the manager of £50, and also £50 to the officer in charge of the Brisbane branch, who was receiving at present £400 a year. The same salary was being received by the Chief Clerk and Examiner, and he had been informed that that officer was senior to the officer in charge of the Brisbane branch. Both those officers had hitherto received £400 a year, and it seemed an anomalous thing to make the office of the officer in charge of the Brisbane branch more lucrative than the position held by his senior in the service. He did not know whether he was rightly informed, but unless there was some complaint about the way in which the Chief Clerk and Examiner performed his duties, it would be only fair to place him in the matter of salary at least upon the same level as his junior officer.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was not at that moment aware of the facts of the

case, but he was inclined to think Mr. Nightingale was senior to the Chief Clerk and Examiner. The reason for the increase being given to the officer in charge of the Brisbane branch was that he had to return on Saturday nights, and in consideration of that he had hitherto received the small sum of, he thought, 10s. a night, which was paid out of Contingencies. It was his intention to abolish that fee, and allow £450 as a complete salary; and though it appeared on the Estimates as an increase to the salary of that officer of £50, it was in reality only increased by £10 or £14. He might mention that he quite agreed with the hon. member for Mackay, regarding his desire for the protection of the islanders; and their interests would be studied as far as practicable. The Savings Bank officer at Mackay had been already instructed to issue deposit books to the islanders. In Brisbane, at the central office, the Immigration Agent had charge of it; but he had not been instructed to that effect yet.

Mr. CHUBB said the senior officer in charge of the Brisbane branch was usually allowed a small sum to cover losses. Was that being continued?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes; the usual teller's allowance.

Mr. CHUBB said, with regard to the savings bank accounts of Polynesians, it seemed to him that the point to be aimed at was the identification of the depositors, and it occurred to him to suggest that the savings bank book should contain the name of the employer of the depositor. It would be a very simple matter to put down in the book the name of the islander and his present employer, and it would provide an additional means of identification of the person who was to receive the money.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £3,848 be granted for the Agent-General's Department. The only change in the item was for two emigration agents for the Continent for six months at £400; and lecturer for the United Kingdom for nine months at £500. The lecturer for the United Kingdom was Mr. Randall, who had been reappointed from 1st October. Before he left for England he was making himself acquainted with all the districts of the colony, so that he would be better able to give full information concerning the colony in the farming districts of the United Kingdom, to which he would specially devote his attention. He would very shortly finish his journeys in the colony, and would then proceed to England. He (the Premier) had not hurried him in starting, as he thought it well that he should have some experience of the northern districts in summer. He considered the selection of Mr. Randall by the late Government was a very satisfactory one. He was an enthusiast in the matter of emigration, and had a very great amount of practical knowledge in managing it and in the selection of the best persons to send out to the colony. It was with very great pleasure that he proposed that salary for his reappointment. With respect to the emigration agents for the Continent, they had not yet been appointed, nor did he know that two would be necessary; but he would like to have the power of appointing two if it were found necessary. If they were appointed they would for the present, at any rate, be appointed for Germany and Scandinavia.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that £5,004 be granted for Harbour and River improvements. That sum showed an increase of £1,118

upon the estimate for last year. That was occasioned by the fact that four new officers had to be provided for. The master of the dredge "Platypus," which was at present engaged at Townsville, was given a salary of £300, the same amount as was paid to the masters of the other large dredges — "Groper," "Saurian," and "Octopus." The vote was further increased by £300 for the inspector of the new dredge at Maryborough; £220 for the inspector of iron work at Brisbane; and £250 for a draftsman required in the Brisbane office. Those represented the increases in the vote.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that the sum of £16,107 be granted for Waterworks and Water Supply. Although the item was of much larger dimensions than that for last year, it did not necessarily imply that the expenditure would be more than was actually incurred last year. If hon. members would turn to the Hydraulic Engineer's report they would see that the expenditure for last year was very heavy indeed in connection with the obtaining of plant and machinery. The estimate this year was framed on a more elaborate basis than last year, and asked the appropriation by Parliament of sums for wages for blacksmiths, foremen, labourers, horse-drivers, chainmen, and cooks, and travelling expenses and contingencies, all of which were paid out of Loan last year without appropriation by Parliament.

Mr. PALMER said this was a subject to which he wished to draw particular attention. The subject of water supply in the interior of Queensland had been brought under their notice in a very forcible manner only quite recently. He would call attention to the first eleven items on the vote. An amount of £4,489 was set down for officers alone, so that the vote for overseeing the expenditure of £16,107 amounted to more than a quarter of the whole vote. For water supply in the interior in 1882, £27,000 was voted; in 1883, £20,777; and in the coast districts he believed there was £69,000 also. It would not be denied by those who had practical experience of the matter, that that amount of money was altogether out of proportion to the results achieved. He did not reflect in any manner upon the political head of the department, but upon the practical head. The gentleman in charge of that department was not sufficiently well up in the requirements of the districts suffering now—which had suffered, and which would continue to suffer so long as the present rule of things was carried out. Other countries had been successful in getting a water supply. In South Australia water had been struck at a depth of 1,220 feet, proving that there was an abundant supply if people only knew where to find it. That water was found at 1,100 feet below the level of the sea, and it made 126,000 miles of country available, being of the same formation. Private enterprise had done a great deal more in that direction than had been done by the dispensing of public money under that vote. On Vindex Station, in the western part of Queensland, water had been struck at 154 feet, and it was immediately made available by a pump being placed there; in that way water was got for 8,000 sheep. The only success the Government had obtained was at Bradley's Creek, where water was struck; but no means were taken to bring it to the surface. If any station-owner had found it he would have put a pump there at once, and that would have enabled travellers along the road to get the water. The losses that had been suffered through the drought ought to teach the country a lesson. If they did not, then it deserved to suffer in the future. It was not

