

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 1886

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 18 November, 1886.

Message from Administrator of the Government.—
Question.—Motion for Adjournment—railway station-masters' salaries.—Leave of Absence to Mr. Morehead.—Message from the Legislative Council—Building Societies Bill.—Warwick to St. George Railway—witnesses' expenses.—Supply—resumption of committee.—Adjournment.

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

MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The SPEAKER said: I have to announce the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, forwarding the Supplementary Estimates No. 2, for 1885-6, and the Loan Estimates for 1886-7.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the Estimates were ordered to be printed, and referred to the Committee of Supply.

QUESTION.

Mr. GRIMES asked the Minister for Works—

1. Have instructions been given for a trial survey of a branch railway line from Indooroopilly to Brookfield?

2. When is the survey likely to be commenced?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) replied—

The Chief Engineer has been instructed to make a trial survey from Indooroopilly to Brookfield as soon as a surveyor is available for the service.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

RAILWAY STATION-MASTERS' SALARIES.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I am desirous of giving an explanation to hon. members in connection with the matter which was referred to last night when the Estimates were passing through in connection with the salaries of the station-masters. I instructed the Commissioner this morning to get a report from the traffic manager on the subject. That report has been furnished and I will now read it to the House:—

"MEMO.

"In accordance with your verbal request of this morning I have the honour to report on the salaries, South Coast Railway, as follows:—

"South Coast Junction.—The present officer in charge of this station was appointed 1st Sept. last at a salary of £120 per annum, made up as follows:—

Railway salary	£98
Postal "	12
Telegraph "	10

Total £120

and he has been paid accordingly. He has never made any complaint and has never been asked by me to remit any part of the above.

"The previous officer was appointed in March 1885, at a salary of £120 per annum inclusive of all duties connected with the Post and Telegraph Department as well as the Railway. He was paid at the rate of £120 per annum from the time of his appointment until removed to Bethania.

"Rocklea.—The porter at present in charge of this station is paid at £100 per annum, as follows, namely:—

Railway salary	£88
Postal "	12

Total £100

He was appointed in April, 1885, when the station was first opened, at a salary of £100 per annum. I enclose copy of his letter of appointment, from which you will see that the salary—namely, £100—was distinctly stated to include postal duties. He has been paid in full, and has never been asked to refund any part of the £100 at which he was appointed.

"Cooper's Plains.—The gatekeeper in charge here is paid £13 by the Railway and £12 by the Postal Department—total, £25 per annum.

"Sunnybank.—The porter in charge at this station was appointed when the station first opened at a salary of £100 per annum, to include post and telegraph duties as well as railway. He has been paid accordingly, and has never been asked to refund any part of that sum.

"Bethania.—The porter at present in charge of this station was appointed in September last to the position of station-master, postmaster, and telegraph operator as follows:—

Railway salary	£78
Postal "	12
Telegraph "	10

Total £100

and he has been paid accordingly. The previous officer was appointed at a salary of £100 per annum to include the post and telegraph duties. He was paid in full and was never asked to refund any part of that amount.

"Logan Village.—The porter at present in charge was appointed in June, 1886, at £104 per annum, made up as follows:—

Railway salary	£86
Postal "	18

Total £104

He has been paid accordingly, and has never made any complaint. The previous officer was appointed when the station opened in September, 1885, at £132 per annum, to include postal duties, and he was paid accordingly at the rate of £132.

"The misunderstanding in regard to this matter arose last year. When the South Coast line was opened, I pointed out the advisability of the officers in charge of stations being paid one salary, to include post and telegraph duties. The Postal Department, however, objected to this in a letter addressed to the Under Secretary for Railways, and dated May, 1885. This letter was never communicated to me, and in making up the pay-sheets I entered the full salary, inclusive of the Post and Telegraph allowances, in accordance with the arrangement approved of by you.

"I afterwards discovered that the Postal Department were paying their portion of the salaries to the officers direct instead of through the Railway Department. It will be seen that each officer has all along been paid in full, but for the period between April, 1885, and January, 1886, they accepted pay for the same duties from both departments. It was this money over-paid prior to the 1st February last which I asked them to refund, and the amounts refunded have all been duly credited in the railway accounts.

"Since 1st February last the Railway Department has paid its own proportion of the salary agreed upon between the officers on one part and the department on the other, and there can be no misunderstanding in the future. There never would have been any misunderstanding if the Postal Department's letter of May, 1885, had been communicated to me, or if the officers themselves had drawn attention to the fact that they were being paid twice for the same duties.

"I have not addressed a letter on this subject to any of the officers in question since the month of March last, nor have they made any complaint to me during that time. I certainly understood the whole matter was disposed of then. The officers have the right of appeal to the Commissioner for Railways, and this facility for redressing their grievances they have never availed themselves of.

"In conclusion I may point out that my reasons for recommending that the Railway Department should pay all the salaries due to its officers, and collect from the other departments the moiety due by them, was the difficulty I experienced in selecting officers for the more important positions. It is not so long ago that the station-master at Oxley made a better income than the one at Brisbane, and would have looked upon promotion to Brisbane or Ipswich as a decided reduction."

