

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 29 OCTOBER 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 29 October, 1885.

Wages on the Northern, Central, and Southern and Western Railways.—Cooktown Railway Extension.—Conveyance of Stock by Rail.—Formal Motion.—Supply—resumption of committee.—Message from the Legislative Council.

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

WAGES ON THE NORTHERN, CENTRAL,
AND SOUTHERN AND WESTERN
RAILWAYS.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) said : Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Ferguson), yesterday, asked what wages were paid to the engine-drivers, firemen, etc., on the Northern, Central, and Southern and Western Railways. I have now a return showing the wages paid to the men on each of those lines, and will read it for the information of the House. Engine-drivers on the Northern Railway are paid 9s. to 13s. per day ; on the Central Railway, 9s. to 12s. 4d. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway 8s. to 12s. per day. Firemen on the Northern Railway

receive 9s. to 10s. per day ; on the Central Railway, 6s. 9d. to 9s. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 6s. 9d. to 8s. 3d. per day. Fitters on the Northern Railway are paid 12s. to 12s. 4d. per day ; on the Central Railway, 8s. to 12s. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 7s. 4d. to 12s. per day. Carpenters.—On the Northern Railway, 12s. to 13s. 4d. per day ; on the Central Railway, 12s. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 6s. 6d. to 10s. 8d. per day. Blacksmiths.—On the Northern Railway, 12s. to 13s. 4d. per day ; on the Central Railway, 9s. to 13s. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 8s. to 12s. per day. Strikers.—On the Northern Railway, 8s. 8d. per day ; on the Central Railway, 7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 6s. to 8s. per day. Labourers.—On the Northern Railway, 8s. per day ; on the Central Railway, 7s. to 8s. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 6s. 6d. to 7s. per day. Maintenance men.—On the Northern Railway, 8s. per day ; on the Central Railway, 7s. to 7s. 6d. per day ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 6s. 6d. to 7s. per day. Porters.—On the Northern Railway, 42s. to 53s. per week ; on the Central Railway, 42s. to 45s. per week ; and on the Southern and Western Railway, 33s. to 42s. per week. Hon. members will, therefore, see that the men on the Northern and Central Railways receive a little more than those employed on the Southern and Western Railways.

COOKTOWN RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said : Mr. Speaker,—I will take this opportunity to state, for the information of hon. members, that I have caused a telegram to be sent to the Engineer for the Northern and Central Railways, requesting him to furnish full information in reference to the route of the line surveyed from Cooktown to Maytown, the plans of which have been approved by this House ; and I hope to be able to inform hon. members of the result to-morrow.

CONVEYANCE OF STOCK BY RAIL.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said : Mr. Speaker,—I have made inquiries of the Traffic Manager in reference to the matter which was brought before this House last night by the hon. member for Warrego in connection with the conveyance of stock on the Southern and Western Railway. I find that the trains have been running at a very inconvenient time for the purpose of bringing down stock to the Brisbane market, and if any hon. member had a grievance and had brought the matter before me I should have rectified it at once. I find that the stock sent to the Brisbane market from up the line are trucked on Tuesday night, and then carried as far as Toowoomba, where they remain till the following morning, and they get down here about midday on Wednesday. I have given instructions to the Traffic Manager that all stock coming to Brisbane shall be trucked on Wednesday, and that the train shall travel through the whole night, and reach here about 6 o'clock in the morning. Of course that will increase the cost, but it is out of all reason to keep stock in trucks from Tuesday until noon on Wednesday, and I think the Railway Department should give every facility in their power and enable people to get their stock to market.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to :—

By the PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith)—

That the House, at its rising to-morrow, do adjourn till Monday, the 2nd proximo, at 3 p.m., and that Government business do take precedence on that day.

SUPPLY—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson), the House resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, further to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Question—That there be granted the sum of £12,827 for salaries, Chief Office, Postmaster-General's Department—put.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said there were no separate estimates given for post offices and telegraph offices, and hon. gentlemen were left to find out for themselves what belonged to each. Had the Premier any statement showing what was the distinct expenditure on each department, allotting a fair proportion for general salaries? His reason for asking the question was that he thought they ought to understand fairly well where the loss was accruing. There was an enormous loss in the Postmaster-General's Department, and they ought to know whether that loss was accruing in the Post Office or the Telegraph Office, or in what proportion it was, so that they might arrive at a better understanding upon the several propositions that had been brought before them.

The PREMIER said no statement had been made out for the financial year. It had been the practice in the annual report to give the proportion of the expenses, so far as possible, for the year—the calendar year. As they of course knew, a great many of the officers performed work for both departments, so that a division could not be made with perfect accuracy. The estimate for last year was to be found on page 70 of the report, and it gave the expenditure on account of the Post Office as £184,000, while that on account of the Telegraph Office was £85,000. The only doubt was in connection with salaries. The salaries down for the Post Office were estimated at £32,000, and those for the Telegraph Office at £39,000. It would appear that the Telegraph Office nearly paid its own way. Of course there was some difference between the financial year and the calendar year. From that it would be quite apparent that the loss was in the Post Office and not in the Telegraph Office.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : From what does the hon. gentleman conclude that the Telegraph Office nearly pays its own way?

The PREMIER said the receipts from the Telegraph Office during the financial year 1884-5 amounted to £75,395, and for the previous year about the same. The expenditure during the calendar year 1884 amounted to £85,000. Therefore it nearly paid its own way.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked if the Postmaster-General had made up an account showing what proportion of the amount he asked for, £319,000, was due to the Telegraph Office, and what to the Post Office? Without going back several years and making the calculations referred to by the Premier, there would be no means of arriving at it. Would it be a safe basis to take the same proportion of expenditure for the two offices that was given in the report for the year 1884?

The PREMIER said that was near enough for practical purposes. The only important increase was in the cost of the carriage of mails, £12,000, which was attributable entirely to the postal branch. In respect to salaries, they were in the same proportion as before ; there were very small increases.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that what he wished to know was—had the Postmaster-General furnished the Premier with any information as to how much of that expenditure was due

o the Post Office and how much to the Telegraph Office? In the absence of that information it would be a fair thing for the hon. gentleman to inform them if the estimated proportion of expenditure was similar this year to what it was last year. They should have had that information. He believed it had always been furnished; and he did not see any reason why it should not be given now.

The PREMIER said the information had never been furnished on previous occasions. If it had been it would be given now. The total amount spent for salaries in 1884 was £91,000, and the total amount asked for salaries for the present financial year was £105,000. That might be divided between the two departments, as last year—£82,000 for one, and £59,000 for the other—one-third and two-thirds. He had no details.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH asked if the Premier could give a fair estimate, or anything like an approximate estimate, of the proportion of that £319,000, which was required for the Post Office, and what for the Telegraph Office?

The PREMIER said he had informed the hon. gentleman that they must take roughly the same basis as before. About one-third of the amount for salaries—the first two items on the estimate, £12,000 and £93,000—might be attributed to the Post Office, and of the amount for contingencies, the greater proportion was attributable to the Electric Telegraph Department. It was not practicable to give any more detailed information.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said the Government ought to furnish the information what each department cost. The Telegraph Department was usually looked upon as one of those expensive non-paying institutions with regard to which they had to exercise the most stringent economy. Certainly, if economy had been exercised in any department it was the Telegraph Department, but he thought if they made an analysis it would be found that the great loss was in the Post Office and not in the Telegraph Department. Could not the Premier tell them approximately how much per cent. went to each department?

The PREMIER said he could only repeat that roughly about 33 or 34 per cent. of the salaries was required for the Postal branch and the balance for the Telegraph branch. It had not been the practice to separate the items in the Estimates; the separation was always made when giving the accounts of expenditure for each year.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH asked what information the Government had received with regard to the efforts made by the Australian colonies to enter the Postal Union, in addition to what they had in the Postmaster-General's report.

The PREMIER said he had very little further information. The Postal Congress met in Lisbon in February, and a request was made by the representatives of this and the other colonies that they might be admitted to the Union and have one voice each. At the present time Great Britain had one vote for herself and only one for the colonies, including British India, although the burden on Great Britain and France—the countries which had to maintain communication with distant colonies—was very much greater than on the countries whose letters chiefly passed through Europe. Canada also had one vote, but the Congress refused to give more than one vote to the other colonies collectively—all the Australian colonies, New Zealand, and the African colonies. The formal report of the Congress had not

yet been received. Since the close of the Congress, it had been suggested that the Agents-General of the Colonies should meet the gentleman who was the representative of New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia at the Congress; but that meeting, so far as he (the Premier) could discover, had not yet been held. On the 22nd June, a letter was sent from the Colonial Office to the Agent-General, informing him that the Postmaster-General proposed that the Agents-General of the Australian Colonies should meet Mr. Buxton Forman, who represented New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia at the Congress at Berlin.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: Berlin? That refers to the parcels post.

The PREMIER said the word "Berlin" must have been written for "Lisbon" in the Agent-General's office by a mistake of the copying clerk—Lisbon was referred to in the enclosure. It was certainly meant for Lisbon. It was considered by the Colonial Office that the most favourable time for the colonies to enter into the Union would be between now and the 1st of February. A committee was appointed by the Union to consider the claims made by the colonies for admission to the Union, and for a voice in the management of its affairs. The demands they made were—(1) that the rates of payment for sea-transit, and the surtaxes fixed by the Convention of Paris, should not be reduced, at all events until after the next Quinquennial Congress, to that of Lisbon; and (2) that each colony should have a separate voice in the affairs of the Postal Union. He might explain that at present the uniform rate for letters between countries in the Postal Union was 25 centimes—2½d.—but each member of the Union, which had to convey letters by sea, might impose a surtax of a similar amount, so that the maximum rate chargeable was 5d. A proposal was made by Germany to reduce the maximum amount of surtax, so that the total would be less than 5d. That was strongly objected to by England; and the colonies desiring to enter the Union made the two conditions, that the rates of sea-transit and the surtaxes should not be reduced, and that each colony should have a separate voice in the management of the Union. The first condition was not opposed much, and was ultimately agreed to; but the second condition met with very strenuous opposition, indeed. The committee consisted of representatives of Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, the United States, and Russia, and two other countries. The result was that by a majority of six to one the request of the Australian colonies was refused; and they would only agree to the admission of the colonies on the condition that they should have only one vote. Finally a protocol was signed at Lisbon, by which the 1st February was fixed as the last day upon which the colonies would have the option of coming into the Union. Nevertheless, the Postmaster-General was of opinion that the colonies would be allowed to join the Union later, on the same terms. The Postmaster-General expressed the opinion, however, that no time would be more favourable for the colonies to enter the Union than the interval between the present time and the 1st February. The opinion expressed was—

"That any time during the interval between the present date and the 1st of February next will be a highly favourable time for the adherence of the colonies in question to the Union, seeing that the very considerable difficulties which stood in the way of a separate vote being accorded to them have for the present been surmounted, and that up to that date the adherence can certainly be effected without any further discussion whatever; whereas after that date it is possible that

upon technical grounds the application might have to be submitted afresh to the various administrators of the Postal Union, and new obstacles might arise."

That being pointed out, a conference of those interested was suggested by Lord Derby, and Mr. Garrick was to have advised him of what took place at that meeting; but so far he had received no report of what took place. Mr. Garrick had informed him, however, that Victoria and South Australia would not enter the Union on those conditions. That was how the matter stood at present. The reasons for not entering the Union before had been pointed out very fully in the Postmaster-General's report for 1882.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said that was a subject in which this colony and all the Australian colonies were particularly interested, and a subject upon which the Continental nations of Europe were trying to get the advantage of the Australian colonies. He had taken very considerable interest in the Postmaster-General's reports for the last two years in following the negotiations upon the subject. He did not understand exactly the information the Premier had given. The great bulk of it was contained in the Postmaster-General's report, which had been laid on the table of the House a month ago. He would refer to page 3 of the report, and it would be seen that in the middle of the page there was a telegram from the Agent-General to the Government here, telling the result of the Conference held at Lisbon. The telegram was as follows:—

"Admission Australia referred committee leading Powers Acceptance our terms unlikely."

That telegram was dated 5th February, and on the 6th the following telegram was sent:—

"Committee refused vote each colony Resolved one vote Australia and status quo surtax."

The report then went on to say:—

"On the 30th May, 1885, a letter was received from the Agent-General, dated London, 23rd April, intimating that he had had an interview with Mr. Blackwood, the Secretary of the Imperial Post Office, and Mr. Forman, who represented New South Wales and South Australia, and they informed him that a translation of the proceedings, together with additions to the Convention of Paris, was being prepared, and would be forwarded to him in a few days. Upon receipt, copies would be forwarded, together with the report of the Agent-General and Mr. Hemmant."

That was business done months ago—initiated in February and concluded in May—and he had been anxiously awaiting a copy of those proceedings up to the present time. They had not the slightest information as to what Messrs. Garrick and Hemmant did at the Lisbon Conference. It was a matter of considerable importance to them, and they were anxious to know that their interests would not be sacrificed. Attempts were being made now to get them into the Postal Union, and many liberal articles had appeared throughout the colony advising it; but, as far as he could understand the Union, their interests were so different from those of Queensland that he thought it would not be a proper thing for them to go into the Union. For instance, he would give a list, approximately, of the various countries constituting the Union. He had not got a list of the Postal Union, but he had a list of the Union for parcels post, and that would give chiefly the same nations. The Union was composed of Germany, Austria, Denmark, Egypt, Great Britain, British India, Montenegro, Norway, Belgium, Persia, Sweden, France, Italy, Portugal, and Luxembourg. Those were approximately the nations in the Union. The Committee did not require to know the whole of them, but Luxembourg was one. For practical purposes it was a very fine postal union for Europe, and had done an immense amount of good. The voting power would be

seen to be most unequal, when Persia, Turkey, and Luxembourg—the appurtenance of another country—were placed alongside Great Britain. It was ridiculous that there should be a Parliament to control and supervise the postal arrangements of the world, each having an equal vote. Practically, it had resulted in good, because the little states were consulted by giving them an interest in the Postal Union. It worked very well until the Union commenced to deal with territory outside of themselves altogether. Three of those countries put forward a proposition which was submitted to the Congress held in Lisbon in February of last year, that the charge for the ocean carriage of letters should be very materially reduced. Of course that was a very liberal proposition for that Parliament, seeing that the countries interested paid for the whole of the ocean carriage, and it became a matter of importance for the colonies to ask to be admitted to the Union. They asked to be admitted to the Union when their interests were so thoroughly at stake. The proposition of Germany was, in a few words, to reduce the ocean postage to 2d. Seeing that Germany did not pay for the ocean postage, the proposition was a very liberal one on her part. Those who paid for carrying the letters, and who should have been consulted, were the people of Queensland, the other Australian colonies, and Great Britain. Amongst the whole lot only one vote was offered to the Australian colonies, and Luxembourg, Germany, and Turkey had one each also. The consequence was that it was absurd for the Australian colonies to think of joining a union of that kind. Each of the Australian colonies should have a vote, and then they could enter the Union on fair terms. But the strange thing was that up to the present time the Government had received no official information whatever as to the results of the Conference. From other sources it was known that the surtax was to remain as it was, and that the Australian colonies were only to get one vote instead of seven. Under terms of that kind, the colonies could not possibly enter. But all that was done in February, and he wanted to know what had been done since. What had Mr. Garrick and Mr. Buxton Forman been doing since? The colonies had been at the expense of sending men to represent them at the Conference—not as members, for they were not allowed to be present, but as watchers, and to give information; but no information had been received from them at all. They had only so far given promises of information. The proceedings took place in February, and although it was now the end of October nothing had been received from those gentlemen.

The PREMIER said he could not remember receiving any report from Mr. Garrick on the subject, and he certainly had no such report. Reports of the kind were invariably sent to the Post Office, and no such report was there. But, after all, it was well known what did take place at the Congress, and that the delegates would not agree to allow the colonies to enter on the terms required.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said the Conference took place in February, 1885, and all they knew about it was contained in a short cablegram of twelve words. The Agent-General had promised information; but what did he know about the matter? Why should the colony pay men to go to the Lisbon Conference if they were not to send out information?

The PREMIER said the only later communication he could find on the subject was the letter from Mr. Garrick in June, in which he sent a copy of a letter from Mr. Wingfield, of the Colonial Office, to the Agent-General, informing

him that the Postmaster-General proposed that the Agents-General for the Australian colonies should meet Mr. Buxton Forman for the purpose of considering the question of the entry of the Australian colonies into the Universal Postal Union, and inquiring whether Mr. Garrick would be prepared to attend such a conference. Those documents were received three or four months since, and he (the Premier) had received no further information.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said it was a most extraordinary state of things that delegates who had been sent to the International Postal Conference, which took place in February last, should not have sent their reports in yet. Promises of information had been given, but were still not fulfilled. He did not feel satisfied to leave an important question of that kind in the hands of Mr. Forman or Mr. Garrick. It was a matter of considerable interest, and no doubt other questions would arise in connection with the subject. The people of the Continent sought to place the whole of the expense of the ocean mail service on the colonies themselves, and the colonies ought now to be protecting their own interests. The proposal that the ocean rate should be reduced to 2½d.—made as it was, too, before the colonies by whom it was paid were allowed to enter and vote—was the most ridiculous and absurd proposal ever placed before a postal parliament. It was against propositions of that kind that the Australian colonies had to guard themselves. He had seen much in the newspapers about the great advantages to be gained by entering the Postal Union. So much had been written in favour of that step that one would think the colonies were to receive an international fortune all at once. Instead of that, however, it appeared that the colonies were expected to pay the whole of the ocean service between Australia and the Continent—that the Continental countries wished to adopt a cheap ocean postal service at the expense of the colonies.