as if the thing was unalterable. It was a well-known fact that a sufficient control could be had over the supply of water to render droughts far less detrimental to the best interests of the country. The question was, who was to do it? Private individuals had quite enough to do to find water for themselves; but it was necessary that the main roads should be kept open. Every class in the community suffered by them being closed. The commercial class could not get their supplies; the storekeepers suffered; the carriers suffered most of all on account of the losses of cattle; and station-owners suffered by the high price of carriage and through not being able to get their sheep and cattle travelled. If roads had dams at forty-mile stages, that was not the way to keep them open. He had had a look at the dam at Sardine Creek, and he should like to know what it cost; whether it had ever held water, and how long it would hold water when filled? The dam appeared to have cost a large sum of money. Things were different now to what they were when the Colonial Secretary took a trip out west; and it would be a good thing if he could take a trip out there now. He (Mr. Palmer) was quite certain matters would never be rectified until some Treasurer—some drought-stricken Colonial Treasurer had his tongue hanging out of his mouth for want of a drink of water, or saw his cattle and sheep perishing for want of water. He would then see the necessity of a sufficient supply of water on the main roads. He (Mr. Palmer) could not say that that was a niggardly vote at all; but he thought it was time a change was made in the mode of expending it. He believed if they followed the example of Victoria, and appointed water trusts, or even allowed the divisional boards to spend the money under some State supervision, a far better return would be obtained. He was quite certain that there were lots of station managers who, if they had had that amount of money to expend, instead of wasting it in what was called "the Government stroke," would have made the interior flow with water. There was no doubt that in the whole interior of Queensland there was an abundant supply of water fit for every purpose. The rainfall was greater than in other countries where there were larger populations; and there was no doubt that more water flowed under the surface than flowed over it. That was proved by water being struck at 1,250 feet in South Australia. Months were taken up in striking that supply, but when they got to it, it rose 20 feet above the surface, and had been so ever since. He knew one station in the West where the owner had spent in dams £24,700, besides £3,700 in sinking wells, and there was now more or less water in them. The United States Congress voted a sum of money for sinking artesian wells. The boring was let by contract to put down two bores 120 miles apart, and to sink to a depth of 2,500 feet, unless they found water sooner. At the Vindex Station, as he had already mentioned, water had been found. He had a letter from Mr. Edkins, manager of Mount Cornish Station, in which he said they put down a bore, and on getting down to 200 feet they got a supply equal to 12,000 gallons a day. That proved that water was obtainable, and it only required sufficient knowledge, and no turning back when the bore was down 200 feet or 300 feet, to get it. He was quite certain that if the expense of that vote was properly controlled it would result in great advantage to the whole colony. That was a question of fact. If it was worth while to bring out a traffic manager for their railways, it was quite as well worth while to bring out a superintendent to take charge of the

water supply department. The cost of obtaining water by boring was not high. He believed that in California the cost of boring 600 feet was £204; that included casing and everything else. He believed the Colonial Treasurer understood the importance of the question; but what was the use? He would get up directly, and in the blindest manner would say that he fully recognised all that, and would take care that no such drought should ever happen again while he was in office. What was the use of that? The roads were not open, and the station managers had to find water somehow. The roads were the very means of making the railways pay; but instead of so many thousands being spent in keeping them open and bringing traffic to make the railways pay, very little was being done; and there was not now one-half as much brought as in ordinary seasons. In ordinary seasons the western interior was not half so impassable. At present dams and wells were made; but nothing was done to make the water found available. He was quite certain that by far the best plan would be to put the money into the hands of water trusts or divisional boards and allow them to spend it. Meetings had been held at Muttaborra and Winton on the subject, and the resolutions had been sent to him to show that the people there were in great extremity. When Cobb's coach could not travel on the roads, they might be very well sure that things could not well be worse. He supposed the greatest extremity the Colonial Treasurer was ever put to was to have his water supply cut off at 10 o'clock in the morning and turned on again at 5 o'clock in the evening. That was about all his experience of a drought; he could not have the faintest idea of the state of things that existed all over the western part of Queensland at the present time. He was sure the hon. Minister for Lands could bear him out in all he said with regard to the importance of the question. One of the resolutions passed at a large meeting, held at Muttaborra, was as follows:—

"That, in the opinion of this meeting, large tanks are a necessity at convenient distances on the main stock routes; and that it would be advantageous to bore for water at intermediate stages, so that the roads may be open for horse, team, and coach traffic, even in a season when such roads may be closed for travelling stock; thereby taking all possible precaution to prevent the recurrence of the enormous losses of stock that have taken place this season."

Several resolutions bearing upon the same question, and showing the great straits those people had been put to in having to cart water three, four, and five miles, for the greater part of the year, were also passed; and he would like an assurance from the Colonial Treasurer that he would put a little more energy into that department. It was energy they wanted. The water was there, and the Government would save money. He saw a valuable plant on the road to Pine Hill, but the season had prevented its being taken out. It was no use the Government putting men on, and pottering away themselves. They ought to let the work by contract, which was the only manner in which it could be carried out; and he trusted that the Colonial Treasurer would see to the carrying out of the purposes intended by the vote in such a way that the districts of Queensland would benefit by it. The amount of money that had been wasted up to the present time was enormous.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was, if the hon. gentleman would believe him, quite impressed with the importance of the subject. He did not think the money had all been wasted in connection with the vote heretofore. It had certainly not produced the results that they wished to have seen at once. Hon. members would understand that water conservation in this colony was to be carried out under