I think that explains the whole matter, Mr. Speaker. The mistake arose through the Postal Department paying their share while the Railway Department paid the whole salary, and the officers were consequently paid twice for the performance of the same duties. That was about twelve months ago, and since that time each department has paid its own share.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Move the adjournment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—We have heard the statement written by the traffic manager, and a portion of it entirely contradicts the statement made by the Minister for Works last night. The Minister for Works last night stated distinctly that no letters were ever written to those officers to return any moneys paid them by the Post Office authorities. I knew at the time that that statement was incorrect, and I could not say upon what authority the Minister made it, but it must have been on the authority of the officer who in the statement just now read admits that he did write to those men, but not since March last. The Minister for Works says that the misunderstanding arose from the Postal Department and the Railway Department paying the same salaries for some time last year, but does he forget that it is two years ago since I brought the matter under his notice? Does the hon. gentleman not recollect that two years ago the matter was brought under his notice when the same estimates were going through? The complaint was made then, and the same complaint is going on still. So that whatever misunderstanding arose twelve months ago cannot be the same as was brought under his notice two years ago, and which was again brought under his notice last night. The hon. member for Oxley had said he could produce half-a-dozen letters that were written to those officers, and I had complaints made to me on the same matter. The traffic manager said no complaints were made to him; but I complained to him and to the Under Secretary for Railways; and I even went to the Post Office to find out whether the statements of those men were true, and I was told they were perfectly true.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; they were asked to return money they had been paid twice over.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The Post Office authorities refused to place their servants under the control of the Railway Department. They looked upon the men running the post offices and telegraph offices as their servants, and both the Postmaster-General and Mr. MacDonnell would not suffer those men to be controlled by the Railway Department. Then when the men themselves had their salaries stopped, some of them went to the Postal Department to ask why their salaries were stopped, and the Post Office authorities could not tell them anything about it. The best thing the Minister can do is to carry out the promise he made last night, and interview the men themselves, get their statement and place it before the traffic manager, and he will then be able to get at the correct statement.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have every confidence in the statement of the traffic manager.

Mr. GRIMES said: Mr. Speaker,—I merely mentioned this matter last night so that an explanation might be given, and it is very likely that the difficulty occurred as stated by the traffic manager. Certainly the station-masters are under the impression that, whoever made the

mistake, they are £12 short in their salaries, and that that amount has never been made up to them. It may have occurred through the station-masters removing from one place to another. The statement of the traffic manager bears out the correctness of what I said—that letters had been sent. It was denied last night; but with some trouble I could have produced half-a-dozen of those letters. It remains yet to be seen whether some of the station-masters are not losers to the extent of £12.

Question put and negatived.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO MR. MOREHEAD.

Mr. NORTON, in moving—

That leave of absence for the whole of the present session be granted to the honourable member for Balonne, Mr. B. D. Morehead—

said: Mr. Speaker,—This motion is rather an unusual one—quite an unusual one in this House—and therefore I think it is desirable to offer some explanation to the House why it was tabled, more especially at this late period of the session. I would point out, sir, that at the time Mr. Morehead left the colony his intention was to remain until about the end of the year, but there were circumstances which pointed to the possible necessity for his return at an earlier date; so that had the session been a long one, and had those circumstances occurred to necessitate his return earlier than he expected, he would have been back before the conclusion of the session, and would not have needed to obtain the leave of the House for his absence. Provision is made in our Standing Orders that if a member absents himself for more than a fortnight without leave of the House, his action is regarded as a matter of contempt; but we all know that that Standing Order, in this House at any rate, has for a large number of years not been taken any notice of. During the time I have been in the House, I have never once heard leave of absence asked for a member who wanted to be away only two or three weeks. The circumstances under which I ask leave of absence for the hon. member are these: Before he left the colony he was desirous that his constituents should be consulted in every possible way; he was prepared to resign his seat if there had been any such desire on their part, but he was requested by a large number of his constituents not to resign. I would point out that there is provision made in the Legislative Assembly Act by which it is possible for the House to grant leave to a member for the whole session, and thus the vacating of the seat is obviated. There is no provision made for giving the member leave; but the clause which refers to the matter is so worded that it seems to assume there would be circumstances under which it might be necessary for a member to be absent during the whole of the session; and in that case it requires him to ask for leave, otherwise his seat becomes vacant. The 7th section refers to this matter—

“If any member of the Assembly should for one whole session of the Legislature, without the permission of the Assembly entered upon its journals, fail to give his attendance in the said House”—

or do certain other things—

“his seat in such Assembly shall thereby become vacant.”

The intervening words have no reference to this matter. The wording of that clause indicates that circumstances may arise rendering it necessary for a member to be absent, and all that is required in such a case is that he should obtain permission of the House. Now, sir, the hon. member for Balonne, Mr. Morehead, is a gentleman who has occupied a distinguished position

in this House. He has been, I think, for fourteen or fifteen years continuously a member of this House, except for a short period when he had a seat in another place; and during that period, I need scarcely remind hon. members, he was a Minister of the Crown. He is a gentleman who is held, I believe, in high respect by all members of this House at the present time, and as it was the particular wish of his constituents that he should not resign his seat in Parliament, I think I am justified in asking, on his behalf, that the House should grant him leave of absence for the whole session. I think it would be a graceful recognition of the good work which Mr. Morehead has done during the time he has occupied a seat in Parliament. The hon. member, like most of us, has his good qualities and has some faults too; but I think I may say that on both sides of the House he has been missed very largely during the present session, and that his absence has been regretted. I believe that had he been here he would have helped considerably towards furthering the work that had to be done during the session, and I am quite sure there is no member of the House who does not regret that the force of circumstances, whatever they might be, should have kept vacant the seat the hon. member for Balonne has so long occupied in this House. I think, then—although I believe that this is the first time leave of the kind has been asked—that I am justified in claiming the consideration of the House on behalf of my hon. friend. Objection may be taken to the application on the ground that it would form a precedent; but I think the fact that the privilege has not been asked before gives good ground for believing that it is not likely to be abused. If I thought many applications of the kind would be made, I would be most reluctant to ask leave of absence for any hon. member, but I think the very fact that it has not been asked for before is a pretty good indication that it is not likely to be asked for again except under special circumstances. I do not think it necessary to dwell longer on this subject, because the matter is one which I think commends itself to the judgment of hon. members; and I am quite sure that in dealing with it they will be guided, not by any party feeling, but by their good sense, and I hope by a kindly consideration for the hon. member himself, at the same time recognising the fact that his own constituents have expressed a strong wish that he should not resign his position.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I should be very glad if I could see my way to support this motion on any sound principle which can be pointed out, more especially because I myself should some day like to take advantage of such a precedent, and go away to England for a year without forfeiting my seat in the House.