THE PREMIER said he, too, was impressed for a long time by the articles in the newspapers; but after reading the official correspondence, and seeing the conditions under which the colonies were invited to join, he saw that the advantages to be derived were after all not so great.

MR. SCOTT said that a good many years ago Queensland went to a considerable expense in carrying a telegraph line to Normanton. The avowed purpose then was that that line should join on to a sea cable, but no such cable had yet been laid. It would be interesting to know whether the Government had any idea that the line to Normanton would yet be used for the purpose it was primarily constructed for, or if there was any chance of a cable starting from Normanton and going to Batavia, or even joining on at Port Darwin, so as to obviate the risk of delay that so frequently occurred on the South Australian line.

THE PREMIER said there was no immediate proposal before the Government to lay a cable from Normanton. Shortly after the Sydney Convention communications were made to him on behalf of the Government, by a gentleman who was pretty well known, with respect to laying a cable from that place, but, as soon as he asked for more details as to his authority, the negotiations came to an end, and had not since been definitely renewed. The question of duplication had been lately discussed, but the Government had always maintained that the present so-called duplication was really no duplication at all, and had refused to contribute to the subsidy now paid. A proposition was made the other day that a line should be laid from the overland line across to the Gulf and thence to

Normanton. To that the Government had no objection, but the other colonies wanted Queensland not only to contribute to the cost of the line, but to contribute to the present subsidy, and the company were in return to send telegrams over the Queensland lines whenever they thought fit. The Government declined to bear any share in the expense of that line to connect with the overland line, and to contribute any share towards the subsidy paid to the telegraph company.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said he was very glad to hear that the Government had come to that determination. He looked upon the telegraph system between Great Britain and the Australian colonies and India as one of the most gigantic and abominable monopolies ever established in the world. The price per word charged for cablegrams to the colony—10s. 10d.—was simply absurd, and it had been demonstrated by business men that, outside of that monopoly, a tariff of 2s. 6d. per word would yield a handsome profit. It might seem a very simple matter to establish a rival company to lay down another cable and work it at that tariff, and it had entered the heads of several men to do so; but wherever they turned they were met by that Eastern Telegraph Company, which had its ramifications and its monopolies in every sea between the two countries, which prevented any other company from laying down a line for many years to come. The Mediterranean Sea was about its own property; and as to the Red Sea, the Khedive of Egypt, whom he did not think of so much account as a Queensland member of Parliament, had actually given that company a monopoly of it, and nobody else could lay another cable there. The Khedive of Egypt stood in the way, and said to the Australian colonies, "If you want to send a message you must send it through this monopolist company in London." It was perfectly astounding to him that the world, and especially Australia, should have put up with that monopoly so long—why they should be content to go on paying 10s. 10d. a word for their cablegrams when they ought to be only paying 2s. 6d.! Surely the bottom of the sea ought to be considered as a kind of highway for telegraph lines! Why, in the name of common sense, should they be prevented from making another line by the Khedive of Egypt? He would not advise that they should enter into negotiations with that potentate in order to get a remedy, but a remedy could very easily be found if the colonies would only unite to oppose John Pender's big company in London. That gigantic monopoly had sole control of the telegraphs all over the East, all over British India, over part of Africa, and over all the Australian colonies; and they were actually pleading to John Pender to give them a concession of 2s. per word from 10s. 10d., when they ought to be getting their messages for 2s. 6d. a word. If the colonies would only unite no power on earth could prevent them from getting their remedy. If they were a nation that thing would be easy; but as it was, they had to go on paying 10s. 10d. a word to John Pender. That should form one of the subjects to be discussed at the first meeting of the Federal Council, and if determined and united action was taken there would be very little trouble about it.

THE PREMIER said he believed there was a route open by way of Singapore.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: John Pender would get at you, even there.

THE PREMIER said he had communicated with some of the Ministers of the other colonies on the subject, although not very fully, but it was impossible to get them to join with Queensland in any way. They were bound up with the Eastern Telegraph Company. If Queensland

went alone into the business, the colony would have to contribute from £30,000 to £40,000 a year—those were the best terms which could at present be got. He did not think they could afford to do that themselves just now, although he believed that before long they should be able to do it. They could not induce the other colonies to contribute at the present time because they were bound up with subsidies to the other company, and would not join them in subsidising another route. South Australia could not. That colony had a very burdensome undertaking on hand in the overland telegraph line, and Queensland could not expect any help from it. The other colonies of Victoria, New South Wales, and New Zealand were interested, with Queensland, in establishing a separate line if they could only be induced to join in the undertaking. He had not had an opportunity of seeing any of the present Ministers of New Zealand. They could not hope for any help from New South Wales.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: On general principles?

THE PREMIER: Yes; on general principles; but he did hope before long to be able to do something with the other colonies.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not wish to interfere in the discussion between the Premier and the leader of the Opposition on the Postal Union question, but he thought there was a serious question involved in the statement made by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer as well as in the report of the Postmaster-General. It would be a matter of importance and of congratulation if the colonies could join the Postal Union on the terms they themselves proposed, but it seemed to him that it would be utterly impossible to induce the Postal Union to allow the colonies to come in on those terms. Great Britain at the present time had only one vote in the Union, he believed India had another, and Canada another.

THE PREMIER said Great Britain had one; India and all the colonies except Australia, another; and Canada another.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Then the question arose—if the colonies were admitted to the Union, would India have a vote to itself? If it had, of course that would give the English portion of the world four votes. If the colonies were admitted individually, and each had a vote, and India a vote, they would then have ten votes out of thirty-three; but it was scarcely likely that the present Postal Union would allow that, because the Governments represented in the Union, outside Great Britain and Canada, had a predominance, and it was not very likely that they would allow the colonies to be admitted with a vote each, as that would give England and her colonies practical control of the Union. He did not think it would be advisable for the Australian colonies to go into the Union with only one vote, seeing that Great Britain and her colonies were the chief ocean carriers of mails. All the other countries put together, with the exception of the United States, probably did not carry one-tenth of the mails that England and her colonies did. He would offer this suggestion to the Premier for his consideration—whether it would not be advisable to initiate or suggest to the Home Government the establishment of a postal union with Great Britain, the United States, and her colonies alone. Great Britain had a population of about 35,000,000; Australia and Canada, about 8,000,000; that was 43,000,000. The United States at the present time had 60,000,000, and was increasing rapidly. That would make, in round numbers, about 100,000,000. India had a population of 250,000,000. So that a postal union including a population of

350,000,000 would, he thought, be a very respectable union indeed; and if they could possibly get admitted into a union of that kind it would be of far more benefit than being admitted into the present Union upon any terms they were likely to be admitted on. He simply made the suggestion to the hon. the Premier, who might bring it before the Federal Council on some future occasion. He believed the Federal Council was now almost an established fact, and a suggestion of that kind, emanating from them, would carry great weight with the English authorities, and perhaps induce them to take it up. He had no doubt that the rest of the colonies—Canada and India—would take it up, and he believed there would be very little difficulty in getting the United States to join also. The States were friendly enough and had enough feeling for their own blood, he believed, to prefer being in a union of that kind to being in any union which did not include all the great ocean mail-carrying countries of the world. Out of Great Britain there were no countries that paid so much for ocean mails as Australia. In fact, he might almost say that Great Britain and her colonies together carried nearly all the ocean mails of the world. France carried a very small portion compared with England and the colonies; and if they omitted France from the account there were very few more ocean mails carried; because Germany carried none, neither did any of the countries enumerated by the hon. member for Mulgrave. Some of them had no ocean border. Therefore he thought it would be far more to their advantage—he did not mean the advantage of Queensland merely, but of the whole English-speaking race in the world, and other countries connected with them, such as India, Malacca, Singapore, and the islands they had in different parts of the world—to establish such a union; and if the hon. the Premier would take the suggestion into consideration it might possibly bear fruit. There seemed to be no chance whatever of the colonies entering the Postal Union upon such terms as would be of any benefit to them. He believed it would be an absurdity—an act of folly on the part of the colonies—to enter the Union upon the terms of having only one vote for the whole of Australia. The result would be that they would be carrying ocean mails for the benefit of the rest of the world, at their own expense. What he had said was merely a suggestion, and he hoped the hon. gentleman would take it in that light. Another question raised by the hon. member for Mulgrave was, why the accounts of the Post and Telegraph Departments could not be kept separate, the same as the accounts in the Works Office. There were three departments—Works, Mines, and Railways—and each rendered separate accounts to that House. Why could not the Postmaster-General get separate sets of accounts for the Postal Department and the Telegraph Department, just the same as the Minister for Works did in reference to the departments under him? He saw no difficulty in the matter. The only objection that could possibly be raised was that some officers were common to both departments; still, that was not a very grave objection. The information required by the Committee could be furnished in such a way that every member could understand it, by keeping the two departments separate, and putting them on the Estimates the same as the Works and Mines and Railways were furnished separately.

THE PREMIER said, with respect to the suggestion the hon. gentleman made concerning an English-speaking postal union, it would be a very good thing if it were practicable; but, of course, Great Britain could not enter a union of that

kind without withdrawing from the other. The United States were already in the Union; so was India, and so were the colonies of Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, Labuan, Hongkong, Mauritius, British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad. It included, in fact, all the British colonies, with the exception of Australia and New Zealand and the African colonies.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Has each of them a separate vote?

The PREMIER said they had three votes between all the British Dominions. He was sure the other colonies would endeavour to come to some satisfactory agreement upon the matter. He did not despair of being able to enter into a postal union with them. After the very decided negative that the Congress gave at Lisbon to the proposal that the colonies should have one vote each, he thought the matter was at an end. No proposition appeared to have been made that they should go in and be allowed two or three votes, which, he thought, might have been a fair share in proportion to their importance and the quantity of the mails carried for them. The alternative put forward was, one vote for the whole, or one vote each. With respect to the keeping of separate accounts, he was not sufficiently familiar with the department, to know whether it was practicable. A very great number of officers did work for both departments, and some did not. That, no doubt, was the reason why the Estimates were first framed in that way, and they had been kept so ever since. No doubt a great many of the items could be kept separate.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said in any remark he made about the accounts he did not blame the present system by which both departments were amalgamated under one head, because he believed in it. All he wanted was to get the actual amounts of money spent by each, allowing a proper amount for the general expenditure of each, so that they might estimate the separate losses in each department. With regard to the subject of the Postal Union and the Conference which took place in February, hon. gentlemen would understand why their curiosity should be excited about it. He could not understand the decision come to by the Union in February, considering what was done previously by them. When a proposition was made for the admission of other countries into the Union, or for some concession that was demanded by some one of the countries, a meeting was first called by the Swiss Government, and then the Swiss Government called the Congress at Lisbon for the purpose of considering the question of the admission of the Australian colonies into the Union, each having one vote and the right to sea-rates and surtaxes. The matter was relegated to the Union, and the Swiss Government invited all the different members of the Union to express their opinion upon the two points submitted, the first being a separate vote for each of the Australian colonies, and the other being the maintenance of the existing sea-rates and surtaxes. The result was that, out of twenty-three administrations which had expressed their opinions on the subject, no fewer than fifteen had given an unqualified assent.

The PREMIER: That only related to Cape Colony.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that the hon. gentleman was quite right—he ought to have said that; but he was referring to it more as an example of how they might expect to be treated. Out of twenty-three administrations, fifteen gave their assent—

“On the other hand, Germany, France, and Luxembourg were willing to concede to that colony the condition of maintaining the existing sea rates and surtaxes

until after the next Congress to that of Lisbon, but not to allow her a vote and representation in the affairs of the Union; while Denmark, Italy, Holland, and Portugal were ready to concede the vote, but not the maintenance of the sea rates and surtaxes. Belgium alone objected to both conditions.”

Seeing that that was the result with regard to the Cape, he did not think the representations of their Agent-General and Mr. Hemmant would have much effect. They had actually a majority willing to concede the right to the Cape—a small colony not larger than one of the colonies in Australia. The result of the negotiations was that they would only allow one vote to the whole of the Australian colonies put together. He was very sorry, as, of course, many advantages would have resulted if they had joined the Union upon equitable terms and made their own stipulations. With regard to the suggestion of a union between Great Britain and her colonies, he did not see how that could be brought about, considering the Post Office in England cleared a profit of about 7 per cent. or 8 per cent. upon the money that passed through it, while in Queensland the loss was 218 per cent. From a calculation he had made, the position of their Post Office was, that they spent £218 for every £100 they received, and the position of Great Britain was that she received 7 per cent. or 8 per cent. profit from the Postal Department there. Therefore, she was not likely to enter into a partnership of that sort without grave stipulations, which would make it useless on their part. It was necessary that some steps should be taken with regard to a postal union with the other colonies, considering the rights that had been asserted by Victoria and New South Wales in the direction of fixing the rates of postage for newspapers and parcels in other colonies and in the colony of Queensland. That was practically what they had done. He would read an extract from the report of the Under Secretary for the Post Office:—

“As an instance of the necessity for legislation, it may be mentioned that, during the year, attention was drawn to the great difference existing between the rates charged upon periodicals and packets of newspapers, in New South Wales and Victoria, as compared with those in force in Queensland, and the disadvantages under which news-vendors here laboured in consequence.

“It was pointed out that while in New South Wales bulk parcels containing newspapers over seven days old, or printed out of the colony, and posted by registered newspaper publishers or by news-vendors for transmission within the colony or to the other colonies or New Zealand, were charged at the rate of 1d. per pound or fraction thereof, and in Victoria arrangements had been made for all monthly and quarterly periodicals to be posted from that colony throughout Australia as newspapers, as well as for monthly parts or weeklies, such as the ‘Chambers’ Journal,’ etc., to be passed through the local post-offices as newspapers and bear only the unit of postage—newspapers in Queensland were, if published in the colony and posted after seven days from the date of publication, charged 1d. each, and newspapers from other colonies (*i.e.*, foreign newspapers) re-posted were subjected to a charge of 1d. for each number, pamphlets, magazines, reviews, and periodical publications other than newspapers, being charged for at packet rate—*viz.*, 1d. for every 2 oz. or fraction thereof, and 1d. for every additional 2 oz. or fraction thereof.”

That meant that whilst their own booksellers and themselves had to pay 1d. each on newspapers over seven days old if they were posted in the colony, the same papers could be sent from Melbourne and distributed in Queensland at the rate of 1d. a pound. The same principle held good with regard to parcels. Victoria claimed the right to fix the amount at which a parcel should be conveyed by the Queensland Government. They did not consult with Queensland whether the rate charged on a parcel from Melbourne to Normanton—conveyed through Queensland—should be, say, 1s.; they said “It shall be 1s.,” and they fixed the proportion they would give to

Queensland; whereas the same parcel, if it started from Brisbane, would be charged somewhere about 3s. Of course Victoria had no right to do that, and he supposed it was only tolerated because the department did not desire to clash with the other colonies. He would like to know whether the amount was surcharged to Victoria and New South Wales—if a packet of newspapers was posted in Melbourne for Toowoomba at 1d. a pound, did the post-office before delivering the parcel make a charge according to our own law—that was to say, at the rate of 1d. for each newspaper over seven days old?

The PREMIER said some of the correspondence on the subject was set out on pages 10 and 11 of the report. The hon. member would see that at the conclusion of the correspondence the colony of Victoria was informed that—

"In consideration of the fact that the postal charges could not be reduced or in any way altered in this colony without legislation, it was deemed necessary that unless Victoria consented to assimilate her rates, so far as papers posted to this colony were concerned, to those in force here, until an opportunity occurred for legislation in this direction, packets of papers arriving with the new Victorian rate of postage affixed should be surcharged, as a means of protecting the interests of Queensland news agents from the undue advantage the Victorian tradesmen would obtain were this department to permit papers to arrive and be delivered at the rate of 1d. per pound, while they would be charged a rate of 1d. per paper for despatch if re-posted."

He had no doubt the matter would be arranged. He had not been able to devote any attention to it himself during the present year.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he hoped that if an arrangement were come to it would not be a haphazard stroke like that made some years ago, when a reciprocal agreement was made to carry papers of all kinds perfectly free. At the present time, as he had pointed out, for every £100 received they spent £218, exclusive of interest on invested capital. He hoped that when arrangements were made with the other colonies it would be borne in mind that this colony had what the others had not—a free circulation of newspapers—and that we could not afford to entrench any further on the Post Office revenue. It was ridiculous that a department of that kind, of so great importance, should be managed at a loss of 118 per cent. without reckoning interest. He hoped that when the matter was brought under the notice of the other colonies it would not be simply for the purpose of conceding what he considered an extremely low rate for newspapers and parcels. They should not adopt any system by which the trade was taken out of their hands and worked at their expense in favour of monopolists in the other colonies.