peculiar conditions. Mr. Henderson had not only been called upon to endeavour to provide for the storage of water in their western interior, on the main roads, but he had been continually called upon to find a supply of water for towns in the settled districts; and he had received a large amount of information from all those parts of the colony which considered they had a claim. He must admit that Mr. Henderson had changed his opinion as to the best means of furnishing a water supply for the interior. When he first came to the colony he was a strong advocate for tanks or dams; but he now thought that boring was far better. If it were successful, there was at once a permanent water supply, whereas by forming dams they had to wait for a season, and there was a great loss by evaporation and by cattle using them. In short, Mr. Henderson had, to a great extent, altered his opinion as to the best mode of obtaining a water supply upon their main roads. A great portion of the money voted for water supply had been spent on the survey of some of the main roads. The whole of the money had not been expended upon the water supply; and there had also been services in connection with the opening up of interior country, and other expenses, which had to a great extent absorbed the funds which had been voted for the storage of water on main roads. He was now in hopes that, as a considerable amount of information had been obtained by the department, some practical outcome would speedily result. The Engineer was in favour of boring, and they were now importing some of Bright and Edwards' Australian water-augers, which, he trusted, would enable the department to proceed more vigorously than they had done in the past, with prospecting for water, and with more satisfactory results. The hon. member must bear in mind that they had had a most adverse season to contend with during the past nine months, and it had been quite impossible to proceed with water conservation in the West, in consequence of the want of forage and the almost impossibility of obtaining labour; and many works had had to be abandoned until the rainfall came. Therefore, they ought not to be discouraged by what had been done in the past. He admitted it would have been more gratifying to the colony to see satisfactory results accruing from that water expenditure; but it must be a matter of slow growth when there had been so many requisitions from different parts of the colony as they had had, with a view of affording preliminary information. He was sorry he could not, that evening, bring before the Committee a statement which he had prepared, showing the cost of sinking and other expenses in connection with the vote in the western districts. He could assure hon. members that the cost of sinking in Queensland was considerably less than the cost of sinking in South Australia or New South Wales. He had no doubt that if they had a change of season, and work could be resumed in the West, before twelve months were over a very considerable addition would be apparent in the conservation of water. As he had said, the department had gained a great deal more information, and were introducing machinery which they thought would be more effective; and they were also prepared to receive tenders from any of those private prospectors who chose to offer their services to the Government in the way of sinking. Hon. gentlemen would be aware that, owing to the scarcity of labour in the West, sinking shafts had been an expensive operation. The hon. member for Burke referred to the shafts in California, 600 feet deep, costing something like £200. In the western districts of Queensland the most favourable tenders had been about 55s. per foot for depths

within 200 feet. Therefore the hon. gentleman would see at once the great disparity in cost between sinking operations in this colony and those to which he referred in California. However, he thought he was only doing justice to Mr. Henderson in saying that he had of late devoted himself directly to the question of obtaining a supply of water, by boring, in the West; and he had not the slightest hesitation in saying that, within the next twelve months, there would be a satisfactory result shown in connection with that department.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. member for Burke had asked the Colonial Treasurer to put a little energy into the Hydraulic Engineer's Department; but, though there was a good deal of energy in the Government, it would take a great deal more to energise the man at the head of that department, who, he believed, was not fit for the position he held. No matter how inefficient heads of departments were, Ministers seemed to have no power over them. They were told that a change had come over Mr. Henderson, and there was some hope for a man who changed his mind when he was wrong; but when a man went on for years doing no good with the money voted and placed at his disposal, the sooner he was out of the department the better. For the heads of departments he would have men who were thoroughly qualified for their positions, and he would pay them well. In Queensland, Ministers had been greatly to blame for keeping in their departments men who were not qualified for the positions they held, and he believed the officer in question was one of them. If Mr. Henderson did not do better with £16,000 this year than with £5,000 last year it would be high time next year for the Committee to take some action.

Mr. SMYTH said the hon. member for Ipswich was not justified in his attack on Mr. Henderson, who was one of the most skilful men in the colony, and had carried out some of the largest waterworks in Victoria. The South Australian Government had even asked the Government of Queensland to allow Mr. Henderson to proceed to that colony in order that they might get the benefit of his professional services. He had watched Mr. Henderson's career, and read his reports, especially that on Bradley's Creek, and he had formed a very high opinion of that gentleman's abilities. His equal was not to be found in Queensland, and probably not in any of the other colonies.

Mr. PALMER said he did not find fault with Mr. Henderson as an engineer, but as a man who was not able to grapple with the wants of the interior in regard to water supply. He had not been convinced by the arguments of the Colonial Treasurer as to the difficulty of boring. Why was it that in America they could bore wells in every conceivable part of the country—1,200 feet, 1,500 feet, and even 2,000 feet deep—and that the same could not be done in Queensland? The interior of California was similar to that of Queensland, the only difference being that in Queensland there was a higher average rainfall; yet the interior of California teemed with wealth, was full of farms, deriving all the benefits of irrigation, and was fit to carry a large population. No doubt the interior of Queensland would be in a similar state if properly provided with water. The difficulties of boring were described by Mr. Henderson in a letter to the Under Secretary for Mines. In that letter, referring to a report made by Mr. Ford, the overseer, he said:—

“Mr. Ford describes some of the many difficulties that are met with in such work. Great difficulties have to be overcome in all instances where the work is inland in remote, dry country; and nothing short of stubborn

determination and energy will outlive and carry operations of such a nature to a successful issue. I find the actual work of boring is comparatively easy and inexpensive, but the difficulty of getting gear, tools, and food and water conveyed to site of operations taxes everything very considerably; in short, the difficulty of transit and the time that is lost thereby stand about six times the cost of actual work.”

There was the whole secret. And if there was such difficulty of transit in connection with boring operations, what must carriers, station-owners, and the travelling public go through in districts affected by drought? It appeared that the Hydraulic Engineer was always reporting on water supply of coast towns; but on the coast the rainfall averaged over 100 inches, and there was not the same necessity for conservation as in the interior. There was a beautiful running river close to Cooktown, and most of the coast towns were situated in finely watered districts. The Hydraulic Engineer could not be engaged in the coast towns and in the interior at the same time, and it seemed that most of the money had been expended in towns where the rainfall was sufficient to supply the wants of the people, while the interior was neglected.