Mr. STEVENSON: We'll give you leave.

The PREMIER: I have no doubt of that. But this is a case which should be determined on principle. There is no doubt the power exists under the Legislative Assembly Act to give a member leave of absence for the whole of a session, but up to the present time that power has never been exercised. So far from being exercised, it has always been understood, as a matter of course, that any member being away for a whole session loses his seat. It has been understood and acted upon, that members who wished to stay away for a whole session would lose their seats, and such members generally left their resignations with somebody before leaving, so as to avoid the inconvenience of the constituency having to wait until the next session before the seat could be declared vacant and a new member elected. I do not think the object of that provision of the

law is to meet cases of this kind. Cases have occurred in the neighbouring colonies, and one case occurred in this colony—in 1882, I think—where Parliament was summoned to meet, met, and was prorogued before some of the members heard of its being summoned, but they forfeited their seats all the same. Another instance that took place in this colony occurs to me, when, in 1874, Mr. Macalister formed a Government at the commencement of the year. I was not a member of the Government then, but I know that it was intended to prorogue Parliament as had been usual when a Government was formed before the ordinary time of the meeting of Parliament for the year, but Mr. Macalister refrained from advising the Governor to do so because two or three members of the House had not taken their seats, and would have forfeited them. It has, indeed, always been understood that absence for a whole session involves the forfeiture of the member's seat. Still, I can conceive of cases where the undoubted right of the House to grant leave of absence for a whole session might fairly be exercised. If a member was away on public business, actually representing the Legislature, or on business connected with the Government, and was unable to get back before the close of the session, leave ought to be granted. An illustration is furnished by the case of the Agent-General, who is a member of the Legislative Council, and is absent from the colony on public business, and to whom leave is granted annually. Or, if a member was unavoidably prevented from taking his seat by illness, it might then be a very fair case for consideration whether leave of absence should not be granted. But none of those conditions occur in the present case. It is a case in which a member whom I confess I should like to see here very much, and whom we have greatly missed during the present session, went away intending to stay away during the whole of the session. He is an old member of the House,—one of the oldest—he was here a few months before I was, and I am now one of the oldest members,—and he is a very distinguished member of the House. That point was dwelt upon by the hon. gentleman who moved the motion. But how are we to draw the line between the most distinguished and the least distinguished member of the House? I confess I cannot see how we are going to set up a rule of that kind. That, then, must be rejected. If we allow a distinguished member to stay away during a whole session without forfeiting his seat, we must grant the same privilege to every other member of the House; or if that rule is not adopted the stronger party would give leave of absence to its friends, and members of the weaker party would not get leave at all. That would be a most undesirable thing. There ought to be some general principle laid down. If the motion is passed a very dangerous precedent will be made. I do not think any sound argument can be adduced why it should be adopted, however much we should like to see it adopted in this particular case. The hon. member says that Mr. Morehead offered to resign his seat, and that when he communicated his intention to do so to certain of his constituents they requested him to retain his seat. That may be so; I have had no communication with any person in that constituency on the subject. I do not even know the views of his constituency upon it. His friends would advise him not to resign his seat; his enemies may desire that he should resign it. But, however, that may be, it ought not to weigh in considering the matter. We are asked to set a precedent which has not been attempted during the twenty-six years of the colony's existence, and very sound reasons ought to be