Mr. PALMER said he would like the Colonial Secretary to make some reference to what had been stated by the hon. member for Leichhardt with regard to telegraphic connection with Kimberley or Thursday Island. They knew that a line was being extended to Cape York, and there was to be communication by wire there. The telegraph was placed at Kimberley for the express purpose of communication by ocean wire, and now they were having a line carried to Thursday Island. Which of those two places was the line likely to be extended to—or was it to go to both?

The PREMIER said he could hardly answer that question at present, but he believed that Kimberley would be the most convenient point of departure, because the waters of the Gulf were much more suitable for laying the cable than the waters at Cape York. The distance, of course, had also to be taken into consideration.

Mr. NORTON said there was one matter he had some delicacy in referring to, as the Postmaster-General had not a seat in that House. He had to complain of the unreasonable time that was taken in deciding any question submitted to the Postmaster-General. He had not a word to say against the Under Secretary or the officers of the department, because, so far as he had any communication with them, he had always been attended to at once. Some time ago a requisition was sent down by the people of Gladstone, through him, to have the lighthouse at the pilot station at Gatcombe Head put into communication with Gladstone. He put the matter before the Postmaster-General early in June, before the Premier and other members of the Government went to Townsville and Charters Towers. He discussed the matter then with the Postmaster-General, who was a little unwilling to approve of the work, but the result of the interview was that that hon. gentleman promised to bring the matter up at the next meeting of the Cabinet, and to recommend that the work should be carried out. The objection raised at the time was that he had no telegraph cables, and that as the line would have to be carried across the harbour or between the two islands it could not be finished until the extra telegraph cable arrived. He pointed out to the hon. gentleman that it was quite unnecessary to wait until the extra cable arrived, because the land line, which was a separate job, could be completed, and that by that time if the cable had arrived it could be laid down. It was a simple matter that might have been settled at once. The first communication he received was that it would have to be delayed until the Premier's return from the North. He went north before the Premier had returned, and was away for some time. He saw the Under Secretary several times, and he was told the matter had not been settled, and it was not until he wrote the other day that he got an answer on the question. He took it for granted the matter would have been put before the Cabinet within a reasonable time, because it was not fair to those interested that it should be postponed. Fifteen weeks elapsed from the time he interviewed the Postmaster-General to the time he wrote, and he still got no answer. His letter brought an answer at last, and it was that the work could not be undertaken now. That answer might as well have been given at first. One thing he could not help observing on going into the office—that whereas before the present Postmaster-General took office the Under Secretary's table was pretty clear of papers, since then there was always a great pile of papers upon the Under Secretary's table, suggesting that the work did not get on so fast under the present Postmaster-General. He must say that in all the other departments and in the Postmaster-General's Department, until now, he had never had the slightest delay in getting any work settled at once.

The PREMIER said he could not give the hon. gentleman much information on the matter. The question of telegraphic communication between Gladstone and Gatcombe Head was before the Cabinet and settled some time ago.

Mr. NORTON: It is not settled yet.

The PREMIER said he knew that the matter had not been before the Cabinet lately. The delay was not due to any want of action on the part of the Government in dealing with the matter.

Mr. NORTON said that if it was settled it must have been settled lately. He believed the Postmaster-General delayed in bringing the

matter before the Cabinet, although he gave him a distinct promise to bring it before the Cabinet and recommend it.

Mr. FOXTON said he believed the repeating-station between this colony and New South Wales was still at Tenterfield, and he would like to know if any arrangements had been made for removing it to Wollangarra, where he believed it should be?

The PREMIER said the repeating-station at Tenterfield no longer existed. They worked with Sydney direct, on the duplex system.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, with regard to a possible cable from this colony to connect with the European line, the Premier had stated that he believed it should start from Normanton, on account of the waters of the Gulf being shallower. Was it not a fact that cables laid in the shallow hot seas of the North were subject to greater deterioration than when laid in deeper water? They had found that the small cables in Moreton Bay were subject to greater deterioration than cables laid in much deeper water.

The PREMIER said of course the deeper the water the better, if other things were equal, but there were coral in the water at Cape York. It was nearly nine years ago that a conference on the subject was held in Sydney. At that time Mr. Mein and himself, as representatives of the colony, undertook to construct a line to Thursday Island as an inducement to the other colonies to lay a cable from that island. A good many people, however, thought that the head of the Gulf would be the best place for a cable to start from.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £93,592 be voted for the salaries of Post and Telegraph Offices. There were, he said, very few changes in that vote. An extra postmaster had been appointed, but that only involved an increase of £70 in the vote. There were seven extra managers, at an increase of £1,600; the number of operators were exactly the same as before; there were some promotions, but no additions, in the list of clerks; there were four extra line repairers, at £150 each; and there were several clerical assistants who were formerly paid as supernumeraries. He would be glad to give any further information which the Committee might desire.

Mr. GROOM said he desired to ask the Premier if he could give any idea as to when the amended telegraphic rates for the provincial Press were likely to be carried into effect. Several of the provincial newspapers had requested him to bring the matter under the notice of the Government.

The PREMIER said that the pressure on a number of the wires was too great to allow of the Press rates being lowered at present all over the colony. It might be done in different parts, but there would be a great outcry if the Press in one part of the colony had reduced rates, whilst the papers in other parts had to pay the present rates. Extra wires were required, and they were being put up as fast as possible. Relief would also be afforded by the introduction of the duplex system, but he was informed that it would be some months before that system could be introduced.

Mr. GROOM said the plan adopted in New South Wales might be very advantageously introduced into Queensland. The rule in New South Wales was that no Press messages should be sent until after 6 o'clock, and not even then unless the lines were pretty well cleared. That prevented any public inconvenience. Press messages were received after that hour, 800,

1,000, 2,000, and even 20,000 words in length. At the time the junction between the New South Wales and Victorian railways was effected at Albury a great banquet was held there, at which representatives of all the colonies were present. Full verbatim reports of the principal speeches were wired that night to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and to the *Melbourne Argus*. The message to the *Sydney Morning Herald* amounted to 20,000 words, and not the slightest inconvenience was occasioned to the public. He believed the same could be done in Queensland with equal facility if a little energy was put into the matter. He knew, himself, that when the Colonial Treasurer made his financial statement the provincial Press were all anxious to have lengthy reports of what he had to say. Such papers as the *Rockhampton Bulletin*, the *Northern Argus*, and the daily papers of Townsville were a credit to the colony, and they complained—justly too—that a very undue advantage was given to the Brisbane Press. The metropolitan papers could receive 100 words from New South Wales for 3s., the Queensland charge being 1s. 6d., whilst the same number of words remitted to the Northern papers were charged 4s. 2d. That illustration would show how the provincial Press of the colony was handicapped. They had to pay very heavy telegraphic rates as against the metropolitan papers, and the result was that their telegrams were abridged into the smallest possible space. If the charges for the provincial Press were reduced, then those papers would be receiving messages, not only of 100 words as at present, but of 500, 600, and even 1,000 words. No doubt that would mean a large accession of work to the department, but it would at the same time mean a large accession of revenue. He could state that from 9 o'clock at night up to midnight the operators in Brisbane had almost nothing to do, and would be only too glad to have some work. There would be ample time for sending messages to the provincial Press, and if the Colonial Secretary or the Postmaster-General gave the subject their consideration they would see that the amended tariff could be easily brought into operation. It would be a great boon to the provincial Press, and the public, instead of suffering any inconvenience, would, on the contrary, be benefited. As he had said before, he did not speak so much with regard to himself—because Toowoomba was only 100 miles from Brisbane, and the *Courier* was delivered there within four or five hours of publication—as on the part of other provincial newspapers hundreds of miles from the metropolis, and which had to depend largely on their telegrams. As there were now eighty newspapers published in the colony the subject was one deserving of the most serious consideration.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: How many dailies are there?

Mr. GROOM said there were three at Townsville, two at Rockhampton, and three in Brisbane. In connection with an application from the provincial papers to be furnished with copies of Parliamentary papers, he asked the Government Printer to make out a list of all the newspapers published in the colony, and he found that there were eighty, a considerable number of which were scattered over the interior, to whom telegraphic information was of the greatest consequence. Of course, in some country places the ordinary operators might not be equal to every occasion, but that could easily be arranged for by the Superintendent of Telegraphs selecting the most competent men for the work in the different towns. For instance, if he wished to have the Colonial Treasurer's Financial Statement telegraphed from Brisbane to the *Toowoomba Chronicle* office, operators could be found at the head

office to send it away with the utmost rapidity; but he felt safe in saying that there was no operator in the Toowoomba office who would be capable of taking it in anything like a reasonable time; and it would probably be delayed till next morning, when, of course, it would be too late for publication. There were not many operators who could take off a message by sound; the majority had to take it from the tape, and very often the words got confused and the message had to be repeated to find out its meaning, resulting in long and irritating delays. He had known an instance of that in a message of only 200 words; what would happen, then, in sending a message of 5,000 words? But that was a mere matter of detail; there were officers in the department quite competent to go to Toowoomba and take off the message. With reference to that place, he was surprised to find from the return that barely £1,200 was taken at the telegraph office in the course of the year; and when it was remembered that the two newspaper offices there paid one-fourth of the total, it would be seen that the facilities offered by the telegraph were not very largely availed of. He himself paid £150 a year for telegrams besides the subsidy he had to pay to the association in order to be able to receive them. The matter was one of great importance to the provincial Press, and he would suggest to the Premier that he should amend the tariff as was done in New South Wales. There, the tariff for Press telegrams was 1s. 6d. per 100 words; but messages were not sent till after business hours, when the lines were comparatively free, and the public suffered no inconvenience. Such a system might be adopted in Queensland with great advantage both to the Press and to the public.

The PREMIER said he would make further inquiries into the matter. He was not thoroughly satisfied with the reasons that had been given for not yet adopting the system. There was one thing, however, of which the Government had a right to complain. When the rates for intercolonial Press telegrams were reduced, they were assured that the papers intended to follow the example of the metropolitan papers of New South Wales and Victoria, and very largely increase the extent of their intercolonial telegrams. They had been very far from doing so. He was acting for the Postmaster-General when a deputation representing the metropolitan newspapers waited upon him. He asked them whether they really did intend to increase the amount of information they would give to the public, or whether they only wanted a reduction in the cost of the amount they were then giving? They assured him that there would be a very large increase. But the information had since then been sometimes even more meagre than it was before, and in that respect they had scarcely kept faith with the Government. With respect to the provincial Press, no complaint whatever could be urged. He had been surprised to see the amount of telegraphic information in some of the country newspapers—in some of them a great deal more than was to be found in the metropolitan papers.

Mr. NORTON asked why certain officers of the department were called postmasters and others managers?

The PREMIER replied that postmasters had charge of the post-office only; when in charge of the telegraph-office as well they were called managers.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the present seemed to be a convenient time for introducing the question of the employes who were under the Railway Department as well as under the Telegraph Department, of whom there were a considerable number. However convenient it

might be for the Telegraph Department and the Post Office to be combined, it was not convenient for the Railway Department and the Telegraph Department to be combined. Indeed, the Under Secretary for the Post Office made some slight complaint about it. He said:—

"A large number of interruptions took place on the railway line through the carelessness or inattention of the railway operators. I do not think these irregularities can be much reduced under the present system of working the railway telegraph offices."

That was simply because the Telegraph Department had not the control over the operators on the railway lines, and they did just as they liked. Those interruptions were equal to an actual break-down of the line for a certain time—it might be for one, two, three, or four hours, according to the carelessness of the operator in charge of the station. Seeing that both the departments had become so large, he thought the time had come when there should be a separation—when the Railway Department should have its own operators, and pay them out of its own estimates. Under such a system there would be neither inconvenience to the public nor loss of revenue to the Railway Department. Probably the department might not appear so well on the balance-sheet as it now did; it might even show £1,000 or £2,000 less; at the same time there would be no friction between the departments, and the complaints to which he had referred would cease to be made, because responsible persons would see that the operators did their duty. The departments ought to be kept entirely separate. It would be better for each and far better for the public. If they were kept separate, cases of the kind he had brought before the House about a fortnight ago could not possibly occur. He alluded to the cases in which the Telegraph Department reduced the salaries of operators in the Railway Department, who had simply to look on and bear the grievance imposed upon them by the Telegraph Department. There was no means of redress. The Telegraph Department found that as far as they were concerned, in their own interests, apart from the interests of the public, they could not afford to pay salaries of £40 a year when the receipts were only £5 or £6; and they threw the onus of paying the balance which ought to have been paid on the department, and between the two departments the operators suffered. He thought a satisfactory system could very easily be arranged between the two departments. He was certain that the Telegraph Department would not object, and he believed that the Railway Department also would have no objection, to a system by which the railway did all its own operating, and, where they operated for the public, took the receipts and added them to the railway receipts. That system was carried out in New South Wales, and he believed in Victoria, but was not certain. He knew it was in New South Wales. There the lines were erected along the railway by the Telegraph Department, and there their responsibility ended, the operating being carried on by the Railway Department; there was no more connection between the two departments, and business was carried on without any friction. He thought it was time that some such system was introduced here, and he should like the hon. gentleman now acting for the Postmaster-General to take the matter into consideration. Both departments had become quite large enough to allow of them being separated. The present might have been a very convenient system a few years ago when the departments were small, and when it was introduced for purposes of economy; and although it might have been a little more economical, it had not conduced to the profitable and convenient

working of the two departments. It would be very much better if the connection between the two departments was dissolved, and they were worked separately for the future.

The PREMIER said that the hon. gentleman's arguments appeared at first sight plausible, but they must bear in mind what the facts were. The hon. gentleman had said that the departments had become so large that they might very well be separated. They were and they were not. In some parts of the colony they had become so large that they might conveniently be separated; in others they were just in the same condition as when the system was initiated in other parts. Of course it was absolutely necessary for the safe working of their railways that there should be telegraphic communication along them, and the telegraph stations and operators being there it was desirable that the public should have the advantage of sending messages. It was first arranged that the Telegraph Department was to provide the operators, and as it was absurd that it should bear all the expense, the charge was divided between that department and the Railway Department. According to his information that arrangement was first definitely carried out when the hon. gentleman was Minister for Works. He (the Premier) made some arrangements in that regard when he was the hon. gentleman's predecessor. The arrangement then made was that the Telegraph Department should contribute to the salary of the Railway official in proportion to the benefit the department was supposed to derive in the way of revenue from the working of the office in which he was operator. That went on for some time, and it was found that the sums contributed by the Telegraph Department were entirely disproportionate to the revenue received. Sometimes only a few shillings or pounds were received by the Telegraph Department, which contributed a comparatively large proportion of the salary. Then, at the suggestion of the officers of the departments, another arrangement was made, by which, instead of the Telegraph Department paying the officials directly, they should simply contribute to the Railway Department a sum which the Railway Department should disburse in paying salaries. For instance, supposing the contributions by the Telegraph Department to the salaries of the officials of the Railway Department amounted to £1,000, instead of dividing it amongst the several operators, paying them directly from the Telegraph Department, the £1,000 was paid to the Railway Department, and they paid the salaries, taking credit for the £1,000 as against the disbursements. It was owing to a slight error in the initiation of the system that the hardships to which the hon. gentleman had referred arose. Of course when the contribution of the Telegraph Department was reduced the salaries of the officials ought not to have been reduced in consequence, but the contribution of the Railway Department should have been increased and the salaries allowed to remain as they were. That was how the mistake arose. As to allowing the railway telegraph offices to be entirely distinct from the Telegraph Department, there were some difficulties in the way. It was absolutely necessary that there should be some system of checking the business done by the operators on the lines, and that could not be done unless they were directly under the control of the department. Those were practical difficulties that suggested themselves to his mind, but they might be got over upon consideration. He thought the present system was probably the most reasonable one. It was certainly not intended that when the contributions of the Telegraph Department were diminished the salaries of the officers should be diminished.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman considered it necessary to have the telegraph in connection with the working of the railway. Of course that was almost an absolute necessity, and he scarcely thought it necessary for him to point out that by the system he suggested there would be no loss to the State. It was simply a question whether the Telegraph Department was doing the work of the Railway Department, or whether it was being paid for work it did not do. According to the information that appeared on the Estimates, the Post and Telegraph Department appeared as not producing sufficient revenue to cover the expenditure, but they were actually expending £4,000 or £5,000 that should be debited to the Railway Department. The State would lose nothing. It would simply mean that the Railway Department would have to bear its own expenditure. The difficulties that the hon. gentleman had pointed out could be easily overcome. At the same time that the Telegraph Department would have no immediate control over the operators it would be relieved of the expenditure, and the Railway Department would have supreme control over them, direct their operations, and punish them whenever they did wrong. At the present time there were two departments, and it was extremely difficult to punish officers when they did wrong. The system might have been a good one some years ago, but it was not a good one now, seeing that the departments had become so large. The hon. gentleman calculated that the northern and western portions of the colony now were in the same position as the colony generally was when the system was introduced. That was no argument at all against the introduction of a system of separating the two departments. Arrangements could be made by which the Railway Department could keep all the receipts from messages sent and the general Telegraph Department could keep all the receipts from messages sent to those railway offices. There could be no difficulty about that, and each department would appear then as it really was. At present the Telegraph Department was handicapped to the amount of £4,000 or £5,000 for the benefit of the Railway Department, which appeared, to that extent, better than it ought to upon the Estimates; that was a thing that ought to be cleared up. The members of that Committee ought to distinctly understand how each department was working, and what were the receipts and expenditure of each department. Under the present system it was not possible to arrive at that. In fact, there was too much mystery altogether in connection with the Government departments, and there always had been. The sooner the two departments were separated the better, and the sooner would the mystery as to receipts and expenditure be cleared up. He did not think it was the right thing for the Telegraph Department to be saddled with that expenditure. It was now, according to the estimate, £139,000 to the bad. That was, the Government expected to receive £180,000 from that department, while the estimated expenditure was £319,000. That would not appear so much if the two departments were separate. Some £4,000 or £5,000 of that was set down to the credit of the Railway Department, and the Committee knew nothing about it. He thought that each department should stand upon its own bottom, and hon. gentlemen would be able to criticise them fairly and efficiently, which they could not do in the present estimate.