Mr. ARCHER said that as the gentleman referred to acted under him for some time, it was only right that he should give his opinion. What had fallen from the hon. member for Burke in regard to California was only what he had read; if the hon. member had been there he had not used his eyes or he would not say the country was similar to Queensland. It was true that there was a higher average rainfall in Queensland, but the plains of California were backed by the Sierra Nevada, which was covered in many places with snow 50 feet and 60 feet deep, and in some of the gullies 100 feet deep, and there was not a better supply of water in the world than was to be found there. When people bored wells on the large plains there, the great difficulty was to prevent the ground being washed away when the water came to the surface. Water was often struck there at a depth of 30 feet, and he only wished the same thing could be done in Queensland, for then a very difficult problem in regard to the interior would soon be solved. With regard to Mr. Henderson, he could only say that he was a perfectly loyal man to his work, and that he would do whatever the department wished him to do. Perhaps no one had done more under unfavourable circumstances than Mr. Henderson. When he (Mr. Archer) went into the Treasury, he took advantage of the money which his predecessor (Sir T. McIlwraith) put on the Estimates for water supply. He instructed Mr. Henderson to organise a party to go out with engines and sink some tanks. They applied to the Department of Works for a person who could be depended upon as overseer. They bought horses and everything necessary, and sent out the party with two sets of plant. They found that the man who had been recommended by the Works Department completely broke down. He was fined at the Aramac Police Court for using beastly language to his men; the party had to be broken up; the horses were lost, and the drought then came on, which made it impossible for the Hydraulic Engineer to conduct his work. It was not as if he had to sink for water where a small supply could be got, but he had to go with horses and engines that required a large quantity of water to places where probably there was no water within twenty or thirty miles. Neither he nor any man living could possibly have worked the machinery without water; men could not live there. This was now the third year the drought had lasted, and it was impossible for him to perform the work he

might have done in six months under favourable circumstances. He proved by the work done at Roma that the excavating machinery would work when they had water to work it with. It was later on that he began boring, and he had great difficulty in getting the machinery to work. The seasons which had destroyed so many millions of sheep and cattle had prevented him from doing what he would have done had there been any possibility of doing it. The Treasurer would find Mr. Henderson a perfectly loyal man in the execution of his duty. One great thing he (Mr. Archer) admired about him was that when he differed from the head of the department he gave his reasons for differing; but he would loyally and well carry out the work he was directed to do. That was a great deal to say of any man; for as a rule people in that position were very unwilling to carry out anything but what they themselves approved of. The hon. member for Burke had not sufficiently taken into consideration the difficulties under which the water-supply operations had been carried out, and the difficulties which would continue to retard them unless the season should change, and they got something like normal seasons again.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the hon. member for Ipswich must have got his information regarding the Hydraulic Engineer from a very impure source. They ought to be more careful in condemning men whom they did not thoroughly know, or who had to labour under great difficulties. The Engineer of that department had been required to supply water in districts where the stations had actually had to be abandoned, and where there was no water for the horses and engines. The difficulty of getting good men was everywhere felt, and even Victoria was as badly off as she could be. The *Bendigo Advertiser* of the 19th November had a leading article on the subject, in connection with a deputation from Geelong that waited on Mr. Service, the Premier of Victoria, complaining of the water supply. Mr. Service said in reply to the deputation:—

"The chief difficulty was to get engineering skill. If a man could be got to put all things to rights, he might be paid £10,000 a year, and the Government would save money. The Government would see what could be done, but he should not set about the work with as much hopefulness as he would if the Government had a thoroughly capable man at their disposal. It has disgusted Ministers who had devoted personal attention to this particular work, that it had turned out one of the grossest bungles that had been experienced."

The *Courier* of Ballarat had also a leader on it, and that paper said that there were only two gentlemen fit to grapple with the difficult question. One was Mr. Bagge, in the employ of the New South Wales Government, and the other was Mr. Henderson. The *Courier* said, after having referred to Mr. Bagge—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Never mind what the *Courier* says; no one believes it.

Mr. ISAMBERT: It is the *Ballarat Courier*—

"And a second man can be found in Australia who would, doubtless, be tempted by such an offer to take service under our Government. The gentleman to whom we allude is Mr. J. B. Henderson, who is at present in the employment of the Government of Queensland."

"Of Mr. Henderson's abilities as a hydraulic engineer, sufficient proof will be found in the last section of the Coliban works, by which the water is led into Castle-maine and Sandhurst, through the Mount Alexander Ranges. It will be well remembered by many that this work was at one time considered impossible of accomplishment, and was regarded with such feelings of despair that it was very generally thought the money expended upon it was being utterly thrown away. To the inexpressible delight and the incalculable benefit of the people of Sandhurst, the water from Malmsbury was at length successfully led into their streets under the able supervision of Mr. Henderson. And what was his

reward? To his consternation he found himself one morning suddenly and unexpectedly thrown out of employment—dismissed from the service summarily, without a day's warning and without compensation, a victim of Black Wednesday."

Now, if after several years' absence from Victoria an engineer was remembered by his works, they should be careful how they disparaged him; and they should also consider under what insuperable difficulties he had been labouring since he had been employed here. He was confident that Mr. Henderson, if he got seasons in which he could move about, would give satisfaction; in fact, he had often said that it was as much as he could do to cross those waterless plains. How much more difficult it was to cross those waterless plains with horses and engines he need not say.

Mr. BLACK said he had been waiting for some time to take up the parable. If a House were made he would go on.

Quorum formed.

Mr. BLACK said it was extraordinary the extreme lack of interest that had been shown in one of the most important subjects which had come on for debate that session—providing a more adequate supply of water, the want of which had led to the most disastrous results to the colony. Hon. gentlemen had entered on a vindication of the Hydraulic Engineer, instead of inquiring from the Treasurer what he intended to do with the huge amount of money put down in the Estimates. He (Mr. Black) was quite prepared to admit that Mr. Henderson, the Engineer, was as good a man as could be got for the colony; but instead of discussing the Estimates they had been discussing Mr. Henderson. There was no man in the Committee who meant, he believed, to disparage the qualifications of the Engineer. But he wished to point out that from £5,000 asked for last year for waterworks and water supply there was a sudden jump to £16,000 this year, and they had no information from the Colonial Treasurer how that very large sum was going to be applied. He had told them that he intended to bore for water, and that he meant to get some new machinery. That was one of the items of information they had got; but he (Mr. Black) did not think that justified the great increase. There was a sum down for foreman, labourers, and horse-drivers, £7,800; but they had no information about where those labourers were to be employed with the boring apparatus, what they were going to do, where they were now, or where was the working plant, or what he had to show for the £100,000 that had been spent on water supply in the colony. Very little could be shown for it, he (Mr. Black) was sorry to say; and he maintained that what the Government should do was not to get boring apparatus and scoops, but to send over to America, and not only get proper apparatus but the proper men to work it. That was one of the most essential features, and that was where the difficulty had occurred with the boring apparatus hitherto in the colony. It was impossible to get skilled labour here to work the apparatus, and the only thing was to send to America and get men who had made it a lifelong study, and who had worked the apparatus over there in the most satisfactory manner. Otherwise, he was sorry to admit, he could see very little hope of any very successful result from the very large increase in the vote. He thought he should be fully justified in moving the reduction of the vote by £5,000 or £6,000, unless the Colonial Treasurer could give the Committee some information as to how the money was to be spent. He did not know if hon.