given before we establish it. I would point this out to hon. members, that, if we establish the precedent, it is quite possible that a constituency may be disfranchised for two whole sessions. I am not referring to the present case, because I know Mr. Morehead is coming back. But suppose leave of absence is granted to a member for the whole of a session, and he does not attend during the whole of the next, the constituency will not be represented during those two sessions, and two or three weeks of the third session may elapse before the House is able to declare the seat vacant. Although personally I felt at first disposed to support the motion of the hon. member, I must confess that, on further consideration, I cannot see any sound basis on which to rest that support. It is a motion of very doubtful expediency, and I am inclined, on the whole, to advise the House not to accept it; although, as I said before, I should myself like to be able to take advantage of such a precedent some day. I think it ought not to be accepted.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—As far as the present session is concerned, this is a mere matter of expediency, provided for by the Act itself. The hon. gentleman says we should be setting a dangerous precedent; but it is not a question of precedent at all; we are seeking to meet an occurrence which was foreseen and provided for by the people who framed the Legislative Assembly Act, and the House itself ought to be the best judge as to whether the permission sought should be given or not. I do not see any danger of a precedent being established, and I shall certainly vote for the motion if it comes to a division, as I should in the case of any other hon. member who might have occasion to be absent for a similar reason—because he wishes to be absent. The hon. member for Port Curtis reminds me that Mr. Morehead offered to resign his seat before he went home, and that his constituents refused to accept his resignation, telling him to retain his seat. There are not many members of the House whose constituents would have made them so graceful a concession; and it would be graceful on the part of the House to make a similar concession, and so prevent the constituency from being disfranchised until the House meets next year and declares the seat vacant. Even if the seat were declared vacant immediately after the opening of next session, an election could not take place within six weeks or two months afterwards. The constituency is without a member this session with its own consent; but if the House does not pass the motion, it will be disfranchised during two months of the next session without its consent. I think the motion ought to pass, and I am not at all afraid that any dangerous precedent will be thereby established.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—I should be glad if the hon. the Chief Secretary could see his way clear to grant leave of absence in this case. It is a well-known fact that Mr. Morehead is now on his way back to the colony, and I think, if there was nothing else that should induce hon. members to grant this application, the interests of the taxpayers of the colony should do so. The Chief Secretary may smile, but I maintain that the interests of the taxpayers of the colony ought to be considered on this occasion as well as they were in the beginning of the session, when extra taxation was placed upon them. We know, sir, that no election can be conducted without expense to the Government; and taking into consideration that Mr. Morehead is on his way home, and will be in his place next session, I think leave of absence should be granted. The expense of another election, no

matter how small it may be, should be considered, and I appeal to hon. members opposite, who have the interests of the taxpayers at heart, to consent to granting this application. If it is to be a precedent, let it be a precedent. The Act and the Standing Orders give power to grant leave of absence, and in the interests of the taxpayers I think it ought to be granted in this case.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I feel sorry that the Chief Secretary has raised any objection to the motion of the hon. member for Port Curtis, but I am sure that in doing so he has been actuated by no party feeling, but by a strict sense of what he believes is the right view to take of the question.

Mr. NORTON: Hear, hear!

Mr. ALAND: But I, sir, cannot look at it exactly in the same light that the Chief Secretary does. I do not want to raise all the objections which he has raised; I want rather to look at it in a broader view, and ask what, after all, can be the possible harm that can arise from granting so simple a request? To my mind it is of some importance that the hon. gentleman is away from this House with the consent of his constituents. That is really a matter that we ought to consider. We all know, because it was stated publicly in the Press, that Mr. Morehead offered to resign, and his constituents told him that there was no necessity for him to do so; that they were perfectly satisfied for him to go away on his holiday, and still be their representative. I hope, sir, that the House generally will accord to Mr. Morehead this privilege. He has been an old member and a very useful member of this House, and I think on that ground we ought to accord to him the relief which is sought for by the motion of the hon. member for Port Curtis.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—We have power by the Standing Orders to decide whether members shall or shall not be granted leave when they are absent during the whole of a session, and I certainly think the evidence in this case shows that we ought to use our discretionary power in favour of the present application. Not only is Mr. Morehead one of the oldest, but one of the most useful, members in this House, and no reasons personal to him have been given why the application should not be granted. Some of the reasons given by the Premier for considering that it may be undesirable to grant such an application in some instances actually are in favour of leave being granted to Mr. Morehead. The Premier stated that if leave were granted the constituency might be disfranchised for two whole sessions, and that is the very evil we who support the granting of the leave wish to avoid. Mr. Morehead's constituents actually gave him permission to be absent during the session; and since he is not here, and the impression has been conveyed by the hon. member for Townsville that his resignation has not been left in the hands of any member of this House—

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I said I did not know.

Mr. HAMILTON: If that is not the case the hon. gentleman's seat will be forfeited through his not having been present during the whole of the session. Then, of course, you, Mr. Speaker, will not be able to forfeit the seat until we next meet, and an election cannot take place until a month probably after the next session commences; so that if leave is not granted there is every probability of the Balonne constituency being disfranchised for a large portion of next session, although they have shown that they have every confidence in their representative. It has been said that the question of granting leave of

absence has never cropped up in this House before; but it cropped up last year in the case of the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Brown, who was elected towards the end of the session. Leave of absence was asked for for him on the ground that he was absent during the whole of the session, and it was argued by Sir Thomas McIlwraith and some of the most prominent members in the House that the Standing Order meant that if a member were elected, no matter at what time of the session, if he was absent during the whole session his seat would be forfeited. Sir Thomas McIlwraith therefore made a motion to the effect that leave of absence be granted to Mr. Brown; the Premier agreed to that motion, and it was carried. Therefore leave of absence has been granted before.