The PREMIER said he thought the arrangements were open to improvement. He did not think that the receipts at the railway telegraph offices ought to be credited to the Railway Department—he did not see why they should be. They

were really receipts from telegraph offices accidentally within the railway fences. They were carried over the general telegraph lines of the colony, and he did not see why they should be credited to the earnings of the Railway Department. The department which was credited with the earnings should be charged with the cost of their earnings. The hon. gentleman was mistaken in the amount he referred to. From information he had received, nearly £1,900 was paid for salaries on wayside telegraph stations which were used solely for the benefit of the Railway Department. That ought to be corrected by being altogether charged to the Railway Department. In some cases offices were opened for the transmission of public business as well, and required to be kept open though there was very little business done; and there was another class where the offices would have to be kept open if there was no railway station at all. In both those cases part of the cost ought to be charged to the Telegraph Department. Of course the amounts could not be calculated with perfect accuracy. When they fixed the contributions at £10 a year the receipts might only come to £9 10s. or to only £8. He thought that the principle was a good one, provided that all the friction was removed from the working of it, and he did not see how friction need arise under the present system. It was arranged between the two departments how much the Telegraph Department should contribute. It was paid in a lump sum, and was distributed by the department itself. It was a good system, he thought.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would point out that the system was not an improvement upon the one that had been in existence for some time. He thought the hon. gentleman was mistaken when he imagined he had answered the question by saying that the department which received the receipts should bear the cost. The Telegraph Office would not have operators at all at those railway stations were it not for the Railway Department. They were compelled to have operators at those offices against their will. They had officers at stations where they did not earn one-tenth of their own salaries in a year. They were kept there chiefly for the purposes of the Railway Department, and the greatest part of their work was telegraphing trains; so that he was mistaken in saying, so far as it was applicable to those cases, that the office that received the receipts should bear the cost. The receipts might be only £2 or £3 per annum, and the cost £60.

The PREMIER asked why should not the departments bear the cost proportionately?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was simply a question for the departments themselves; but the Committee would understand the matter better if each department stood upon its own bottom.

Mr. BLACK said he would like to ask the Premier, in connection with the salaries that were paid to postmasters, upon what basis they were paid? Did they receive salaries in accordance with their seniority in the service, or in proportion to the work they had to do at the different post-offices in the colony? In the Estimates they were put down in a lump sum—so many at a certain rate—and he found in the schedule that post-offices where there was very little business to be transacted sometimes carried very large salaries with them, and, on the contrary, where a great deal of work was done at the post-offices the postmasters received a smaller salary.

The PREMIER said it was the same as in every other department—the salary was attached to the person and not to the place. The most

experienced men were put in the most important places. A man was appointed at a particular salary, and when his salary was increased he was frequently appointed to a more important position.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that there be granted a sum of £212,700 for the Conveyance of Mails and Contingencies. There was an increase of £8,000 for the conveyance of inland mails, rendered necessary partly by the weather and partly by the extension of services. There was an increase of £2,000 for the conveyance of mails *via* Melbourne, including the service by the Orient Company's steamships; and an increase of £2,000 for gratuities to masters of vessels for conveying mails. There were also increases in the estimate for country post-offices and receiving offices, £1,000; maintenance and repair of lines, £1,000; and £500 each for travelling expenses and forage allowances. There were additions to the items "Labourers for protection of stations," and "Allowance to cover extra cost of provisions for officers on Northern and Western lines," in consequence of the increased number of officers.

Mr. PALMER said he noticed there was an increase in the vote of about £22,000; of that, about £12,000 was for ocean mail service, and only £8,000 for the conveyance of inland mails. Considering the extent of settlement in the interior, he did not think anyone could say that £8,000 was an exorbitant increase. On the contrary, the department was the most conservative of all the Government departments; in fact it was too conservative—it had not elasticity enough. When railways were extended into the interior the services were continued as they originally were. For instance, there was an extension the other day to Torrens Creek, leaving a shorter route between Torrens Creek and Hughenden, yet the service was still continued bi-weekly. The people petitioned for a tri-weekly service; but of course the demand was refused. The place was too far north to have any consideration extended to it by the Government. He saw by the morning's paper that a mail coach was to be established between Brisbane and Gympie three times a week. Now, between Brisbane and Gympie there was almost daily communication by steamer and train, which was much quicker than the coach, yet £1,400 was to be paid for that service. The two cases were quite different. If the extension could be made to Gympie, it ought to be made to the other place also. He supposed the contractors, seeing the distance was so much reduced, would be willing to run three times a week at a reduction on the old rate for twice a week.

The PREMIER said they wanted a great deal more.

Mr. PALMER said Cobb and Company would surely not want the same for going 50 miles as for 150.

The PREMIER said the reason the Government did not establish a tri-weekly mail to Hughenden was that the amount asked was exorbitant. The Government must exercise some economy, and they did not feel justified in paying the price demanded. With reference to the mail coach to Gympie, as the hon. member said, there was a great difference between the two cases. In one case the service was between two populous centres, and afforded a convenience to a very large number of people; and he did not think many people travelled just now between Torrens Creek and Hughenden.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was informed that the mails to Gympie could be delivered much quicker by steamer.

The PREMIER: So they can; but the steamer goes another way.

Mr. DONALDSON said he had applied the other day for a duplication of the service between Charleville and Adavale. They wanted two mails a week, and he thought it was a very reasonable request. They could get a second service for £400 per annum, and the single service cost £700. That was declined, because the Government had determined not to increase the postal expenses; yet in the face of that, £1,400 was given for a service between Brisbane and Gympie, though there were other facilities for a much quicker conveyance of mails.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman evidently did not know that there had always been an overland mail to Gympie. The amount paid for a long time past had been £800 a year for a service by coach to Mellum Creek and thence by horse. The new service would go by coach the whole way to Gympie, and would accommodate a great many people all along the road, at an extra cost of £600 a year. He thought it was a very good bargain.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was only speaking from hearsay, but he believed the mails were delivered more quickly by steamer. The Government appeared to be very liberal in granting that extra amount, when they declined other very reasonable applications on the ground of economy.

Mr. PALMER said he thought the Premier was out in his calculation when he said there were very few passengers between Torrens Creek and Hughenden. It was the outlet for the whole Gulf country. He knew some gentlemen who had come in nine or ten days from Cloncurry, and others from Winton. To get from Hughenden to Torrens Creek three times a week would be as well worth the extra subsidy as to give £600 to subsidise a coach to a town that had communication every day.

Mr. WAKEFIELD said the member for Burke had raised an objection to £600 additional expenditure in conveying a mail from Brisbane to Gympie by coach. He himself considered that that additional sum was far less than the district through which the service passed was entitled to. He had been in the district during the last few months, and had been quite surprised at the large amount of settlement on the road between Brisbane and Gympie; and instead of being purely a mail to Gympie he thought it was a mail that did very good service along the route. In proof of the importance of the district he need only mention that the House had approved of a railway between Brisbane and Gympie, in addition to the one from Maryborough, at an expenditure of something like half-a-million of money, showing the large amount of trade between Brisbane and Gympie, and the importance of the district through which the line would pass. That was a proof that the amount referred to was a very small one to be expended on a route which warranted such a large outlay.

Mr. MELLOR said it was a well-known fact that there was a great number of farms and residents on the road between Brisbane and Gympie, and he knew that when the Gympie coach was taken away it was considered a great hardship by the people living on that road. The service would be of benefit, not only to Gympie, but to the whole of the Wide Bay district and Maryborough. He saw that the people of Maryborough had received the intelligence of the establishment of the service with a great amount of satisfaction. The irregularities of the steamers plying to Maryborough were very great. They left when they chose, and people in Gympie were put to great inconvenience in consequence, in

getting down to Brisbane. He hoped soon to see the railway constructed, so that they might have daily communication between Gympie and the metropolis. He believed there were no less than about 30,000 inhabitants in the whole of the district to whom the service would be a great benefit.

Mr. NORTON said that if the hon. member who had last spoken was in the same position as the hon. member for Burke he would see just the same objection to the service. The hon. member for Burke did not so much object to the service as to the fact that whilst outside districts were not provided with communication inside districts got additional means of communication. He thought the present the right time to ask the Premier upon what principle the Government proposed to act in the establishment of coach services where horse services were previously run?

The PREMIER said it was impossible to say what principle the Government would adopt in such a matter. They could not lay down an arbitrary rule in such a matter; but he supposed coach services would be established where the requirements of the country demanded them, and where the Treasury could afford the additional expense. They had done pretty well, he thought, in that respect during the last few years. A person could now travel by coach or railway from the Gulf of Carpentaria right through to Melbourne or Adelaide.

Mr. NORTON said he was not raising any objection to the coach services. Some time ago he had spoken to the Postmaster-General about the establishment of two coach services, and he was glad to say they had been arranged for and tenders called for them both. The Postmaster-General had raised some objection to having to pay more for the coach service when he could have the mails carried by horse for less, and said that the object of the department was to get the mails carried, and if passengers wished to be carried it might be arranged in some other way. He thought that rather an illiberal principle, because it should be borne in mind that they had railways running in various parts of the colony, and while the people in those districts had the advantage of the railways people in other districts far removed from railways had to contribute their share to defray the interest on the cost of construction and maintenance of those railways. They were therefore, he thought, entitled to some consideration in the matter of coach communication. Where there was likely to be a fair amount of traffic, the Government ought to do what they could to provide them. He had thought the Postmaster-General somewhat illiberal in his remarks upon the subject; but he supposed it was only because he was new to office and wished to put on some show of being economical and of being desirous of keeping down expenditure.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he was sorry the hon. member for Burke should have any cause for complaint, and he would greatly like to see the hon. member's district duly attended to; but because the hon. member was a little disappointed in that respect it was no reason why he should object to the coach service between Brisbane and Gympie. As a Maryborough man, he would say that Maryborough was well satisfied with the service, which would benefit far more than those between Brisbane and Gympie. It would benefit also the people of Maryborough, Howard, and Gladstone, because they would have more frequent mails and greater certainty in their delivery, which would be better for all concerned.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he wished to draw the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the condition of a portion of the Bulimba electorate—more particularly to that portion known as Cooper's Plains, Brown's Plains, and the upper portion of the Logan. For some years past, and up to the opening of the South Coast Railway, they had two mail deliveries there per week; but since the opening of that line they had had only one. He had brought the matter under the notice of the Postmaster-General, and he hoped soon to hear that better arrangements were completed. The mail now arrived on a Saturday in those places, and persons expecting letters had to go for them on Sunday, and the only chance they had of replying to them was on Sunday; and they had further to post their replies on the same day, because the mail left again on the Monday. At a meeting held in that neighbourhood on Saturday last in reference to the extension of telegraphic communication to Beaudesert as well as increased mail facilities, he found that a resolution was proposed by Mr. Hinchcliffe, and seconded by Mr. Boyd, to the effect that there should be a deputation to the Postmaster-General *re* telegraphic communication, and also to bring under his notice the necessity for a daily through service to and from Brisbane and Beaudesert. In these days of progress and railways it was rather unfortunate that settlers in a district who were for many years in the habit of receiving two mails weekly should be reduced to one mail per week, and that one arriving on Saturday evening, thereby causing people receiving correspondence to reply to letters received on Sunday. He hoped some means might be devised by which the mail communication might at least be made as frequent as before the railway was opened.

The PREMIER said that inquiries had been made in order to see how the requirements of the inhabitants in that district might be best satisfied. The mail arrangements were interfered with by the stopping of the coach service on the opening of the railway line to Logan Village. Other arrangements, however, were being made to give the people their double service again.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the Premier would give some information as to the change in the mail service from Torrens Creek to Hughenden; the mileage of the route, and the subsidy paid?

The PREMIER said the route was 100 miles in length, and the subsidy paid to Cobb and Company was £1,096 a year. The service was reduced to half the distance, but the subsidy only to £840. The same number of coaches were run, but when Cobb and Company were asked to run an extra day a week they wanted £240 extra, which was considered excessive.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Committee had been informed that the additional subsidy for the Gympie coach service was £600. It was, he thought, an extraordinary thing that the Government should be so extremely economical in the case of Torrens Creek and Hughenden, especially when the drought and condition of the country was taken into consideration, and so liberal with districts farther south. He supposed the contract with Cobb and Company for £1,096 a year for the 100 miles was taken two years ago, when there was water in the creeks; but the Government seemed to have made no allowance for that. About a month or six weeks ago he applied to the Postmaster-General on behalf of the people of Cairns, for a coach service from Herberton to Georgetown. The answer was that the present condition of the country did not warrant the Government in calling for tenders for fresh coach services—that

if they did call for tenders they were sure to cost too much. To that, he (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) did not object. It was, he thought, a reasonable excuse, but he hoped that the service he asked for would be established in time. In the Torrens Creek and Hughenden case, the same state of drought existed, but no consideration had been given to that circumstance. Simply because the Government thought the contract price was a couple of hundred pounds too high they had deprived the people of a part of an important district of their coach service. He did not see why there should be such economising at one end of the colony, and such extreme liberality at the other end. The people of Gympie were not badly off for mail communication. They had the railway from Maryborough, and mail coaches from other places, and now the Government had subsidised another mail service from Brisbane to Gympie. He looked upon that as absurd. The people of Charters Towers had a mail coach from Millchester, but not a single individual in Charters Towers would ask for another coach from Townsville. He was sorry the Government had seen fit to mete out scant measure for one part of the colony which had no communication, and give large measure to another part which was already overwhelmed with means of communication. The hon. gentleman did not require to be told about the growing importance of Georgetown. Yet that was a place which had received little or no consideration from any Government. It was a great distance from both sides of the colony, but in spite of all disadvantages was steadily going ahead. He was certain that not more than three times the amount of the subsidy to the new Gympie coach would suffice for a coach service between Herberton and Georgetown. £2,000 was enough for a coach from Cooktown to Maytown, and he thought that route lay through worse country. He had not been over the whole of the country between Herberton and Georgetown, but he had crossed it at different places; and it was better than between Cooktown and Maytown. At present there was only a horse service to Georgetown. If a coach service was established to that place the town and district would go ahead even still faster than it was going now. A coach service would take people and capitalists who were disposed to speculate to the place who would not undertake the fatigue of a journey on foot or horseback. Georgetown, and in consequence, the whole colony also, would thus be benefited.

The PREMIER said he did not know that a coach service to Georgetown had been asked for, or that it could be obtained at so cheap a rate as the hon. member had mentioned. He would be very glad indeed if one could be established, for he agreed with the hon. member that Georgetown was a very much neglected place and that its progress and development as a goldfield would be of great advantage to the whole colony. He would be very pleased indeed if there were funds at the disposal of the Postmaster-General to lay on a coach service to Georgetown, and he was glad that his attention had been called to the matter.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he would call the attention of the Premier to the fact that at Dulbydilla, which was the present terminus of the Southern and Western Railway, there was no telegraph station, although the main telegraph line passed within 200 yards of the place. As that would be an important station for some time, as the terminus of the line, where large quantities of goods, sheep, and cattle would be despatched, a telegraph station would be necessary in order to enable people to advise their agents. It was also necessary, he should have thought, for the safe working of the railway.

The PREMIER said he was rather surprised to hear that there was no telegraph station at Dulbydilla. However, he was informed, arrangements were being made for opening one at once.

Mr. HAMILTON said he should like to have some more explicit information from the Premier with regard to establishing coach communication between Herberton and the Etheridge. The hon. gentleman said it would be done when the means at the disposal of the Post Office would allow. Did he mean that it might be expected at once, or early next year, or when?