members had noticed that the increase in the vote was from £5,000 to £16,000, and that they had had very meagre information indeed in regard to it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he thought the hon. member for Mackay must have had his attention directed to some other subject when he was moving the vote, otherwise he would have heard that the increase was more apparent than real. The same amount of money had been spent last year, but it had not been voted. The wages of the foreman, labourers, chairmen, and all those things had been paid as they were put down on the scale now proposed, but the money had not been voted. There was no increase in the department except in making provision in connection with the steam-scoops which unfortunately were at present lying idle. They had simply made provision for labour at the same rate as last year. If the hon. gentleman would turn to the report laid upon the table, he would see that last year for plant, machinery, and various public works they had spent £20,000, a large portion of which was for tanks and dams. Last year these respective services had been charged with wages at the same rate as was now proposed, and they had been submitted in the Estimates in the present form for greater convenience. He quite admitted the value of some of the American machinery which had been submitted to the department for trial, and the Government had taken into consideration the desirability of getting one of those machines. They were also making inquiries as to the possibility of getting a party of American prospectors to work the machines—at any rate of securing the services of one or two competent men. They had requested communications to be opened up in connection with the matter. But it could not be done all at once, though the first steps had been taken to get American borers as well as plant. He trusted that some greater results would be felt in the next twelve months than were now perceptible. At the same time that must depend, and the expenditure of the vote would depend, on the seasons. Unless they were visited by normal seasons, when the men could work, the money would not be expended, and comparatively little progress would be made by the department. The engineer was resolved, as soon as the weather admitted, to push on vigorously with the boring so that some satisfactory results might be obtained.

Mr. ANNEAR said that the hon. member for Mackay seemed to take exception to the action of those hon. gentlemen who had stood up in defence of Mr. Henderson. He had thought that no member of the Committee would have attacked any Civil servant on a point which another person had told him of. He had never attacked a man unless the matter he wished to speak upon had come under his own personal observation. He would not be discharging his duty if he did not say what he knew of Mr. Henderson, and he thought it was a manly thing for the member for Rosewood and the Colonial Treasurer to speak of Mr. Henderson as they had done, after the way he had been attacked by the member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane; for no man could have been more severe upon another than that hon. member had been upon Mr. Henderson. That gentleman had carried out certain works for the municipality of Maryborough in a most efficient manner, and he believed that officer was a thoroughly competent engineer. The hon. member for Burke had remarked that Mr. Henderson was chiefly employed in the coastal towns. Well, if he had been employed in the coastal towns those places which received the benefit of his services paid for them. It seemed to him (Mr. Annear) that the gentlemen who

occupied the western country did not help themselves as they ought to do; they looked to the country to do everything for them. They ought to do as the people living in municipalities did—spend some of their own money and try and find water for themselves. Hon. members must be aware that a very influential deputation of representatives from several municipalities waited on the Colonial Treasurer the other day with a view of getting their water-works loans reduced, but they were rebuffed by the hon. gentleman. Not one penny was taken off. Such being the case, he maintained that the squatters in the western districts should not rely on the Government doing everything for them. They should put forth some efforts of their own and try to raise water for themselves. While he had the honour to have a seat in that House, whenever he knew any man to be wrongly attacked he would rise up to defend him. It seemed to him that some members of Parliament had a “down” on Civil servants. He had had a lot to do with Civil servants in Queensland, and he believed that 99 per cent. of them were well qualified for the offices they held, and that they well earned the small salary they received. He hoped that neither he nor anyone belonging to him would ever require to enter the Civil Service, because it was an unenviable position for anyone to occupy.

Mr. PALMER said he was quite certain that the hon. member who had just addressed the Committee knew very little indeed of what he was speaking about. He had never before displayed his ignorance in the manner he had done just now. To say that the squatters ought to lay out their own money a little better than they did showed that he knew very little about the matter. They had none to lay out. They had, however, shown an example to the department which might be very well followed. The member for Maryborough could not have had much experience in the western country, and from the way he extolled the Hydraulic Engineer, he (Mr. Palmer) had come to the conclusion that the hon. member did not understand the working of the Hydraulic Department. If Mr. Henderson was the competent man he was said to be, why could he not do what had been done thousands and thousands of times in the United States? From a pamphlet on artesian wells, he (Mr. Palmer) found that—

“In the United States, amongst a great number in various parts of the country, the well at St. Louis is bored to a depth of 3,843 feet, giving a pressure of 1,293 lbs. to the square inch.”

Why did not Mr. Henderson bore to a depth of 3,843 feet in Queensland?

“At Louisville, 2,086 feet.”

If they went down to that depth in this colony they would get streams of water.

“At the sugar factory, St. Louis, 2,200 feet. In Colorado ‘flowing’ (artesian) wells have been made for irrigating purposes, running a minimum flow of 1,000 gallons an hour, which is found sufficient to irrigate a square mile ‘section’ of 610 acres. Wells to a great depth have also been bored in England and Scotland for water, and in Germany for finding rock-salt. The most interesting results have, however, been attained by the French engineers in the Desert of Sahara. Seventy-five shafts have been bored, yielding 600,000 gallons an hour; new villages have been built there, and 150,000 palm trees planted in more than 1,000 new gardens. Surely science need be proud of this achievement, when it is related that in the year 1802 one of the most appalling cases on record of suffering from thirst occurred to a caravan, which was destroyed in travelling from Timbuctoo to Talhat, when 2,000 human beings, with 1,800 camels, lost their lives.”