Mr. STEVENSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I can quite understand that the Chief Secretary has very great difficulty in giving his consent to this motion. I think he has received it in a very good spirit, and would be very willing to grant it if he could see his way to do so. As he says, there is not very much argument to be adduced on either side; it is a matter really for the House to decide. The Chief Secretary has given several instances where members lost their seats through having been absent for a whole session, and that has always been the rule, but I would remind the hon. gentleman that leave of absence was not asked for those members while the House was in session; so that there is a difference between this case and those, as no steps were taken to enable those members to keep their seats. I would like to say one word with regard to the statement of the Premier to the effect that Mr. Morehead went home with the full knowledge that he was to be absent for the whole session. That is not quite the case. Mr. Morehead thought that possibly he would be back before the session closed. At any rate, immediately he got home he booked his return passage, and expected to start a couple of steamers sooner than the one he is coming by. He expected to start back in October; instead of that he left on the 11th November. When he left here he intended to start back in October, and thought that if the session was a very long one it was possible that he would be able to take his seat before it closed. So that the hon. the Premier is not quite correct in stating that Mr. Morehead left with the full knowledge that he would be away the whole of the session. It is well known that he was willing to resign his seat before he left, and I remember quite well seeing telegrams from all parts of his constituency begging him not to resign. I am perfectly satisfied from what I know that the feeling of the majority—I believe the great majority—of the constituents of the Balonne will be that they will be very pleased if this motion is passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) said: Mr. Speaker,—If leave of absence had been asked for a less prominent member of the House, the question might have been regarded wholly from a constitutional point of view. In common with other hon. members, I regret the fact that the hon. member for Balonne has not been here this session, because his criticisms are always intelligently delivered, and form a great and interesting addition to the debates. Therefore I sincerely regret that the hon. member has not returned to enter into the legislation and debates of the session. I cannot, however, disregard the aspect of the case which the Premier has laid before us, because, apart from the position occupied by the hon. member for Balonne, I can see that the practice might be followed to an inconvenient extent. Suppose half-a-dozen members wanted to be absent during the same session, it would be unfair to give leave of

absence to one and refuse it to others. Again, party feeling might run pretty high, and those on the side of the majority might obtain leave and those on the side of the minority be refused. There are all those circumstances to be taken into consideration, and I think the Premier has done right in drawing attention to the abuse that might exist. I somewhat agree with the hon. member for Townsville that the House will be the judge of the circumstances at the time each application is made. I may state that the hon. member for Balonne before he left expressed to me his intention of returning before the close of the session if circumstances permitted, and I am inclined to think, notwithstanding the constitutional view of the question, that in the case of the hon. member for Balonne, seeing that he has been delayed by circumstances he did not foresee, it would be a graceful act on the part of the House to concede the permission asked for in the motion. We should not, however, consider it as a precedent to be followed in other cases. It should not be taken as an indication that every other member who applies will be sure to have permission granted; but the House must from time to time deal with such applications on their individual merits.

Mr. JORDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I think it is not a question whether this House has power to grant the request, because that is admitted, but whether it is expedient to do so; and that being so, the question can be decided on its own merits. The hon. member for Balonne is a very distinguished member of this House, and every member on both sides must have regretted his absence during the session. I am sure I have. His great humour keeps up the temper of the House and enlivens the debates; his great ability is of great assistance in carrying on the business; and his opposition is a manly one on all occasions. I do not think there is any danger in this motion. Of course, half-a-dozen members might apply for leave, but then it would not be granted. The leave in the present case is asked before the end of the session, and we have the fact of the intention of the hon. member for Balonne to return before the end of the session, also the fact that many of his constituents asked him not to resign his seat. The hon. member for Normanby has put that fact more particularly before us in saying that telegrams came from several parts of the constituency begging him not to resign his seat; and I think that is a very important fact. All things considered, I think we may very safely grant this permission. I shall be very sorry if it is not granted, and I think many other hon. members share that feeling.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—Personally I should be very glad if the Standing Orders could be read so as to save the hon. member for Balonne the expense, it may be, of going back to his constituents; but I think the case is not so much for this House as for the constituents to decide. The hon. gentleman has to deal with his constituents; and if any member absents himself for twelve months his action does not concern this House so much as his constituents, who, if they still have confidence in him, will return him again without trouble or expense to himself and probably without even a contested election. We can be sure that if we make an exception in this case it will be taken as a precedent in future, and no matter what may be the circumstances of any particular case it will be argued that there are as good grounds for exemption as in the present case. Looking at the matter from that light, I shall oppose the motion of the hon. member for Port Curtis, not from any personal feeling or party view, but considering that it is a question for the hon. gentleman's constituents more than for members of this House.

Mr. SCOTT said: Mr. Speaker,—I think every hon. member will agree that the Chief Secretary did nothing more than his duty in pointing out what was done in somewhat similar cases, but this is a somewhat exceptional case. The hon. member for Balonne is an old member of this House, who has worked very hard ever since he has been a member. He has been in his place almost every day Parliament has sat; he has done his duty well; and I think an exception may very well be made in such a case. I think the Chief Secretary said that several members lost their seats under similar circumstances.

The PREMIER: Messrs. Sandeman and Fleming.

Mr. SCOTT: I know that if leave of absence had been asked for on account of those two gentlemen it would have been granted.

The PREMIER: Of course it would.

Mr. SCOTT: In this case leave has been asked, and I think it should be given.

Mr. NORTON, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I would like it to be understood that I do not take exception to the objection raised by the Premier to this leave being granted. I think any hon. gentleman occupying his position was bound to point out to the House what objections there were to granting leave, and that it was forming a precedent which might, under some circumstances, be turned to improper account. But I think the House is quite capable of seeing that an improper use is not made of it. This is a precedent that is not likely to be used badly on any future occasion; for I feel sure that any House, however composed, will see that the constituencies are considered in such a matter. I am sure that no hon. member asking for leave under circumstances where his constituency had not sanctioned that leave would receive it. I quite agree with what has fallen from the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, that the rule is a very wholesome one to adopt—the rule of forfeiting a seat in the event of a member not appearing in his place for a whole session. But I regard it as a rule only, and the Act of Parliament has made provision for an exception. So far as the rule goes, it is a proper one; but when the Act of Parliament itself has provided for an exception, I think we are quite entitled to grant leave to Mr. Morehead. I can only express my satisfaction that the motion has been received in so kindly a spirit by the House.

Question put and passed.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

BUILDING SOCIETIES BILL.