The PREMIER said he was not prepared to say how far the money available for the Post Office was appropriated.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he hoped the Premier would keep up his sympathy with the people there. The Postmaster-General had given him a distinct promise that he would consider the matter early next year, believing that by that time the drought would be at an end, and he would be able to get tenders on reasonable terms. His information from the spot was that tenders could be obtained for a coach service the whole way for £2,000.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he would now call the attention of the Committee to another question, of which he gave notice last night—namely, the ocean mail service. He wanted to know the position in which they stood with reference to the other colonies. They knew that the Secretary of State for the Colonies had directed the attention of the colonies to the fact that the contracts would expire during the next two years, and invited them to unite for a combined mail service. Had the Government made up their minds as to the policy they intended to pursue with regard to that service? What action, if any, had they taken in the matter? Hon. members would see from the very lucid report of the Under Secretary for the Post Office the position that the different mail services were in at the present time. They would see that while the subsidy to the British-India Company had remained a fixed quantity, a large proportion of the postage which, had that been the only mail service, would have been carried for nothing, had to be paid over again to two other services. In the vote under discussion there was an item of £15,000, for the conveyance of mails to Great Britain *via* Melbourne and *via* San Francisco. Admitting the value of the facilities thus given for the transmission of correspondence, it must be remembered that the whole of that correspondence would have been carried for nothing had it gone by the British-India Service. They must consider their position with reference to the position the other colonies had taken up, whose aims and interests they could see. South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales had joined together in making a very complete service to Great Britain, but they had not shown the slightest sympathy with the Queensland Mail Service *via* Torres Straits, and he had not seen any reason to believe that they would be willing to include the Torres Straits Mail Service in any general scheme of a mail service to Great Britain. Still they, as Queenslanders, must acknowledge the very great importance of it, and must take care that they were not forced into such a position as to ultimately be compelled to give it up. The Under Secretary's report stated that the postal matter carried by the Orient line had considerably increased during the last year. That was a financial loss to the colony, though a facility to the people in it. The British-India Service used to be considered as a service exclusively for the benefit of the northern parts of the colony. But that idea was now upset, because the service was now

availed of by the Brisbane people to a greater extent than ever it was before. The report showed that the proportion of letters by the direct route to the United Kingdom *via* Plymouth—for which the rate was only 4d. per half-ounce letter—was 29·48 per cent. of the letter correspondence *via* Torres' Straits from the whole colony, and 42·01 per cent. of that from Brisbane. Another thing to which he would direct attention was the average rate of speed of the various services between Brisbane and Great Britain. The average time occupied by the P. and O. Company was 42 days 55 minutes; by the British-India Company 42 days 19 hours; and by the Orient line 39 days 18 hours. The work of the British-India Mail Service must be, therefore, considered as highly satisfactory; they had done more than was anticipated, and more than they had contracted for, and they had rendered efficient service, not only to the North but to all parts of the colony, which they were not expected to serve at all. The point to which he wished to direct attention was, that they must see that they were not hemmed in by the service of the southern colonies to the exclusion of their own service. They must maintain a service independent of their communications by means of the other colonies. They had been served well by the British-India Company, and their correspondence was carried cheaply by it. It was a very grave question; in fact, it was a matter of certainty that if they were not as independent as they were they would not be treated so very well as they were. For instance, in order to induce the colony to encourage or assist the P. and O. Company and the Orient Company, by sending a certain portion of their mail matter by each, the Victorian and New South Wales Governments were at the expense between them, without any charge to us at all, of carrying our mail matter backwards and forwards between the port of arrival and Queensland. All the mail matter for Queensland that arrived from Great Britain in Melbourne was delivered in Sydney for nothing, so far as Queensland was concerned, and *vice versa* with regard to mail matter from Queensland for England. Of course, they could not expect that unless their neighbours had some object to gain, and their object was to establish a monopoly to the disadvantage of Queensland. Those were things they had to guard against. Therefore, he would like to know in what way, if at all, the other colonies had approached Queensland, with regard to joining them in arranging for the seven years' service they proposed to establish—a through service in which the whole of the colony would combine. Another matter he would like to refer to was: At page 4 of the correspondence it would be seen that by instructions from the Postmaster-General of England, all correspondence to and from Thursday Island, Normanston, and the Gulf of Carpentaria, was to be sent exclusively by the British-India service. It seemed to him that that was in violation of the agreement that was made with the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria, by which, when they entered into the arrangement with the Orient Company, and the P. and O. Company, they undertook to send all letters by the first steamer that left after they were posted, unless they were marked to go by a particular route. Although the arrangement made was a good one, in his opinion, still he thought it was a violation of that agreement, and he would like to know if any of the other colonies had complained of it in that way.

The PREMIER said no complaints had been received, and he did not think it likely that there would be any complaints on that ground, because

although it was technically a violation of the promise made to send letters by the first steamer that left, still that part of the colony was so much nearer England by the Torres Straits route than by any of the others, that he was sure the other colonies would not insist upon it as a violation of the agreement. With respect to future arrangements for ocean mail service, the only communication he had received from the other colonies was a copy of an agreement, dated the 21st August, which was received here some time in September last. It was headed "An agreement between Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, Western Australia, and New Zealand," but it was not an agreement between them. As a matter of fact, he had heard — it was not mentioned in the correspondence—that New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia had made an agreement on the basis there set forth. The proposal was to call for tenders for a service for five years from the termination of the contracts now existing between the P. and O. Company and Victoria, and the Orient Company and New South Wales. Although that agreement had been sent to the Government, he had very great doubts that it was a correct copy, because within the last day or two he had seen reference made to an agreement which was apparently the same, but it bore a different date, had a different number of clauses, and the clauses a different number of paragraphs; so that he could not help thinking there had been some change made of which the Government had not been advised.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Is it an official paper?

The PREMIER: A telegram received by His Excellency the Governor yesterday. The general basis of the agreement was that the tenders should be at so much per lb. for all mail matter; the mails to be delivered weekly or fortnightly; the time to be occupied between Great Britain and the colonies being stated, the overland transit being paid for at fixed rates of 10d. per lb. through each colony, and that the contracting colonies should undertake to send all mail matter by that route. The matter had been sent to the Government for their consideration, but they had not had time to consider it yet. In fact, he did not quite understand how the matter stood at present. From a telegram received yesterday, by His Excellency, but which he was inclined to think had been sent here by mistake, it was evident that the matter was not yet settled, and as tenders were not likely to be called for some time the Government did not think it necessary to decide upon it at once. With regard to the Torres Straits route, he thought there was no use trying to insist that the other colonies should contribute to the subsidy for that line. There was not the slightest probability of their doing so. They did not derive any particular advantage from it except in regard to communications with the East, and there were so many steamers running to the East now that that was not sufficient inducement for them to contribute. As far as Brisbane was concerned that route was of no particular use as a mail service, except that some letters were carried at 4d. instead of 6d. To the North it was an advantage, no doubt; but he thought they must recognise the fact that they must make their own arrangements with regard to that route. As to whether they would join the other colonies or not, he did not know, as the Government had not arrived at any conclusion on the matter. There had been some delay in the printing of the papers, which were not ready until yesterday; and therefore the matter had not yet come under the collective consideration of the Government.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said at the present time he thought Queensland was treated very liberally by the other colonies with regard to the carrying of mail matter between Sydney and England, seeing that they gave us the land transit between Melbourne and Sydney for nothing, and allowed our mail matter to be carried at the same price as they paid themselves. But the very basis of the arrangement the Premier had read showed that their principal object was this: That all the colonies should join in paying a certain amount per lb. for mail matter to be sent by a certain service, and in addition to that, each carrying colony had to pay for carrying its mail matter over its own part of the country. Queensland would, therefore, be placed in a great deal worse position under that system than it was before. In addition to that, it was part of the contract that they should send the whole of their mail matter by that line. What position would the colony be in then? They would be establishing a monopoly against themselves, and would become part of the southern monopoly. What was the good of having a mail service of their own, if the basis of the arrangement was that they engaged to send the whole of their mail matter to the other colonies? They had to undertake to do that. Unless there was any preference for a route expressed on the letter, it was sent by the first mail. What would become of their mail service? They could not possibly subsidise a mail service *via* Torres Straits, after having been forced into an engagement by which they were bound to send the whole of the mail matter south. The faction of the southern colonies was perfectly plain, and it was to their interests no doubt; but it was certainly opposed to the interests of Queensland. That colony derived a considerable advantage from the mail service they had established; but they would lose that advantage, and drift back into the old system by which Sydney and Melbourne were the two capitals of Australia, and Brisbane would be left out. The Premier must see perfectly well that he had to look to the interests of Queensland, and see that they were protected. He did not suppose it would be necessary to advise the hon. gentleman that they must be perfectly independent. They should take advantage, to as great an extent as possible, of the mail system down south; but not assist them in establishing a monopoly that would result in making Queensland simply an outlying district of New South Wales or Victoria, as it used to be. The tendency was altogether in that direction at present. That joining in that mail service would hurt Brisbane, he had no doubt, and that it would hurt the northern parts of the colony went without saying; and he hoped that the Premier would give his thorough attention to the matter in the interests of the colony. They knew perfectly well that they could not afford to have their own service knocked on the head, even by a combination of the other colonies against them. To show how the thing worked hon. members had only to look at the way in which correspondence had been diverted from their own route into the Orient service. Until lately the great bulk of their letters from London to Brisbane and from Brisbane to London went by the British-India service. But this year there was a change, and only 32½ per cent. were received from England *via* Torres Straits, while 54 per cent. were despatched to England. They would at once see the great disparity in the amount received by that route and the amount despatched by that route. The reason given why there should be so many more letters despatched from London by the Orient line, compared with the proportion that were despatched from Brisbane, was that the arrangement in London was that the Orient steamers left a

week before and a week after the Torres Straits service, and they took away the bulk of the letters that would otherwise have gone by that route. That was a loss to the colony, because, although the letters might arrive here a day sooner, the colony had to pay the postage for those letters in addition to having paid the British-India service to carry them. That was simply how the thing was worked in the interests of the other colonies, instead of in the interests of Queensland. The Postmaster-General in England could so fix matters that he could increase the amount of mail matter that went by the Orient line, to their detriment, from the small proportion of 7 per cent. or 8 per cent. last year, to 49 per cent. this year. Actually half of the mail matter went by the Orient line. He could not impress upon hon. gentlemen too often, that they paid for that mail matter to the Orient Company, having already paid the British India Company for carrying it. There was no question that a monopoly was tried to be established to the exclusion of Queensland. He was sure their own interests had been better served since they had had ships coming from England to their own ports, and the disadvantage to the colony if their own route was crushed out would be very serious. The other colonies were looking to the time when they would make a contract for seven years—no doubt the steamship owners would try to make it a longer time; but at least it would be seven years—to establish a monopoly against Queensland, which would be left at a very considerable disadvantage. It was not only a question in which the northern part of the colony was involved. It was a question in which the southern part, as proved by the statistics now published, was quite as much injured, because he had shown that the great bulk of the mail matter from Brisbane now went by the Orient line. The statistics also proved the success of the cheap postage that Queensland had the credit of having established. They had established a system of fourpenny letters from Brisbane, and the statistics showed that 47 per cent. of the letters that were sent from Brisbane went at that rate. That was a great advantage to the colony; but it would be a loss to the colony if those letters went by the Orient line, because the British-India Company had been paid for carrying them.

The PREMIER said it was all very well for them to say that they had already paid the British-India Company. But that company carried the mails only once a month and they required mails every week to and from England. The British-India Company might be willing to take all the letters, if the correspondents would wait until the steamer sailed. The hon. gentleman evidently misunderstood the conditions of the agreement, which was very liberal so far as it went. It provided that the contracting parties should send by the contractors' steamers all mail matter not specially directed to be sent by any particular route; so that if they joined they could make the stipulation that when two mails left on the same day, they could send their mail-matter by their own route. But they would be able to take advantage of the contract without becoming parties to it. It was provided by it that other colonies would be allowed to send their letters on the same terms as the contracting colonies. With respect to the terms being more burdensome for the land carriage, he did not think they were. The total cost of the carriage overland from Adelaide to Brisbane—supposing they were carried by rail all the way—would be at the rate of 2s. 6d. per pound. A pound averaged, he believed, about fifty letters. At present they paid 1d. each for letters—4s. 2d. a pound.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was for sea carriage. There was nothing to pay for land carriage.

The PREMIER said the letters were sent to the Sydney Post Office, and the rate paid covered both land and sea carriage from there to London. There were a good many matters that had to be considered, and the Government had not yet had an opportunity of giving them consideration. He thought it likely that they would adopt the agreement in some modified form. It would not, he believed, interfere with the present agreement, or tend to make this colony more dependent on the other colonies than it was at the present time.

Mr. ANNEAR asked if it would be arranged that the coach service from Brisbane to Gympie would meet the train with the through passengers, and also meet the train from Maryborough to Gympie?

The PREMIER said that depended on the time the train started from Gympie to Maryborough; but from his knowledge of the road he thought it would be very difficult to do it. The coach had to start from Gympie at 5 in the morning to reach Brisbane at 6 the next evening, and it was not likely the train could arrive at Gympie at 5 in the morning from Maryborough.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked how many passengers were carried by the Gympie coach?

The PREMIER said the coach was not running yet; but he believed there would be just as many passengers as the coach would hold.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that was a lawyer-like explanation. He would ask the hon. member how many passengers were carried at the time the coach service was knocked on the head? Perhaps the hon. member would tell them the reason it was knocked on the head and why it was now proposed to tax the colony for a considerable sum of money to recommence a service which had ceased to exist.

The PREMIER said the traffic at that time was not very great, but at the present time there was a bi-weekly coach running a considerable part of the way, and it was always crowded.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked how far it went on the road to Gympie?

The PREMIER said it went to Mellum Creek, which he believed was about half-way.

Mr. ANNEAR said he would point out the chief grounds on which the service was granted. The hon. members who waited on the Postmaster-General stated that passengers from Gympie to Brisbane were detained in Maryborough one or two days nearly every time they went down to catch the steamer. Now, no doubt, many Maryborough people would use the coach service, and arrangements ought to be made to prevent their having to stop in Gympie two days or a day.

Mr. SMYTH said the Maryborough people seemed very frightened of having to stop a night in Gympie, but they did not mind detaining the Gympie people a night in Maryborough. There was a time when the train ran from Howard to catch the Gympie train, but now, if they went from Bundaberg or Howard, they had to loaf about the township three hours for the departure of the train, and then when they arrived in Maryborough they had to remain there all night. He would ask the Government to alter that, so that the people of Mount Perry, Gladstone, Howard, and Bundaberg, should have speedy communication with Brisbane. That could easily be done by making the train leave Howard at the time it used to leave twelve months ago; then it used to arrive in Maryborough about ten minutes to 4. He believed what the hon. member

for Maryborough proposed was that the train should arrive at Gympie in the morning with passengers from Maryborough, and that the coach should be there to meet it, whereas, now, the train arrived at Gympie at 11 o'clock. What difference would it make, whether the mails lay in Maryborough all night or came by the evening train and remained in Gympie all night. He wished to point out that the coach service was for the benefit of the whole coast line as far as Gladstone, and there was no occasion to put it on the Gympie people at all.

Mr. ANNEAR said he had a duty to perform to his constituency just as much as the hon. member had to his. He always understood that mails should not have to stop a night anywhere, nor passengers either, and he did not see why the train should not be run to meet the coach. The train now left between 4 and 5 in the evening, and if it were altered so as leave at 6 in the evening, it would get into Maryborough only an hour later. He did not want to create a rivalry between Maryborough and Gympie; that had never existed so far as Maryborough was concerned. They had no grudge against Gympie or any other place. The question involved an expenditure of about £1,500, paid by the general taxpayers. When he was last in Maryborough many of his constituents had asked him to bring the question before the Committee.

Mr. MOREHEAD said Gympie was well served at the present time so far as expenditure for mail services was concerned; and he trusted that a paternal Government such as they had would look further afield, and spend the money they now proposed to spend upon what was really a passenger service between here and Gympie, in extending the postal and passenger services into the interior. The proposed line for a mail service was simply for the convenience of travellers. There were no centres of population upon the line between Brisbane and Gympie, and the Premier knew that; but he had been got at by the junior member for Enoggera, who, he believed, was a large property holder at Caloundra, and there would probably be a branch line to go from Mellum Creek to the property held by that hon. gentleman. It certainly wore a sinister aspect. Only in that morning's paper he found that tenders had been accepted for that particular service, which was a service that was abandoned some years ago, and a service that was no more necessary now than when it was abandoned. He supposed it was part of the payment the State had to make for the support given to the Government by the junior member for Enoggera. It was the bribe given to that hon. gentleman and the constituency he represented. They had had no explanation from the Premier as to why they should be asked to spend £1,500 a year for such a service. If the colony was in a most prosperous condition such an expenditure should be severely commented upon; but when they should save every shilling, as they should do at the present time, what did they find? They found the Government wasting money on a purposeless object, for no one could say that the mail service between here and Gympie was not fully performed at the present time. No one could say that Gympie had not been fairly and even liberally treated, not only by the present, but by every Government that had been in power. As the representative of an outside district and as a citizen of Queensland, he most distinctly objected to such a profligate waste of public money. If the money was expended at all it would have been better expended on outside districts. He was aware that any members who supported the Government had bribes thrown to their constituencies.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was very glad to hear the hon. gentleman admit the truth of his assertion, and he had no doubt there would be more joy in Heaven over the hon. gentleman's repentance than if every one of the good people on the Opposition side of the Committee were to repent. The hon. member knew that the money he was expending now was to bribe the constituencies to keep members at his back; money which, if honestly expended, would have done an immense deal of good in the development of the colony. It was no use his asking, as hon. member for Balonne, that justice should be done to that district. He had given that up as hopeless. The Government would not listen to him, and as he would not bow his head to the powers that be there would be no justice extended to the district he had the honour to represent. Hon. members on the Government side went to the Premier and said, "If we don't get this we will cross over to the other side, or sit on the cross benches."