He was quite certain that those circumstances were known to the Hydraulic Engineer. Mr. Henderson had spent a lot of money, but what was the result? They had scarcely a dam that

would hold water. It had been proved in other countries that the system of well-boring could be made self-supporting. He wished those gentlemen who represented the western districts were present; but they were out saving their flocks, and he supposed they had lost their life-earnings by the drought. He spoke now for those people who were out west, and doing their very best to earn a living. It was because they were out there that the towns along the coast were so prosperous. If those people did not remain in the interior the towns would be at a great disadvantage and would not be so prosperous.

Mr. ANNEAR said he might be ignorant, but he would not go to the member for Burke as his schoolmaster when he wanted to be taught anything about the colony. When he (Mr. Annear) spoke just now, he stated that the money spent by Mr. Henderson in the coastal towns of the colony, and the expense of the visits made by him to those towns, had been charged to the places interested. The towns paid for the work done for them. The hon. gentleman had referred to America. Well, he might not be so bright as the member for Burke, but he knew something about America, and he knew that there was no comparison between this colony and California, as far as water was concerned. If they went to California they would find a windmill on almost every ten-acre block. The people put down a bore and soon struck fresh water, but that was not the case in Queensland.

Mr. PALMER: Yes.

Mr. ANNEAR: If that was so, then the reports he had read were not true. According to the accounts he had seen they first struck salt water in this colony in most places, and then had to go a great depth before they got fresh water; and sometimes they did not get fresh water at all. To compare this colony to America, in respect to water, was like comparing darkness to noonday. He knew that squatters had difficulties to contend against. So had everyone else, and he did not see why a tax should be levied on the whole colony for a work from which only a few persons would derive a benefit. The municipality of Maryborough, of which he had the honour to be one of the representatives, owed £44,000 for their water supply, and they had to pay the interest on that money, and did so religiously, as the Colonial Treasurer could testify. He was sure he echoed the wish of every member of that Committee, when he said he hoped the time might soon arrive when the calamities to which the hon. member for Burke had referred would be no more.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he hoped the hon. member for Burke did not mean the Committee to understand that he wanted the Government to provide a water supply for the squatters?

Mr. PALMER: No.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he thought some members on that side of the Committee understood his speech to mean that—namely, that he was speaking on behalf of the squatters in regard to the vote. Hon. members were really led to infer that that expenditure was to be incurred on behalf of the squatters. He had had a good deal to do with squatters during his no small experience in the colony; and during the time of the last general election he met many of them in the Mitchell and the adjoining district. But there was not one squatter in the whole of that enormous territory who expected the Government to spend one shilling on their runs to enable them to supply water for their stock. They were all prepared to undertake the expenditure themselves, provided

they got a fair tenure for the squattages they held. He had met several squatters who strongly advocated surface storage. He had gone thoroughly into the matter, believing that the question of the conservation of water was of more importance to the colony than even railway extension; and he was of a different opinion. He felt sure the Colonial Treasurer, also, when he made the proper inquiries into it, would come to the conclusion that any expenditure incurred on water supply must be to obtain the supply from underground, and in no other way, for the permanent benefit of the colony. When squatters had in his presence advocated surface storage, and he had pressed them closely by argument, they generally gave as their final reason that by an expenditure of £1,000 on this dam, and £2,000 on that, and £5,000 or £6,000 on another, persons coming to select in the country would be struck with the enormous expenditure requisite before it could be profitably occupied, and would be deterred from entering it. There were not many men of that opinion, but if that opinion was industriously circulated it would no doubt have a deterrent effect on the advance of settlement in that very excellent pastoral territory. He understood the position of the Government with regard to water supply in the provinces to be, that they intended to establish a supply of water at convenient distances on the main lines of traffic, to enable teamsters and others to carry on their business; and he trusted that if any hon. members imagined the Government were going to furnish a supply of water on private property they would be disabused of the idea. He wished to call attention to what he considered the over-expenditure in the clerical branch of the department. The sum of £16,000 was a very small turnover for twelve months to require a clerical staff costing £728. Not long ago the Hydraulic Engineer had no clerk at all; whereas now he had an accountant, a junior clerk, and a clerk in the Western district, the whole receiving salaries amounting to £728. Private establishments, which turned over ten times the amount every year, and in very much smaller items, were not in the habit of employing such an expensive clerical staff. As it was the desire of the Government, according to the Minister for Works, to manage every department in the most economical manner possible, he trusted the Colonial Treasurer would look to those items, and, if possible, omit one or more of them, or else prevent the increases from being granted.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was almost inclined to think that when the vote was again submitted it would show a still further increase in the clerical branch. The office of accountant was absolutely necessary, by request of the Auditor-General, who desired that the various items of expenditure incurred over the length and breadth of the colony should be properly classified, and the books kept in a form which would enable him to maintain a more effectual audit. The clerk was getting overwhelmed with correspondence; indeed, the correspondence of the department, especially during the present severe season, had been something enormous—as large almost as that of any other department of the Government—and it seemed more than probable that additional clerical assistance would have to be obtained. The draftsmen had been rendered necessary by the applications from municipalities to which he had referred, and for whose services the municipalities paid. The sum of £16,000 was not necessarily the whole turnover of the department; it simply represented the salaries and wages paid. Last year £40,000 was spent in machinery and the construction of dams; and no doubt the machinery to be

purchased during the present year would run into £10,000, especially if they sent to America for improved appliances. When they considered the extent of the colony, and its requirements, the cost of the staff could not be called extravagant. Water storage would be provided on main roads, but not on private pastoral properties, although, no doubt, the storage on main roads would enhance the value of those private properties. But at the same time there was no improvement made by the department upon any actually private property. It was all made on the main roads, to encourage and maintain travelling stock from the railway termini to the western districts.