The SPEAKER: I have to report to the House that I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Bill to amend the law relating to building societies, with amendments as indicated in the accompanying schedule, in which the Council request the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

On the motion of Mr. WAKEFIELD, the consideration in committee of the Legislative Council's amendments was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

WARWICK TO ST. GEORGE RAILWAY.

WITNESSES' EXPENSES.

Mr. JESSOP, in moving—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a return showing the whole amount and details of the expenses of each of the four (4) witnesses who came from Goondiwindi to give evidence before the select committee of the Legislative Council on the Warwick to St. George Railway, and the total sum that was paid to each—

said: I wish to amend the motion by omitting the word "of" in the 2nd line, and inserting the words "claimed by."

The PREMIER: There is a great objection to that.

Mr. JESSOP: I cannot see what difference it will make. It does not alter the meaning, but makes it plainer, and will carry out the intention I had in moving the motion.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Give fresh notice.

Mr. JESSOP: No. If I am not allowed to go on with the amendment, I will go on with the motion as it is.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member can only amend his motion with the consent of the House. The hon. member can give fresh notice and move his motion on another day; but if the House objects to the amendment, the hon. member cannot amend his motion now.

Mr. JESSOP: Can I move it as it stands?

The SPEAKER: Yes; certainly.

Mr. JESSOP: Mr. Speaker,—My object in bringing this motion before the House is to let this House and the country know certain circumstances connected with the matter to which the motion refers—the Warwick and St. George Railway. It appears that a certain number of gentlemen came from Goondiwindi to give evidence before the select committee of the Legislative Council on that railway. They came totally unasked for and on their own responsibility, and I hear that they have sent in large bills for their expenses. I want the House to know, and the public also, how they arrive at the large amount they are claiming for their expenses for this trip of theirs. They brought down a certain amount of agricultural produce with them. In this morning's paper it is stated:—

"There is an interesting show of agricultural produce now on view in the shop window of Messrs. A. J. Hockings and Son, Queen street. It consists of the products brought down from Goondiwindi and its neighbourhood, and laid under the notice of the Legislative Assembly in order to prove that agricultural produce can be grown there in great variety and of excellent quality."

Mr. KATES: Hear, hear!

Mr. JESSOP: I saw this exhibition when it was laid out for the inspection of the select committee.

"The produce shown, and the names of the growers, are as follow:—Thos. Walker, Cape barley."

There was one bundle with ten or a dozen heads of barley.

"broad-leaf lucerne,"—

A handful of lucerne, eighteen inches or two feet long—

"Egyptian wheat;"—

There were two bunches of wheat each with from twelve to twenty ears—certainly a very nice sample.

Mr. KATES: How many dray-loads do you want them to bring down?

Mr. JESSOP: You could not get a dray-load in the whole district.

"Thos. Gibson, Cape barley (one and two crops), oats;"—
Also one bunch of oats—a very fine sample. I imagine it was grown in a Chinaman's garden instead of in a field.

"George Canun, lucerne, oats; George Else, oats, canary; S. Dwoughton, oats, wheat, setaria; W. Lucas, oats, wheat;"—

There are three people down here for oats. To the best of my recollection there were only two bunches of oats.

"John McKenzie, Cape barley;"—

They must have been hunting all over the district for Cape barley.

"Jos. Stratford, English barley; Geo. Cameron, Kohl rabi;"—

There was one Kohl rabi—about the size of a water-bottle.

"Cabbage,"—

One cabbage weighing about 7 lbs., I think. I have seen cows fed on a great deal better.

"Onions,"—

I think there were six onions on the table—certainly very nice samples.

"Oranges,"—

There were eight of them.

"Swedes,"—

Swedes, it says. There was only one there, I suppose it weighed 2 lbs.—a very nice sample.

"Grapes,"—

One bunch of very badly grown grapes.

"Also Messrs. Hockings and Son have a sheaf of the Indian bearded wheat on show. This has been grown by Messrs. Joyce Brothers, Cregmore, Dalby. It is really worth the while of any of our wheat-growers to step in and see this sample, for it is perfectly matured, absolutely free from rust, notwithstanding that it has been grown alongside varieties perfectly rotten with that fungus. Mr. Joyce said it has yielded with him $4\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per acre, and fully 4 tons straw."

The name of the person who brought the exhibits down is Mr. Thomas Hunter, who has constituted himself the captain and knight of the agricultural show in Brisbane. He brought the whole lot down, and now he asks the Government to pay something like £42 in expenses. Amongst the claims he put in is one for cutting and carrying these exhibits down, and no doubt it will look very well to see such items as "Cutting one cabbage, £1"; "carting it from the Chinaman's garden," another £1, and so on. My object in bringing the motion forward is that the country may know the real truth of the statements which have been made, because if the statistical returns are looked at it will be found that there is very little agriculture carried on in the district. The whole population of Goondiwindi is only 100, and I think one Chinaman's garden would easily feed the whole lot. When people come down to make such statements as have been made I think it should be made known that there is only a certain amount of truth in them. We know very well that there are agricultural flats in all parts of the country. I do not think there is a district in the whole colony where a certain amount of agricultural land cannot be found; but to urge as a reason for constructing this railway that the land is all good is simply absurd, and the true value of the statements should be known. I do not think there are more than four or five acres of land under wheat around Goondiwindi, and—

The PREMIER: I rise to a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I conceive that it is very irregular to refer to statements said to have been made before a select committee of the other House. I have never heard of it being attempted before. It is entirely contrary to the practice we have hitherto adopted. Indeed, members are not supposed to refer to debates in the other Chamber at all. That is a rule which is often departed from, but we do not allow statements made before a select committee of this House to be referred to before being reported to the House.