The PREMIER: You are speaking from memory, probably.

Mr. SMYTH: That is what you did.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was merely giving the Premier his opinion, though it might not square with his own.

The PREMIER: It does not square with facts.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that as long as he had a seat in the House he would express his opinion, and whether he was right or wrong was a matter that chiefly concerned himself. Any member on the Government side who bent the knee to the brute Baal got what he wanted. They could bow down and worship their brute Baal as much as they liked, and nobody objected to their doing so. But no member of the Committee who was not prepared to become a joint in the tail attached to the animal that led the Government could expect to receive any consideration at the hands of the Government. He did hope that hon. members would not sanction the vote for what would be purely a passenger service between Brisbane and Gympie, when the colony had already expended a very large sum of money in the construction of a railway between Maryborough and Gympie and in the payment of a subsidy for the mail service between here and Maryborough.

Mr. PALMER said he wished to refer to a question raised both by the hon. member for Port Curtis and by the leader of the Opposition, and that was the great increase of expenditure over income in that department. Nobody apparently knew how to work that department more economically. He might mention that he had been several times in the Postal Department, but he had never had the pleasure of meeting the Postmaster-General there. He thought, therefore, they might save his salary, and hand over the office to the Minister for Works. It was not right that people should go to the Post Office day after day to see the Postmaster-General without that gentleman once making his appearance. The Under Secretary, so far as he could make out, appeared to be Postmaster-General; and the pile of papers awaiting the signature or attention of the Postmaster-General would fill a small waggon. The leader of the Opposition referred to the revenue derived from the Postal Department in Great Britain. He found the net revenue there was £2,646,000, and amongst other items down in the report of the department was the statement that there were 48,000 employés in the department, and that 3,000 women were employed as letter sorters, telegraphists, clerks, and so on; and he thought the department might take up that idea here.

He would ask the Premier how many iron telegraph poles had been imported, or how many had been ordered for the line from Normanton?

The PREMIER said that about 20,000 had been ordered.

Mr. PALMER asked if there was any probability of a telegraph line being constructed from Normanton to Burketown this year?

The PREMIER said he could not answer that question. There were only two months of the year left, and only a certain amount of money available for telegraphic extension.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that a subject of great importance to the Australian colonies was that of a parcels post union. The colonies had been invited to join in a universal postal union, but that, so far as they were concerned, seemed to have fallen through. If it was impracticable to join that union, a parcels post union might be practicable between Great Britain and the colonies. The matter could be very easily arranged between the companies carrying the mails and the English Post Office. At present the expense of bringing a parcel from England was enormous. He had a few books sent out to him in a small box 8 inches by 10 inches in size, and about three pounds in weight, by means of one of the agencies, and the carriage cost him no less than 17s. It would be a great thing if the Government could arrange to have parcels of that sort brought out for 1s. 6d. At present a number of private agencies were making a great deal of money at that kind of business. In a letter from the Colonial Office to the Governor, the colony had been invited to consider that matter. What had the Agent-General done in the matter? Had any arrangements been come to between the British Government and the steamship companies, or were negotiations in progress on the subject between the colonies and the British Government?

The PREMIER said that nothing at all had been done. It was a matter that might very well be included in the new contracts which had to be entered into with the steam shipping companies when their present contracts expired.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said they would then have to wait two years.

The PREMIER said that was so if nothing could be done in the meantime. It was a question which had been overlooked, and he was glad his attention had been called to it by the hon. member.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the letter from the Colonial Office directing attention to the desirability of establishing a parcels post union was written in January. Had it received no attention?

The PREMIER said that nothing had been done. He remembered that it had been considered by a late Postmaster-General, who arrived at the conclusion that the proposal would be impracticable. The opinions that gentleman expressed to the Cabinet were, that although a parcels post might be carried out in some parts of the colony it could not be done all over the colony, and that it would not be possible to instruct the Postmaster-General of England that he was only to receive parcels for certain places in Queensland.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought there was a great deal in what had fallen from the Premier. Even in England the parcels post had not yet proved a success, and he could quite see how a great many difficulties would arise in the colony.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £750 be voted for the Meteorological Observer, and the purchase of instruments for country stations, and contingencies. He said he was sorry that that department was not in a satisfactory condition. The country stations were not well equipped. Their instruments were not always of the best character and were not always in their proper places. There was not a sufficient amount of instruction given to the officers. The present Meteorological Observer, although he had done very good work, was not a scientific meteorologist. The item for the purchase of instruments, and contingencies, had been increased from £150 to £500, and with the additional sum he hoped to equip some stations more efficiently. He attached very great importance to meteorological observations, not merely for the recording of the rainfall in separate places, but for the purpose of generalising and comparing the information supplied as to the condition and movements of the atmosphere. That matter had been reduced to a science in several countries. In the United States the weather bureau was one of the most wonderful institutions in the country. In England, as was well known, the kind of weather that was to come was now accurately foretold. It would be of great advantage to have full and accurate information as to the weather in the different parts of the colony, and Queensland was peculiarly well situated for collecting valuable information on that subject. In some of the Southern colonies their sources of information were all on one side, whereas here, in Queensland, there was communication by telegraph in every direction except from the north-east, from which quarter, however, very bad weather seldom came. The sum of £500 had been asked for contingencies in the hope that during the current year the Government might be able to make some preliminary arrangements for more efficiently working that branch of the department.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he agreed with the Premier as to the importance of establishing a meteorological department in Queensland, but at the same time he hoped that before any permanent arrangements were made they would be submitted to the House for an expression of opinion upon them. With the vote, as increased, he cordially agreed. The money was much wanted, and he hoped it would be well spent. The fault of the present arrangements for taking and recording meteorological observations was not owing to the head of the department, but to the fact that the officers who worked the instruments had never been under efficient control. They had done the work just as they liked, and as they took an interest in it or not. The telegraph masters who did the work had always looked upon it as an extra for which they received no pay; and under such circumstances a man would not take much interest in the work unless he had a special taste for it. A small consideration to the men who took the observations would be very useful, and the work would be done more efficiently. Wherever there was a telegraph office there should be a meteorological station, even if of only a limited extent. The observations ought to be constantly taken all over the colony by simple instruments, which would not involve a very great outlay.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there was a great deal in what had fallen from the hon. member, but he had left something unsaid. For instance, he had not told the Committee that the present meteorological observer in Brisbane was apparently under the control of nobody, and got £250 a year for purely clerical work, which possibly was done by some subordinate in his employment. If the colony could not afford to go in for a

higher class of observations, as had been done in the southern colonies, by appointing an astronomer, it ought to have a meteorological observer who was a servant of the State, and not one whose principal business was outside the salary that was voted for him on the Estimates year after year. He should not occupy a dual position, as the present holder of that office did. Some years ago, when he (Mr. Morehead) held a high position, that gentleman waited upon him and asked whether he did not think his salary ought to be increased. He explained that his idea—or rather, as he put it, and as the present Minister for Works generally put it, the idea of his colleagues—was that he ought to be abolished, and an astronomer appointed. He held that opinion still. If that most important work was to be done at all it should be done thoroughly, and by an officer who should be a Civil servant and nothing else. The present system was simply play to the Meteorological Observer, with the consequence that the most imperfect records were obtained from nearly every station in the colony. There was no check upon those records, nor had the observers in all cases the latest and best scientific instruments that were necessary to obtain such meteorological data as would be of value. At present they had only haphazard records of the rainfall at the different places, whereas a systematic record of the rainfall would be invaluable. So important a matter should be under the control of a Government officer, who should be responsible to Parliament for the accuracy of the records of his department. At present they had a very amiable gentleman, who looked like an astronomer, and who was supposed to superintend the recording of that department, but as a matter of fact the records were uncertain and therefore unreliable. The best plan would be to establish an observatory in charge of an astronomer. The cost would not be much more than the amount of the present vote; at any rate it would not cost double the money, and, as the Premier had pointed out, the colony was in an exceptional position for obtaining meteorological records—although he did not quite agree with him that no very bad weather ever came from the north-east. At any rate, they had a very long coast-line with telegraphic communication all along it; and a meteorological department, under an official head, might be most valuable not only to this colony but to the southern colonies as well. Under the existing system the expenditure was almost useless. They were simply paying Mr. E. MacDonnell £250 a year as an imperfect recording clerk, and no one knew that better than the permanent head of the Post Office. It was well known that the duties performed by the Meteorological Observer in Brisbane were useless. He was not going to oppose the vote. On a former occasion, when in “another place,” he was obliged to tacitly sanction it, but now that he had an opportunity of expressing his opinion about it he condemned the expenditure under the existing system as wasteful and unnecessary. He hoped the Government, if they had the pleasure of being in power next session—which from what they had seen seemed extremely likely—would see their way to destroy that subsection of a department, and come down to the House, on the lines laid down by the Premier, with some scheme which would enable the colony to establish an observatory with a competent person at its head, as was the case in the southern colonies.

The PREMIER said he had forgotten to mention before that a short time ago he received a communication from the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, asking this colony to assist in establishing a system of weather records, and he

hardly knew what answer to give. He had every desire to do so, but was not sure whether they were in a position to undertake it. Although it was not the province of a Minister in charge of the Estimates to invite discussion, still the matter was of so much importance that he had felt justified in calling attention to it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it seemed to him that they were paying either too much or too little for that department, judging from the sort of seasons they were having lately. He thought they were paying rather too much for those seasons, and if abolishing the department altogether would lead to the breaking up of the drought he would do so at once. He thought it was time that a more complete and perfect system of meteorological observations should be adopted in the colony. It was becoming a matter of recognised importance in all parts of the civilised world, and with the exception that they had bad times just now they were perfectly justified in going to further expense in connection with it, seeing that their population was increasing very rapidly, their centres were spreading far and wide, and that with their numerous telegraph lines they could command a vast amount of information. He should like to see some such system as had been suggested by the hon. the Premier carried out, by which the observatories here might work in co-operation with those in Sydney and Melbourne; and he hoped that next year the Postmaster-General would see his way to put a sum on the Estimates for that purpose.

Mr. PALMER said the statement of the hon. member for Balonne was a very serious one. He did not know what authority the hon. gentleman had for making it, but if the records were as inaccurate as he said they were they were valueless. The value attached to a scientific record arose from its perfect scientific accuracy. It must be reliable, and if the records referred to were as inaccurate as they were stated to be, and to have been for years, the expenditure was simply waste of money. He had not seen the meteorological report for the year, but he knew that the gentleman in charge of the department was to a great extent at the mercy of those upon whom he had to depend for information. They could send it or not, as they chose, and many of them sent him returns, which he knew by instinct were unreliable. He could easily see the difference between a return filled in from guesswork and one which showed that some care had been taken to secure accuracy. If scientifically correct those records would become more and more valuable as the colony grew older, and in fifty years information of that sort would be invaluable. Certainly a radical change was required in the department if the statement of the hon. member for Balonne was correct.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had not the least doubt as to the returns being inaccurate. It was, as he said before, all haphazard work. The Meteorological Observer had no control over the other observers. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Burke that such returns, to be of any value, should be almost mathematically accurate. He might say, in connection with that very much abused portion of the community, the pastoral community, that the rainfall in a certain district was a matter of supreme importance to anyone who was going to invest in pastoral pursuits. The importance of ascertaining accurately the average rainfall in different parts of the colony was fully recognised by the “powers that be” in the other colonies. In South Australia, he believed, it was recognised many years ago, and a line was drawn by Mr. Goyder, inside which a certain run was valued upon what

was called "Goyder's" valuation, which was based altogether upon the extent of rainfall. The matter was one of the utmost importance to this colony. They had passed an elaborate Land Act last session, and they should, as far as they possibly could, get a correct record of the rainfall in the different portions of the colony, so that that element might be taken into calculation by anyone who had to appraise the value of a run. Every member of the Committee would agree with him that Queensland should not be far behind the other colonies in regard to meteorological observations. At present they were lamentably behind them. They had no really scientific head of the department who would be able to represent the colony in the event of a conference of meteorological observers being held in the other colonies. Some years ago it was proposed that such a conference should be held, and, if he was not wrong, the Government, of which he had the honour of being a member at that time, refused to allow the colony to be represented, because they felt that they had not an individual who could meet the other representatives upon anything like an equal footing. He said that without any discredit to the Meteorological Observer, and without wishing in any way to hurt his feelings. He thought the time had come when they should have at the head of the department a gentleman who would be able to take that position. He thought no money could be better spent—even if they spent three times the amount that appeared on the Estimates—than in putting themselves as nearly as they could, if not quite, on a level with the other colonies in that matter. It had not received sufficient consideration at the hands of the Committee in the past, and possibly the three years' drought had opened their eyes to the great necessity that existed for careful observations. He was sure, after what had fallen from the Premier, that the Government next session would do their best to place the department on a better footing than it was at present.

Mr. NORTON said that, however competent the hon. gentleman in charge of the department might be, under present circumstances it was utterly impossible that he could carry on the work properly. He knew that many complaints were made for which that gentleman was not to blame. The blame attached to his assistants. He believed the Government did not pay the men who sent in the reports.

The PREMIER: The telegraph officers are supposed to do it.

Mr. NORTON said they would not do it if they were not paid. He had been told that in one case—namely, at Thursday Island—Mr. MacDonnell paid a man himself and had done so for years. That was rather unfair.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the office should be abolished as it stood at present, and the person who held the position should be *per se* an officer of the State, and answerable to Parliament for his conduct. The Meteorological Observer was the only officer on the Estimates who had no power over any subordinates. He took the *apre dixit* of anyone who sent him a report. He should be a Civil servant, and nothing else; and, if necessary, his salary should be increased. He (Mr. Morehead) should be only too glad to see some of the money paid to the underpaid servants in the Telegraph Department for doing that work, and bind them to send correct reports. Mr. MacDonnell was outside of all control of the Postal Department, except so far as drawing his salary was concerned. He had no control over the Telegraph Department. Those men who had to make the reports should be paid for

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it, and some officer paid to see that the work was properly done. Why spend money over incorrect records?