Mr. SMYTH said the hon. member for Burke and the hon. member for Mackay were labouring under a false impression about water-boring as it was carried on in California and in Australia. There could be no comparison between the two countries in that respect. Water-boring in America was done by means of the diamond drill chiefly; but it required the employment of a great number of men and horses, and a large expenditure to carry out the works which were being constructed in this colony.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he had been taken to task by the hon. member for Rosewood, and the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear; and he wished now to say that he was speaking not without book. He had said that he had heard a great deal, but he knew a great deal as well. He did not say a word against Mr. Henderson as a man: he might be one of the best men in the colony for all he knew, and very likely he was. He was speaking about him as a professional man, and a hydraulic engineer, and he said again and distinctly, that he was not the man for the position. He might be a good hydraulic engineer, but they judged by results; and he said again that if those hon. gentlemen who had addressed the Committee that night had obtained the same results from the employment of any person as the Government had obtained from the employment of Mr. Henderson, then that person would not be in their employment for three months. That was what he meant—the results obtained from the money which had been expended, were almost *nil*. During the last year there had been a great cry all over the colony for want of water. Some towns were actually starving for want of it, and if they had not had rain by this time the people would have had to remove to some other place where there was water. He wanted those hon. gentlemen who were maintaining the great superiority of the Hydraulic Engineer to point him out some results that had accrued from the employment of that gentleman. Let them look at the Roma dam. What sort of work was it?

Mr. SMYTH: Very good and substantial.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he maintained it was very bad work. There was a big hole in the dam at the present time which had let all the water out; and when the dam was finished, the very first time a storm occurred it had destroyed the dam. That was a fact, and was indisputable.

Mr. LALOR: It is not a fact.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. gentleman contradicted him, and he should like to see him on his feet. He said again that any man who did his work well deserved to be supported by the State; but that was not the case with the Hydraulic Engineer; and if they found there were no results accruing from the expenditure of large sums of money, it was time that they looked about them for someone else to do the work.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said, in justice to Mr. Henderson he must say that he received a letter from the mayor of Roma, expressing the most thorough satisfaction with work done in that town; he highly complimented the Hydraulic Engineer, expressing the fullest satisfaction with the Roma dam; so that he (the Colonial Treasurer) could hardly understand how the hon. member for Ipswich could say the dam was a failure, when the local authorities were quite satisfied with its construction. He thought he might refer the hon. gentleman to the report which had been laid on the table of the House—the last report of the Hydraulic Engineer—where there was a list of the works which had been carried out by that gentleman. There was the Roma dam, and a dam at Winton, the survey of the Charters Towers water supply, the Winton dams and tanks—they were satisfactory as far as they had gone—the Kensington Downs works, and the Einasleigh Creek borings, which were admitted to be satisfactory by the hon. member for Burke. There were several other works which he had no doubt hon. gentlemen would have in their minds. Altogether there was a list of twenty-five dams which had been constructed last year under the Hydraulic Engineer.

Mr. ARCHER: They will not fill until the rain comes.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said no; but the Winton dam had been filled by a couple of thunderstorms, and seemed to be satisfactory. Hon. gentlemen must bear in mind that until there was a change in the seasons no works that were in course of construction or which had been constructed would be found to be satisfactory.

Mr. MACFARLANE said hon. gentlemen should know that the dam at Roma was made at the charge of the country. The municipality of Roma did not pay for the making of that dam. That accounted for the mayor of Roma being well satisfied with the work.

Mr. ARCHER said he had ordered the Roma dam to be made, and at the expense of the country; and he did so for this reason: that the Government imported machinery of enormous value, and before sending it out west it was determined to have it tried in a place somewhere near Brisbane, so that if it broke down it would be easily repaired. The reason why the dam was not filled was that after it had been half made, and the machinery had been proved to do its work admirably, he refused to do some other work for the Roma people. He made a mistake in not having that dam finished at once, and it would have been filled the first time had it had a fair chance; but he was in a hurry to get the machinery and men away out west, and as so much time had been wasted at Roma he refused. His hon. colleague, the late Premier, probably with far better judgment than he (Mr. Archer) displayed, said that the dam was to be finished at once, and he finished it when he (Mr. Archer) was away. Since then there had been no rain to fill the dam. Surely the hon. member for Ipswich did not expect the Hydraulic Engineer to make rain as well as dams! If there were any faults to be found with the construction of the Roma dam, at the expense of the country, he was to blame.

Mr. LALOR said the hon. member for Ipswich said there had been sufficient rain to fill the Roma dam, but that was not the case. There had not been sufficient rain to half fill it. With regard to what the hon. gentleman said about the dam being a failure, he (Mr. Lalor) could only say it was a first-class dam, and one which Mr. Henderson could afford to be proud of. There was a mistake made in the connecting

pipe between the old and new dams, and when heavy rain came the pipe was not ready to receive it. The consequence was that the surplus water ran away. It had been said that it was Mr. Henderson's fault, but he could not have expected that the rain would come so suddenly. There was a good supply of water in the Roma dam now. He would like to ask the Colonial Treasurer if it was the intention of the Government to deepen the old dam at Roma?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was inclined to think that the Roma Municipality, having been provided with a new dam, might very well bear the expense entailed in deepening the old one.

Mr. LALOR said that he saw last week, when he was at Roma, seven or eight men working at the old dam with wheelbarrows—quite behind the times. Only fancy men working with wheelbarrows cleaning out a dam! Why, the poor selectors in the Roma district would not think of such a thing; they would employ tip-drays, or use scoops and working bullocks, and work in a more systematic manner than that. The men he referred to were working for the Railway Department, who got their water from the old dam.