The SPEAKER said: I think the hon. member is out of order in referring to what has transpired before a committee of the other House, more especially as the matter has not yet been reported to the other branch of the Legislature, and has not yet been supplied to its members.

Mr. JESSOP: It is not my intention to break the rules of the House in any way; but I simply wanted to let the House know a few facts that I had been told. When the Premier rose I was referring to the fact that there are not more than four or five acres of agricultural land under cultivation around Goondiwindi, and I was saying that in all districts of the colony, of course, there was more or less agricultural land. I was shown a telegram the other day from an influential resident of that district, stating that there were only about five acres of wheat now under crop. I do not wish to say any more on the matter, but will simply move the motion standing in my name.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—No objection will be offered to the motion as it stands, for this reason: that the Treasurer will know what money is paid and can give the information, but if any further information is required it cannot be obtained by a motion of this sort. It is not the practice of the Legislative Assembly to scrutinise the manner in which the Legislative Council conduct their business, or to inquire into what they are doing. We give that Chamber credit for knowing how to mind its own business, and they will very properly expect us to mind our business. As to the expenditure which has been incurred, of course the Government can give that information, but if any further information is required it will have to be obtained by a message, asking the Legislative Council to furnish us with it; or, if the hon. member is particularly anxious to get it, he can ask some member of the other House to move for a return. No objection will be offered to the motion in its present form. I had some doubts about it at first, but as it seems simply to amount to a statement of the expenditure incurred by the committee, of course the Treasurer can supply it.

Mr. HORWITZ said: Mr. Speaker,—It is very strange that the hon. member for Dalby has been good enough to give a cheap advertisement to Goondiwindi. It is about the best advertisement for that locality that I have ever heard of. I am glad the hon. member has made it known that wheat can be grown in that district, because for the last ten or fifteen years I have been telling the people in the Warwick district that our soil on the Downs is far too rich to grow wheat, and that we want a lighter soil. The hon. member for Dalby has informed us that all the exhibits he saw were first-class, and I quite agree with him. He is perfectly right, and I only regret that he did not tell us that better wheat and oats could not be grown around Dalby than in the Goondiwindi district. I, for one, should be only too glad to hear it. The hon. member has informed the House that he had seen a telegram which came down from a certain party in Goondiwindi, stating that there were only five acres of cultivation altogether around Goondiwindi, but he forgot to tell us who the wire was from. Will he inform the House of that?

Mr. JESSOP: Certainly not.

Mr. HORWITZ: Then I will. I hold in my hand a telegram from Goondiwindi, dated 12th November, 1886, and addressed to "Thomas Hunter, Transcontinental Hotel, Brisbane," and it is as follows:—

"Groom has wired Bell for information *re* acreage wheat. How have you got on?"

"W. CRAMB."

I will lay that on the table of the House, and then the whole secret will be out.

Mr. JESSOP: That has nothing at all to do with it.

Mr. HORWITZ: Some time ago I stated that wonderful things took place in Toowoomba, and I will prove it on the floor of the House now. Certain petitions were manufactured at Toowoomba and were sent to Dalby, Yeulba, and Roma to be circulated for signatures.

Mr. JESSOP: No.

Mr. HORWITZ: I say yes. Two petitions were sent up from Toowoomba to injure the St. George line; and I am only sorry the Hon. B. D. Morehead was not present this session, because if he had been here that line would have been carried by a large majority, instead of by a majority of one.

Mr. DONALDSON: Where would you have got the majority?

Mr. HORWITZ: From your side of the House. A certain petition was sent up from Toowoomba to St. George, and I made it my business to inquire into it, and I found out that only two people in St. George signed that petition, and that is sufficient proof for me that if Mr. Morehead had been here the St. George line would have been passed by a large majority. We all know why the members for Toowoomba worked against the St. George line, and it is because at a meeting which took place in Toowoomba some time ago the Hon. James Taylor distinctly stated that if the line to St. George was started from Warwick the value of property in Toowoomba would go down 50 per cent.; and it appears to me that the Toowoomba members have got to do just what the Hon. James Taylor tells them, or they would not have recorded their votes as they have done. They should take example by the conduct of the members for Gympie and Maryborough. Gympie wants a railway to Brisbane, and we do not find that the Maryborough people are jealous; but they simply say, "The time has arrived when it is necessary to have a line from the metropolis to Gympie, and of course we must give way." But what has Toowoomba done? Some years ago it was thought necessary to have a Darling Downs party; but that has now been broken up. We had a right to believe that Toowoomba would assist Warwick, as Warwick has always assisted Toowoomba; but what do we find? The Government have spent large sums of money in Toowoomba, and Warwick has not complained; but as soon as the Government think proper to go in for a line from Warwick to St. George, which Warwick can gain nothing by, and which can be of no injury to Toowoomba, the Toowoomba people, simply through spite, oppose the construction of that line. That is the secret of the whole situation.