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving that £5,679 be granted for the Auditor-General's Department, said it would be observed that the estimate exceeded the appropriation for last year to the extent of £134, which was partly occasioned by provision being made for a junior clerk who was formerly paid out of Contingencies, £84. The incidental expenses were decreased to the extent of £50, but the travelling expenses of inspectors were increased by £100. So that the increases amounted to £184 and the decrease to £50. He might congratulate the Committee upon the estimate being framed upon such a moderate basis. The amount of clerical duties and inquisitorial duties imposed by the Divisional Boards Act, and similar Acts, were of such an extensive character that, really, he should not be surprised if in the course of a short time the department would require to be very much enlarged. It was one of the most efficient departments in the Public Service, and acted in every way as a most complete check upon the financial conduct of the Government business. With the increase of the various Government departments, the work in the Auditor-General's Department would increase, but he was glad to be able to show the Committee that the most minute investigation was still maintained throughout all the branches of the Public Service of the colony.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there was a foot-note, "To defray actual expenses at the rate allowed to district court judges." £100 was put down for that, but upon what occasions did the Auditor-General travel, and for what purpose?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Auditor-General occasionally travelled to see that the work of the inspectors was properly carried out. Like the inspectors he visited districts when he was not expected, and checked the accounts which had previously been inspected by his subordinates. He had only just returned from a trip to Townsville and Charters Towers.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked what particular places he had visited besides? Did he simply visit the seaports for his own amusement?—or did he go further inland?—did he only follow upon the tracks of the inspectors?—had he so little faith in them that he had to see that they did their work properly? It was simply a yachting trip that the Auditor-General enjoyed, and was a new departure.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Auditor-General did go inland; but he did not travel much, because his duties were mostly in the central office. He made about two trips in a year; upon such occasions he considered it necessary to do so.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked if the Colonial Treasurer could inform them what the travelling expenses of the Auditor-General were for the last twelve months?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he could not give the exact figures. The Auditor-General had lately been at Roma and Stanthorpe, besides having gone along the coast to Rockhampton and Townsville.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was not satisfied with that answer. The Colonial Treasurer ought to be able to state what the expenses were. They had not been very much, but he would guarantee that there were very few shillings left in the Treasury out of that £100. The Under Secretary for the Treasury ought to have come down prepared with that information.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he thought the hon. gentleman was not taking a correct view of the case. The Auditor-General should have the means to travel and inspect any of the public offices of the colony, and if he drew the whole amount of £100 it would be money well spent. He knew the Auditor-General was not a man who, for the sake of a mere £100, would draw it to augment his income; he only drew the money when he was travelling on public service. He was rather surprised that the hon. gentleman should consider a sum of £100 for the travelling expenses of an officer of Parliament as money thrown away. It would be a very unfortunate thing if the Auditor-General were confined to Brisbane, and prevented from judging of the conduct of public business better than he could from any report. He had lately imposed on that officer the duty of an investigation in connection with some alleged irregularities at Keppel Bay, and he was bound to say that the examination was conducted in the most able manner, and greatly assisted him in coming to a correct decision. It was a very intricate case, and very great injustice might have been done to one man concerned, if the officer conducting the investigation had failed to make himself master of all the details of the case. He was very glad that the Auditor-General, after making a most careful investigation, was able to make such a statement of the case as to relieve an accused officer of the possibility of being dismissed from the Public Service. That was by the way. The duties of the Auditor-General were ably discharged, and he had always felt gratified when that officer visited public offices in the interior, because a personal inspection of the books enabled him to form a much better idea of how the Public Service was conducted than even the most elaborate report.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he thought that longwinded eulogy of the Auditor-General must be a little nauseous to the Committee. He did not see why their time should be taken up with that diversion. It was a pet hobby of the Treasurer to praise the Auditor-General. That officer was in a position to criticise all the other departments and could not be criticised himself. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) denied that the Auditor-General's Department was one of the best in the Public Service; it was a long way from being the best. If his department were criticised by another Auditor-General in the same way as he criticised other departments, they would see many shortcomings.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he still thought that £100 was given to allow the Auditor-General to have an annual trip. It was absurd to say he had to follow the track of his own inspectors to see they did no wrong. His salary was increased a little while ago by £200 a year, and now they were asked to give him another £100 a year to enable him to take a trip up the coast. There was no man in the Civil Service who had done so well out of the State as Mr. Drew. The bulk of his relatives and connections by marriage were quartered on the State, and some of them were very unworthy of the positions they occupied. The Colonial Treasurer told them what an invaluable servant he was, but where did his excessive value come in? That he was a toady every man knew, but no one knew what were his great claims on the State. The Colonial Treasurer asked them to deal kindly with Mr. Drew because he was an officer of the House. He was an officer of the House, and a very bad officer too. He would ask the Colonial Treasurer to look at the Estimates in other colonies, where very much more important duties had to be performed than those performed by Mr. Drew, and see if Mr. Drew was not inordinately paid

for the duties he performed? Was the Auditor-General in any other colony given an allowance for travelling expenses? This year that was at the same rate as a district court judge; in a year or so it would be at the same rate as a Supreme Court judge, then on the same scale as the Governor, and a year or two after that Mr. Drew would probably draw what he liked. The Auditor-General got a salary of £1,000 a year—absolutely as much pay as their esteemed Colonial Treasurer—and he ought to be content with it, and draw no travelling allowance unless he were required to go and inquire into some special case. When the Colonial Treasurer was asked how much of the £100 was drawn, he could tell them nothing except that the whole of it had not been drawn. That might mean that Mr. Drew had drawn £99 19s. 11d., or that he had drawn £1. He (Mr. Morehead) rather leant to the idea that it was £99 19s. 11d., from his knowledge of Mr. Drew. "Drew" and "draw" were pretty closely connected. There would be very little left in the Treasury out of that £100 if Mr. Drew had only drawn travelling expenses between Toowong and Brisbane.

Mr. BROOKES said he often listened with pleasure to the hon. member for Balonne, whose criticisms sometimes were really valuable; but he did not think what the hon. member had said about the Auditor-General would carry any weight. Everyone knew that there was a feeling towards the Auditor-General on the part of the hon. member for Balonne which was not of recent birth. It was a matter of public knowledge that wherever the Auditor-General might get sympathy, and he might add justice, it certainly would not be from the hon. member for Balonne. He would submit that the talk about a possible £100 for the Auditor-General's travelling expenses was rather pitiful. The vote expressly said, "To defray actual expenses at the rate allowed to district court judges." He would submit, with all respect to the hon. member, that that was hardly the way to treat an officer of the rank of the Auditor-General. He had never heard any expressions in the House that would lead him to suppose a want of confidence in the Auditor-General, though he had heard a great deal to the contrary. His own opinion was that he was a very valuable and efficient officer, and he certainly occupied a peculiar position—a position of enormous responsibility, and a position which was almost unassailable. He was an officer of Parliament, and he was entitled, at all events, to the amount of respect with which they would willingly treat officers occupying an inferior position. It was perfectly well known that remarks made about that officer by the leader of the Opposition or by the hon. member for Balonne would not be dispassionate remarks. He hoped he should not be called upon to say very much more upon that matter, but he should be prepared to give reasons if he were. He was rather surprised to hear the hon. member for Balonne speak of that officer as a highly paid officer. The hon. member for Balonne, although he knew a good deal, did not know everything, but he ought to know that Mr. Drew received the least salary of any Auditor-General in the colonies.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Sure?

Mr. BROOKES said he was pretty nearly certain of that, because he remembered when that officer was "on the gridiron" before, they looked into that matter, and if his memory did not act treacherously, the facts were that whereas they had only one Auditor-General, in New South Wales they had two, and, at all events, they had two in Victoria.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Three in Victoria.

Mr. BROOKES: Perhaps three. He had not looked into the matter just now, but his impression was that the statement he made just now could be substantiated—that their Auditor-General received less salary than the Auditors-General of Victoria and New South Wales. He would suggest that, in discussing the status of an officer of such a rank as the Auditor-General, they should act fairly and not allow their prejudice to overrun their better judgment. The hon. member for Balonne in his heart was a fair and just man, but in that matter he had allowed himself to be run away with, and there was more of prejudice than intellectual conviction in what he said.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was sorry to have to correct such an elderly gentleman as the junior hon. member for North Brisbane, but he found the hon. member was wrong as usual in his facts. He had taken the trouble to look up what the Auditor-General got in New South Wales, which he understood was a slightly more thickly peopled colony than Queensland. He found on looking over the expenditure for 1883—when he believed the colony of New South Wales was even then more numerous than Queensland—Volume I. for 1883; he wished to be precise with the hon. member who was always so accurate himself. He found at page 639 that the Auditor-General was provided for by schedule. He then started to search out the schedule, wincing at the same time under the hon. member's castigation. However, notwithstanding that the flail was upon his back he succeeded in finding Schedule A at page 618, and he found there that the Auditor-General of New South Wales received a salary of £900 a year. That ought to shut up the hon. member as he (Mr. Morehead) shut up the book from which he quoted.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he did not rise to discuss the Auditor-General, but merely to point out that the salary of £900 was voted to Mr. Rolleston in New South Wales; but previous to that, £100 additional had been voted for the office. All that had been gone into at the time the Auditor-General's increase of salary was under discussion; and he merely rose to say that the £100 voted for that officer for travelling expenses had been on the Estimates at least since 1879, and he believed further back than that.

Mr. PALMER said the junior member for North Brisbane stated that the Auditor-General was one of the most valuable and efficient of their public officers. He could not gainsay that in any way; but his report, so far as comparison with the reports of other departments was concerned, was valueless. The fact of having one year ending on the 31st December, and the other on the 30th June, made the Auditor-General's report valueless for the purposes of comparison.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said the Colonial Treasurer deprecated any further reference to the addition for the Auditor-General; but he must remember that he brought it on himself by his own fulsome eulogy of the Auditor-General. He himself had not so much respect for the Auditor-General or his ability; because he did not think he had been such a conspicuous success. It was now ten years since a commission sat for the purpose of revising the system of dealing with the public accounts of the colony. The conclusion came to then was that the system was an expensive system—that as one set of books was kept by the Auditor-General, and a similar set of books, going over the same items, was kept by the Treasurer, there was a great deal of unnecessary book-keeping going on. The great recommendation of the new system devised was that, while being a

sufficient control over the different Government offices and the expenditure of the Government, they would have the department at a great deal less cost to the colony than £4,000 a year. Now, instead of the expenses going down during the administration of the Auditor-General, they were steadily creeping up, and had crept up a little bit that time. The expenses now were £5,679, or working on towards double what it was when the great reformation was made. It was reduced at one time to £3,000, and it was now nearly double that. He could see no reason to consider that as the most efficient department of the Public Service. He said it was not; and if the same kind of criticism was applied to the Auditor-General's that he applied to the other departments they would know the deficiencies of the Auditor-General's department a great deal better than they did now.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought the present was an appropriate opportunity of referring to the death of "A.B.C.D." That individual had been dead for some time now—for twelve months or two years. The columns of the *Courier* used to be from time to time occupied by letters on various public or political matters, signed by "A.B.C.D." On investigation it was not difficult to see that "A.B.C.D." was W. L. G. Drew. It was useless for him to sink his identity under the first four letters of the alphabet. If he had signed his letters "A.S.S." he would have got nearer the truth as to what his signature should be. He was a most interesting individual—that Auditor-General. It appeared that he was now quarrelling about the new bishop. He was a Jack-of-all-trades and master of none, and was well known by the lucubrations he put in the newspapers on vexed political questions. But was it not highly improper that an individual occupying the position of Auditor-General—an officer of Parliament who should be as impartial as the Clerk of the House—should write letters dealing with vexed political questions to the newspapers. He would not go further into that charge, but he maintained that the Auditor-General was a very overpaid official. And not only that, but he also, by by-ways and cross-ways, and underhand ways, had foisted his relatives, friends, and hangers-on upon the State. There was no other officer of the Public Service of whom the same could be said. The State had to pay for his friends and relatives. Whether they paid him or not he (Mr. Morehead) did not know, but he would repeat that they were foisted on the State, and that was a fact that could be verified by the strictest inquiry.

Mr. BROOKES said he rose to express his strong disapprobation of the hon. member for Balonne's speech, on account of its venom and spleen. It was most unfair, when they were merely discussing a paltry £100 which was allowed to the Auditor-General for travelling expenses, and which was not paid unless it was spent in travelling, to make such an attack on the Auditor-General. In anybody else such conduct would have been contemptible. The hon. member for Balonne had a gullet as big as that of an alligator, and the Auditor-General was his favourite prey. What decency was there in bringing up the "A.B.C.D." business every year? If the hon. member asked him (Mr. Brookes) straight if he thought it was right that the Auditor-General, or any Civil servant, should write letters on politics to the newspapers, they would agree like Siamese twins. Such conduct was very wrong, but all that should surely be forgiven by a noble-minded forgiving man like the hon. member for Balonne. Why drag the buried matter out of the tomb? There should be no more of it. But the hon.

member did not confine himself to the region of fact. He slipped also into the region of fiction, and talked about the Auditor-General in connection with the new Bishop. Now, what had that Committee to do with the Bishop, or with the relations between the Bishop and the Auditor-General? He (Mr. Brookes) could say there was no quarrel between them, but that was all irrelevant matter. The speech of the hon. member for Balonne was an unworthy way of dealing with a Government officer, and no matter if the hon. member made a similar speech every five minutes until 12 o'clock, he would only impress the public mind with the fact that the hon. member for Balonne could not judge fairly of the Auditor-General.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had no intention of making an impression on the public mind at all. He had simply given his opinions of the Auditor-General for what they were worth. He would have failed in his duty had he not pointed out the positions occupied in the Public Service by the relatives and friends of the Auditor-General. He was perfectly justified in pointing out that that officer had managed to foist a large number of his relatives upon the Civil Service of the colony. That fact had remained unanswered by the hon. member for North Brisbane.

The PREMIER said the Committee had merely been informed by the hon. member for Balonne that the fact was so. The fact, however, was not so. The hon. member took an opportunity every year to vent his spleen on one of the best officers in the Public Service; but he understood he probably would not repeat the performance next year, on which the House was to be congratulated.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the sarcastic statement of the Premier was absolutely untrue. He (Mr. Morehead) had proved to every man in the House that the Auditor-General had a large number of his relatives and friends in the Civil Service. There was his son-in-law, who was recently promoted. There was also Mr. Rogers in the Post Office. When he (Mr. Morehead) was in the Post Office, he was pestered to promote that man, but distinctly declined to do so because he was so utterly incompetent. That man was not fit to hold any position in the Civil Service except on the ground that he was a perfectly honest and straightforward man. Mr. Drew's friends, however, pestered him (Mr. Morehead) to push him forward. The hon. member said that probably next year he would not be annoyed by his (Mr. Morehead's) presence there. Probably he would not; probably during that year his place there might not know him. But he might come back again, if his life was spared; and some constituency might again return him to the House. The dictatorship of the Premier would not last for ever. When the hon. member had the impertinence to say that it would be a good thing for the House if he went away, he could quite believe it as far as the Premier himself was concerned. There was no one who could irritate the hon. member so much as he (Mr. Morehead) could, and that was the only reason he should regret being away; but he trusted that others were growing up to take his place who would irritate the hon. member even more than he had done. The hon. gentleman was getting a little bit too "cocky." He thought he was going to "boss" the whole colony because he had got a flexible tail at the present time, but some day he would find that the tail was paralysed, and that he could no longer wag it. He was not sure that that time was not coming. No doubt his new followers who had lately come into the House would do anything he liked, but some of his older supporters, who knew him better, would not support him so much in the future as they had done in the past.

Mr. BROOKES said it was remarkable how sensitive the hon. gentleman was to a little impertinence; he was the thinnest-skinned man in the House, and yet no one could say coarser or more unfeeling things than that hon. member when it suited him. He hoped the hon. member was not going away. If he did it would cause him great grief, and he should have to go to the expense of a new suit of mourning. There was no man whose absence would make a greater gap in the House, or whose absence he should more deplore. But all that was beside the mark. They were talking about the Auditor-General, and he could only repeat that the more the hon. member for Balonne talked against the Auditor-General the more would he strengthen the opinion of hon. members and the outside public that the Auditor-General was a most excellent officer.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked whether that obstruction on the part of the hon. member was to continue all night? No doubt the hon. member had got a brief from the Auditor-General; he was just the sort of man to be one of the Auditor-General's friends.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH asked when they might expect to have the Auditor-General's report?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the annual report, which was made up to the 30th September, was not completed yet, and he was afraid the preliminary report would not be forthcoming before the end of the session.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said that up to the present time they had only had the audited accounts for last year. Surely such an efficient department ought to have had the report on the table before the end of October; or they might, at least, have had the preliminary report as they had always had in previous years. Would it be believed that that perfect department had only given them information up to the end of June last year? He knew that the accounts for the year could not be audited before the end of September, but nine-tenths of the work was done long before that date. But the present session had been characterised by the extraordinary time it had taken to put the various departmental reports on the table. Some of them were not in yet. However, there was more excuse for the Auditor-General than there was for some of the other heads of departments. The delay that had taken place in laying the Railway Commissioner's report on the table was perfectly scandalous. It could have been made up in January and laid on the table when Parliament met. Instead of that, eight months elapsed before they got the report, and then the information in it was old, dry, and useless for all practical purposes. The Post Office report was a credit, and it actually referred to facts that happened a long time after the end of the year reported on. That was very useful to members of Parliament, but it would be extremely inconvenient in after years for reference, because it would be seen that a fact which occurred in 1885 was actually mentioned in the report for 1884. As to the Auditor-General's report there was no reason why it should not have been laid before Parliament before the session came to an end.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that if there was any blame in the matter it should not be attached to the Auditor-General, but to the Audit Act. The Treasury accounts for the year ended on the 30th June, were not closed till the 30th September, and only three or four days had elapsed since the Cabinet dealt with the amount brought forward in account with the Treasury for the year which ended on the 30th June last. To afford hon. members the fullest information as to how the balances available for further

expenditure stood, he had placed on the table of the House a list of the balances brought forward. He could inform the hon. member that the accounts had not yet been forwarded to the Auditor-General to report upon, and therefore that officer was in no way to blame. The Treasury had three months from the 30th September to make up the accounts, but they generally endeavoured to get them completed in October, and he believed that before the end of the month they would be sent to the Auditor-General. He did not suppose that that officer's report would be ready by next week, but if it was he would lay it on the table.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said no doubt it would be satisfactory to the Auditor-General that the Treasurer took the blame entirely on his own shoulders. It would enable that officer to state that he had not had an opportunity of giving all the information to Parliament that he was desirous of giving, because if there was anything by which the Auditor-General was characterised, it was sending down reports very often; at all events when it suited himself.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he should advise the Auditor-General of the feeling of the Committee concerning the desirability of receiving his report, and, although he could not promise that the Committee should have the information before the session closed—yet if the state of the public accounts could be communicated briefly, he had no doubt that officer would do so.