Mr. PALMER said he wished to correct an impression that seemed to be afloat—that he was pleading the case of the squatters. He was pleading the case of the carriers, and those who had to travel on the roads, and of the people living in the inland towns, and who subsisted through the carriers. If there was one more independent class in the community than another it was the settlers in the West. On the road from Muttaborra inland, the supply of water on the road had to be obtained from the stations, or dams erected on the stations, and miles off the road. He hoped the Colonial Treasurer saw the necessity for putting a little more energy into that department. That was what they wanted. There was plenty of money and material, and the water was there if they only had it on the surface. With the same set of circumstances he thought another set of men would have the water on the surface. The Government seemed to have an aversion to leaving anything to local contract. They seemed to fight shy of local government altogether. In Victoria they saw the principle fully carried out, and local water trusts established. He commended the subject to the serious attention of the Colonial Treasurer; because the same thing would happen next year unless a different system was adopted.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

CROWN LANDS BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning this Bill, with certain amendments, to which they asked the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton), the message was ordered to be taken into consideration in committee on Thursday.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS AGRICULTURAL DRAINAGE BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council stating that the Council had agreed to this Bill without amendment.

MARYBOROUGH AND URANGAN RAILWAY BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, returning this Bill with certain amendments, to which they asked the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the message was ordered to be taken into consideration on Friday next.

JURY BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, intimating that the Council did not insist upon their amendment in clause 3 of this Bill to which the Legislative Assembly did not agree.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—In moving the adjournment of the House, I may state that I have ascertained that it will be convenient for a great many members of the House to meet to-morrow evening after dinner. We do not propose to ask the House to proceed with any business upon which there is likely to be any long discussion or dispute. There are some motions of my hon. colleague the Minister for Works for the approval of some lines of railway, which I believe will not meet with much objection. There are also some votes on the Estimates which we believed might have been finished to-night; and the Supplementary Estimates for last year. If we can get through this work it will leave the ground very clear for the remainder of the work of the session. I may say at once that we propose to proceed with the amendments of the Legislative Council in the Land Bill, on Thursday. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn till 7 o'clock to-morrow.

Mr. ARCHER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very sorry that this has cropped up just now. The hon. gentleman will remember that, in asking for an additional sitting day this week, he mentioned that it would not make any difference this week on account of the holiday on Wednesday. I know that the leader of the Opposition and several prominent members on this side of the House have made arrangements for to-morrow under the impression that we would not be asked to sit to-morrow. I have no arrangements made for to-morrow myself, and if it is determined to sit I will feel it my duty to come; but I think that if the hon. gentleman himself and some of his chief supporters were sitting on this side, and were given to understand that the House would not meet on Wednesday, they would feel it rather hard at the last moment to be asked to come. I know the leader of the Opposition will not be here to-morrow, and I think the Government ought to take those reasons into consideration.

The PREMIER said: I was under the impression that every hon. member was aware that it was the intention to sit to-morrow evening. I understood that every hon. member was informed so, and that they almost all expressed their willingness to sit. I was also informed that the leader of the Opposition had been told, so that I do not think there is anything in the nature of a surprise in the motion. I may say that the sitting to-morrow may make a very considerable difference in the length of the session. Considering that but for the unexpected discussion that has taken place during the last half-hour these Estimates would have been disposed of this evening, and that some hon. members have gone away as if they took no interest in the business, I do not think any great objection can be made to sitting to-morrow. For the matter of that we might have sat till 12 o'clock to-night, and disposed of them. I am sure that hon. members who have shown so little interest in the business as to go away cannot complain

if the business is taken to-morrow instead of to-night. If there is any particular business that any hon. member desires to speak on, there is no reason why it should not be postponed ; but, considering the present state of business, and the fact that there is a very strong desire on the part of every hon. member that the session should be closed as soon as possible, I think there is nothing unusual in asking the House to sit to-morrow for the purpose of doing business which might have been taken to-night. I anticipated there would be no objection to such a course. It is quite true that I said last week that we did not propose to sit to-morrow evening unless it was the general wish of the House. I do not propose to bring forward any business that can by any possibility be a surprise. Nothing can be fairer than that.

Mr. ARCHER : I am quite certain that all the members on this side of the House were not asked to sit to-morrow. I only heard it about half-an-hour ago. The leader of the Opposition complained that, owing to certain circumstances, he was up late last night, and therefore was tired ; and it was then that we first heard of the proposal to sit to-morrow. The leader of the Opposition then said that he could not sit to-morrow, because he had already made other arrangements, as he never thought the House would be asked to sit.

Mr. STEVENS : I have no intention of opposing the motion ; but I just wish to say that three or four hon. members are absent to-night, and will not be here to-morrow on account of what fell from the Premier last week. Apart from that, I cannot see why the House should not sit later to-night. There is no necessity for adjourning so early. We could easily sit till 12 o'clock. There is a good deal of work to do ; and some hon. members, who are very sanguine, are hoping that we shall get through the business of the session before Christmas ; but unless we sit later than we have been doing, I see very little chance of it.

Mr. ARCHER : Of course if the hon. member presses his motion he will carry it ; but he will find that what I say is true. I only heard of the proposal half-an-hour ago, when the leader of the Opposition went away. Neither he nor I had been informed of it before.

The PREMIER : With the permission of the House I will say that it was under the impression that there was a general wish on the part of both sides of the House to sit to-morrow, that the Chairman was moved out of the chair a quarter of an hour ago : otherwise we might have gone on sitting. Although the Minister for Works postponed his motions till to-morrow, still, under the circumstances, we will only take the remainder of the Estimates and the Supplementary Estimates to-morrow.

Mr. BLACK : I do not see why we cannot go on. I am quite ready to do three or four hours' work more. If hon. members are so very anxious to get on with the business, I am quite as anxious as they. I see no reason why Mr. Fraser should not take the chair again, and let us go on with the business. That would obviate the necessity of sitting to-morrow.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : Mr. Speaker,—I think the arrangement made by the hon. the Premier will commend itself to the approval of the House. Hon. members on this side have expressed a desire not to proceed with further business this evening, and if we meet to-morrow we will only resume the work that we have left unfinished to-night. I do not see what objection there can be to that.

Question put and passed, and the House adjourned at two minutes past 11, until 7 o'clock to-morrow.