Mr. MOREHEAD said perhaps the Treasurer would indicate when the House was likely to rise. He knew it must be some time before the 14th November, because that was the time fixed for the hon. the Premier and the Colonial Treasurer to go north. If the hon. gentleman would tell them when they were likely to have the report, it would probably save a great deal of discussion; at the same time he did not believe they would get it at all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would like to correct the hon. the leader of the Opposition, who had stated that the Commissioner for Railways' report was laid on the table in the month of August. Now, he found by the "Votes and Proceedings" that it was laid on the table on the 8th July—two days after the House met. He thought the hon. member ought to be a little more careful, and not make those haphazard statements.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I said July or August.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You said August.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said he would refresh the hon. member's memory about a promise he made last year. Feeling satisfied that the House was not likely to meet before July, he asked an expression of opinion from the Minister for Works as to whether that report should not be published and circulated amongst members before the House met, knowing, as he did, that the Commissioner ought to have his report out within a month after the end of the year. The Minister agreed that it would be a proper thing to do, and made a promise that it should be done, and that the report should be published in the newspapers; and now they found that it was not issued until after the House met in July, although it might have been circulated long before.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not know whether the hon. gentleman's memory was defective or not, but he had a peculiar way of misconstruing things. He was not sure about

the hon. gentleman's veracity, or that he spoke the truth. The House met on the 6th July, and the Commissioner's report was laid on the table on the 8th.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said if the hon. member could muster up courage to express his opinion so clearly that they could understand him, and not simply condense a lot of impudent, impertinent remarks into a single expression, which was perfectly unworthy a Minister of the Crown, it would be very much better. What did it matter to him what the hon. member's opinion of him was? He said he did not believe he (Sir T. McIlwraith) spoke the truth. He did not care a straw for the hon. member's opinion, and never had. He repeated that it was unworthy of the position of a Minister of the Crown that he should stand up and say nothing else except expressing such an unworthy opinion as that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said when the hon. gentleman accused a public officer of neglect of duty he had a perfect right to get up and correct him.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked if those remarks applied to the Auditor-General? If they did he thought the Minister for Works was rather out of order. The Chairman, however, seemed to take things very quietly; all the bad language used on the other side did not seem to affect him a bit. If he would endeavour to combine the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo* possibly things would go on a little better.

Mr. NORTON said he would remind the Premier that last session he brought up the question of circulating reports before the House met, in order that members might have an opportunity of looking through them as they were published, instead of getting a pile of them together. The House agreed that it was desirable that they should be circulated, but very few of them had been. In fact, some of them that were published weeks before the House met were not distributed until weeks afterwards. He was sure that the Premier recognised the importance of the matter.

The PREMIER said he perfectly recognised the importance of having reports circulated as soon as possible. There had been delay in some cases, and he hoped that the officers of the departments, whose duty it was to prepare reports, would take notice of the debate that had taken place that evening.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER in moving £13,550—Payments from trust and special funds—Pacific Island immigration—said there were a few changes in the vote—an item of £250 for an assistant inspector at Bundaberg. There was a very large number of Polynesians in that district, and it was considered necessary that there should be an assistant inspector, the same as there was already for the districts of Ingham, Mackay, and Townsville including the Burdekin. The number of permanent Government agents had been reduced from 12 to 10. The additional inspector at Bundaberg involved additional forage allowance. There was a new resident surgeon at Geraldton, and also at Ingham, which necessitated forage allowance at the latter place. There was an increase of £1,000 in contingencies. Particulars of all that expenditure had been recently laid before the House in connection with the discussion upon a Bill dealing with the subject, and it was therefore unnecessary for him to go into the matter further in detail.

Mr. BLACK said the hon. gentleman spoke of the increase of £2,200 in the management of that department as if it were a mere bagatelle; and considering that the planters had had to

submit to increased taxation very recently in order to meet that expenditure, it was only right that there should be a little explanation about it. When he complained, during the passing of the Polynesian Bill, of the excessive expenditure in management of hospitals, the Premier told him he would have an opportunity of referring to it when the Estimates came on. He wanted some promise from the hon. gentleman in charge to economise that fund. In his own district the cost of inspection was £1,800 a year. There were four officers—two inspectors and two surgeons—in that one district, and the amount was really excessive. The islanders were concentrated in that district, and there was no necessity for two inspectors; besides, the number was gradually decreasing. In the Maryborough district, where the islanders were very much scattered and the inspection more difficult, there was only one inspector. A deputation waited upon the Premier, from Maryborough, and suggested that their Polynesian Fund should be kept apart from the other districts, as it was unfair that they should be taxed for the inordinate expenditure which was going on in the Mackay and other districts. The Maryborough department cost £950 a year. There was another item to which he would refer. He saw that the Immigration Agent was down at £100. He understood that there was a separate department in Brisbane for the management of Polynesian immigration, which was presided over by the chief clerk at £400 a year, and three clerks at £150 each. Surely that was enough for the Brisbane management without paying the Immigration Agent £100 a year.

The PREMIER said the Immigration Agent was appointed, by the Polynesian Labourers' Act, the officer in charge of that department. Part of his salary—£100 a year—was paid from that fund, although the work was practically done by the chief clerk. With respect to the alleged extravagance at Mackay, he did not think that two surgeons were too many to look after 3,400 persons, of whom a very large proportion were sick from time to time, and whose mortality was very much beyond the ordinary average. He was certain that two inspectors were not too many for that number of islanders. One could never do the work himself. It was physically impossible.

Mr. BLACK said he understood that the £100 a year was only a matter of form, and as he did not do any work connected with the department, which was left in charge of the chief clerk, he saw no reason why the £100 should be paid to a man who was only an ornamental officer. He moved that the item "Immigration Agent, £100," be struck off.

The PREMIER said the proposal was to reduce the salary of the Immigration Agent by £100. At present the salary was £600, £500 from the revenue and £100 from that fund. The law required that he should be the head of the department.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the Immigration Agent was at the head of European immigration as well?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. BLACK said he understood that he took no part in the management of that department; and he did not see why they should pay £100 a year for a nominal head. He saw no reason why the planters should be called upon to pay £100 a year if he did no work in connection with that branch of the department.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. BLACK said that last year there was an allowance of £60 in lieu of quarters for the resident surgeon in Mackay. This year it was increased

to £100. In Mackay there was a magnificent range of hospital buildings erected at a cost of £5,000, which contained a surgeon's quarters. He could safely say that there were very few districts in the colony where the European hospital was erected on such an extravagant scale.

The PREMIER said he understood that there was no accommodation for the resident surgeon at the hospital. He had never been there, and had nothing to do with building the place. The resident surgeon when appointed had an allowance in lieu of quarters, because he could not live there. Did the hon. gentleman say there were quarters there for a man with a family? It was not a condition that a surgeon should be a bachelor. He was specially qualified for his particular work, and gave the greatest satisfaction.

Mr. BLACK: So he does.

The PREMIER: Why should he be compelled to do what was impossible—to live with his family at the hospital?

Mr. BAILEY said that in reference to the vote for the forage allowance for the surgeon at Maryborough, he believed some planters waited upon the Minister complaining of the extravagant expenditure of that officer. He could not see at all why there should be an allowance of £100 for forage for the resident surgeon at the hospital in that town.

The PREMIER said the surgeon's work was not confined to the hospital; he had to visit plantations as well, and for that he must keep a buggy.

Mr. BAILEY said he was glad to hear that it was part of the duty of the resident surgeon to visit the plantations. He did not think many of the planters knew that, and he thought they would be glad to know it. It would often save a planter the expense of sending to the hospital Polynesians who might only be malingering.

The PREMIER said he hoped he would not be understood to mean that the planters could send in a series of requisitions so as to keep the unfortunate surgeon driving round the country night and day the whole week. It was part of the surgeon's duty to visit the plantations. In Mackay two surgeons had been appointed, because one was not enough to attend to both the hospital and the plantations.

Mr. BAILEY said there were often Polynesians who were not ill enough to be sent to the hospital, but who required treatment of some kind. He was glad to know that in such cases the planters could demand the attendance of the surgeon.

Mr. ANNEAR said he looked on the vote as being £600 per annum to the resident surgeon. He thought a resident surgeon's duty was to stop at the hospital and go to other places where Polynesians were employed when he was called on to do so. What did the surgeon at Maryborough do? He (Mr. Annear) like to call a spade a spade, and clear away any obstruction as they went on. The £100 for forage was to enable that gentleman to drive into Maryborough about 11 o'clock in the morning to compete with doctors doing private practice in the town. He had the right of private practice. He (Mr. Annear) did not wish to make any rash assertions, but he knew where that gentleman went to in Maryborough; he knew where people went to meet him, and he saw him every day when he (Mr. Annear) was in Maryborough. He received £600 a year, and his time ought to be devoted to the duties he received the money for.

The PREMIER said he was surprised to hear the hon. gentleman say that, because only a few days ago the doctor asked permission to have

private practice, and it was refused. He was not sure that he was not allowed private practice at some out of the way places, but he knew there was an application either for the privilege or for the extension of the privilege, and it was refused.

Mr. SMYTH asked in what position islanders were when their time had expired?

The PREMIER said the law just now was in rather a confused state, but the Bill before Parliament would put it straight. When Polynesians were employed under agreement the employers were subject to hospital rates, but "boys" who had their certificates as being exempt from the provisions of the Act would have to be paid for in the ordinary way.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he saw that while the surgeons at Maryborough and Mackay got £500 a year there was only £200 for Geraldton and £300 for Ingham. Had the Government obtained surgeons at these salaries?

The PREMIER said those surgeons were also attached to the European hospitals. The salary was paid partly by the local hospital committee and partly by the Government out of that fund.

Mr. BAILEY said he hoped the Government would not lay down a rigid rule that surgeons in charge of those hospitals should not be allowed private practice. When an hospital was five or six miles out of town, if people were sick or met with an accident, the services of a medical man were very useful. If they laid down a rigid rule not to allow any private practice it would not be at all a benefit to the community. With regard to what the Premier had previously said, he understood that if an employer had Polynesians sick he could demand the attendance of the surgeon to see if they were really sick and required to be removed to the hospital. He was told that with some Polynesians to send them to the hospital was as good as killing them right off. They got into a fright and made up their minds to die; they believed they were sent there to die. He did not altogether approve of hospitals for Polynesians; many of them could be a great deal better treated on the plantations.

Mr. BLACK said that under the heading of Contingencies there was £100 down for incidentals; and again, under "Hospitals," there was a further sum of £3,000 for contingencies. Out of a vote of £13,550 there was no less than £4,000—about 35 per cent.—which they were asked to vote without any explanation as to how it was to be spent. It seemed to be entirely in the hands of the officials of the department, and might be spent in the same reckless way that they had been spending the money for the last twelve months, when they reduced the fund from £13,000 to £4,000.

The PREMIER said the item of "incidentals" related to a number of contingencies connected with the working of the department. There were a number of small things that came under that heading, such as when they had to maintain islanders for a short time, or in case of runaway islanders—small matters like that, which would be seen by the return. Sometimes inquiries had to be made, and there were expenses for advertising. The last item of £3,000 for contingencies was the cost of maintaining the hospitals. They had to provide food, there were servants employed, and there were the ordinary expenses of working hospitals. The additional £1,000 was for two additional hospitals.

Mr. BLACK said he would like to get an assurance from the Premier, before the vote passed, that he would take some steps to see if he could not reduce that very great expenditure. Would he try by some reasonable means—say,

by entrusting the management of the hospitals more to those who were on the spot—to reduce the expenses? Of course the hon. gentleman maintained that the expenditure was not extravagant, but it had clearly been shown that the expenses of maintaining the islanders was about £70 a head.

The PREMIER: Nothing of the kind was shown.

Mr. BLACK said that was what was shown by the return of the islanders in the hospitals. There was an anticipated expenditure of £10,000 for 100 boys.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman took the average for the month of September, and not the average for the whole year.

Mr. BLACK said that even that would bring it up to £50 per head. He did not admit the hon. gentleman's figures at all. They were not in possession of all the figures they required; he had asked for a return of the islanders in the hospitals.

The PREMIER: You asked for the month of September.

Mr. BLACK said he asked for a return of the islanders in the hospitals at that time, and in two hospitals, where there were 100 islanders, the cost of maintenance was at the rate of £10,000 a year.

The PREMIER said the average cost could not be reduced from day to day, according to the number of islanders in the hospital. The hon. member had asked for a return for the month of September, which happened to be the best month in the year, and he got it. He did not know why the hon. member had asked for it, but the average for the whole year was a very different thing. As to the Government reducing the expenditure, he had already intimated to some of the Maryborough committee personally, and to the committee of the Mackay hospital by letter, some time ago, that the Government would be very glad indeed if they would exercise supervision over the expenditure. He had been under the impression that they were doing so all along, as that was their special function, and he did not know why they had not done so. They had only themselves to blame for not having exercised that supervision. He was very sorry that they had not done so, because the Government looked to them to assist them in dealing with those hospitals.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the sum of £3,557 be voted for the Chief Inspector of Sheep. There was a diminution in the vote, which was due to the fact that some special items were required last year that would not be required for this year—expenditure in connection with quarantine buildings. There were some additional salaries to inspectors of sheep, though there were only the same number employed. There were two at £250 and one at £150. He could give hon. members information as to the salaries of each inspector, and the places where they were stationed, if they required it.

Mr. PALMER asked if he was to understand that the quarantine buildings were at Indooroopilly?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. PALMER said perhaps the hon. gentleman was not aware that there was danger in having the quarantine station at Indooroopilly. The mere fact of diseased sheep having to travel to Indooroopilly was enough to infect the whole colony. In New South Wales it was found the sheep had scarcely travelled a few miles when it cost many thousands to disinfect the colony.

The PREMIER said he did not know who selected the site; but it appeared to be recommended as a suitable site.

Mr. PALMER: How do the sheep get there?

The PREMIER said he presumed they were driven there; but there were no sheep depastured between any of the wharves and Indooroopilly.

Mr. PALMER said the station might just as well be at Toowoomba as at Indooroopilly. The mere fact of travelling scab-diseased sheep in a railway was sufficient to spread the infection. He believed the object of the quarantine station was to prevent the spread of scab, and if that was so, the station might just as well be at Toowoomba as at Indooroopilly for all the good it would do in preventing the spread of that disease.

The PREMIER said he found he had been in error. The quarantine station at Indooroopilly was only for sheep supposed to be clean. The true quarantine station was at St. Helena, and sheep infected with scab were not allowed to land or were landed at St. Helena.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £4,302 be voted for Registrar of Brands. The item was almost the same as last year, except that there was a larger number of inspectors of brands.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said the next vote, Police Superannuation Fund, was a formal one, the amounts being fixed by law. The vote was for £4,266 16s. 8d. There was an increase in the number of constables who had retired. The fund out of which the payments were made was sufficient for the present; but it was a matter that would have to be dealt with seriously before long.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that £6,834 be voted to pay the expenses of the Government Savings Bank. The item was increased by £465, which was accounted for by the appointment of three additional junior clerks, an increase for clerical assistance of £150, and slight increases to some officers in charge of country branches.

Mr. BLACK asked the Colonial Treasurer what steps had been taken to prevent a recurrence of the defalcations which had taken place in connection with the Polynesian Islanders' deposits, which the planters had been called upon to pay for?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the defalcations occurred in the Immigration Department, which was in charge of the Colonial Secretary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said that, in the first place, the planters were not called upon to make up the deficiencies. They were paid out of the Pacific Islanders' Fund, and the money thus used consisted in very great part of the wages of deceased islanders. It might be as well said that dead islanders' wages were used in the maintenance of planters' servants in the hospital, but it was not necessary to say anything of that sort at all. It was difficult to know exactly how the frauds occurred. On several occasions islanders were fully identified as depositors, but their money was found to have been drawn by means of forgeries. The receipts for the money bore what purported to be the marks of the depositors and the initials of officials, which were forgeries. The identity of the depositors was easily proved, for they had good memories, and could tell exactly the particulars of the money they had deposited. Such frauds could, no doubt, be accomplished by means of personation, but those already done were done when the business was conducted in

an extremely loose and irregular manner. Means were taken now to identify the islanders fully, and there was no probability of any more mistakes unless in the case of very clever personation. The total amount of the defalcations was £165. One officer was suspected, and he, in fact, admitted that he had imitated another officer's initials, but there was not sufficient evidence to prosecute him criminally.

Mr. BLACK asked if every islander who deposited had now his own bank book? He pointed out last year that, owing to the way their deposits were received by the Polynesian inspectors, irregularities would undoubtedly occur. The inspectors were in the habit of going round every six months and receiving the islanders' money, which they lodged in lump sums in the Government Savings Bank. If that system was continued, serious irregularities were bound to occur; and, moreover, if an inspector was removed, how could his successor identify the men?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that bank books were issued to each of the depositing islanders immediately after the defalcations occurred.

Mr. NORTON asked if the officer who came under suspicion in connection with the frauds was still in the Government Service?

The PREMIER said that he certainly was not.

Mr. BLACK asked if each islander had his deposit book in his own possession?

The PREMIER said the practice was not uniform in that respect. Some of them had their books, others had theirs in the keeping of the inspectors.

Mr. BLACK said that every boy should have his book in his own possession, otherwise irregularities would continue.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained to leave to sit again to-morrow.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER informed the House that he had received a message from the Legislative Council intimating that the Council did not insist on their amendments in the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Bill to which the Legislative Assembly disagreed; that they agreed to the amendments in new clause 5; and agreed to the amendment on their amendment in clause 9.

The House adjourned at thirty-two minutes past 10 o'clock.