Mr. ALAND: It is not good enough.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for Warwick has hardly touched upon one of the assertions or charges made by the hon. member for Dalby. If I understood the hon. member for Dalby aright he referred to a paper he held in his hand, pointing out that certain exhibits of produce were brought down here from Goondiwindi by a gentleman interested in having the line taken in that direction, and the hon. member's assertion was that there is not the quantity of land cultivated in that district which the gentleman referred to asserted there was. I was not present when the evidence was given before the committee on the St. George line, but I understand that this gentleman—Mr. Hunter—asserted that there were 200 acres under wheat at Goondiwindi. I believe that statement has been contradicted. We have no official records to show what quantity of grain is being grown there this year, but I find that during 1885, from statistics from reliable resources, the following in a letter published in the *Courier* of last

Monday. If the statistics there quoted are true, it is most remarkable that there should be such a large quantity of grain grown in that district this year, when only such a small quantity as is here stated was grown there last year. The figures for last year are stated as follow:—

	Acres.	Yield.
Hay	26 ...	5 tons
Maize	3 ...	50 bushels
Lucerne	5 ...	3 tons
Green food	8 ...	Not stated
Rye and millet	1 ...	<i>Nil</i>
Potatoes	4 ...	<i>Nil</i>
Sorghum	6 ...	Not stated.
Vines	3 ...	
Other crops	1 ...	
Gardens and orchards	5 ...	

In all 62 acres. It is a remarkable thing that there should have been only 62 acres including orchards cultivated there last year, and that there should be 200 acres under wheat alone this year. The yields, when we come to see into them, do not bear out the hon. member's statement, that the poorer land produced the richer crops.

Mr. HORWITZ: No.

Mr. DONALDSON: The hon. gentleman maintained that the land on the Downs was too rich for crops, and that the poorer land near Goondiwindi would be found more suitable for the crops.

Mr. HORWITZ: For wheat.

Mr. DONALDSON: I have had a good deal to do with the growing of wheat, and I believe it takes a very good and rich soil to produce a good crop; and I am confident that the land near Goondiwindi is not suitable, because the seasons there are not suitable for wheat, even if the soil was better than it is. We should bear in mind that this season has been a very exceptional one indeed, and lands in the western portion of the country, which would not grow grain in other seasons, have produced good crops this year, because a more favourable season for the purpose has not been known by the oldest resident in Queensland. I know that in New South Wales, in 1879, when we had a very good season, I cut more hay from a paddock of 9 acres than has been cut from it since, although it has been put under cultivation every year since that time. I know that in the Western districts of this colony it is not possible without irrigation to have orchards, and the Chinamen there have only very small portions of ground to look after, and if they tried larger areas of ground they could not look after them.

Mr. NORTON: Did the Chinamen grow the vegetables produced?

Mr. DONALDSON: I do not know by whom they were grown, and I make no charges of that kind; my statement is that crops might be grown there this year that could not be grown in ordinary seasons without the greatest trouble being taken in the way of irrigation. When gentlemen come down at the end of the session and make assertions such as have been made, when there is no chance of getting reliable information to contradict them, it is our duty to make every inquiry into the matter. We are the custodians of the public purse, and when we find gentlemen volunteering to come down and give evidence, and then sending in a big bill for expenses, those who have control of the expenditure should be very careful in awarding the expenses. If gentlemen take such a great interest in the railway to a district as to voluntarily come down and give evidence, I do not think it is their duty to claim expenses from the Government. I have been given to understand that all this produce that was brought down to be exhibited was

charged at a very high rate. I hope that, after the discussion which has taken place, great care will be exercised before that account is paid. If they had been summoned to give evidence they would have had a fair claim for expenses. But if we can prove that some of the statements they made were not true, what are we to infer? That they have been influenced by their interests in the district in giving the evidence they did. Now, I am not able to prove it, but I have every reason to doubt whether there are 200 acres of wheat in the district. I am perfectly confident that it will never be a wheat-growing district, at any rate until we have some system of irrigation; till then it will only be in very exceptional seasons that it will grow decent hay, let alone wheat.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—If the hon. member had confined himself to sheepskins, tallow, and wool, he would have made a better speech. I have not the slightest objection to the motion which has been proposed by the hon. member for Dalby. I do not at all sympathise with the heavy bill sent in by anybody from that quarter, and I should be the first to oppose any overcharges in connection with the produce brought down from Goondiwindi. But I maintain that anything which was brought down from Goondiwindi was *bonâ fide* grown there.

Mr. JESSOP: No one denied that.

Mr. KATES: It was denied in some way by the last speaker. The fact is that the hon. member for Dalby appears to be jealous in some way of the produce being brought down. He says the Egyptian wheat was only two bunches. How much did he wish anybody to bring down in the coach from Goondiwindi to Warwick, and by rail from Warwick to Brisbane? The gentlemen who brought down these agricultural products brought a large variety of the very best description; and the excellence of the articles took me altogether by surprise. A finer cabbage never was produced in Brisbane, or even Dalby; the onions were excellent—a white kind of Spanish onion of first-class quality; the grapes were very far advanced, compared with the grapes in other portions of the Darling Downs; there were excellent specimens of tobacco, silk, cotton, oats, and wheat. The hon. gentleman who just sat down says that is not likely to be a wheat-growing country; I say it will be the very best wheat-growing country in the southern portion of Queensland.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

Mr. KATES: Who says "No"? I say yes. The purple straw I saw amongst the exhibits is superior to anything I have seen for the last twenty-five years on the Downs. There was not a speck of rust on it, and the grain was plump; all it required was the sun to harden it. Suppose there was only 5 acres of that produced—

Mr. DONALDSON: Why did you say there were 200 acres?

Mr. KATES: The country that produced 5 acres could produce 50 acres, and 500 acres, and 5,000 acres. The reason these people have not developed the wheat culture is that they have no facilities for bringing it to market. What is the use of growing wheat there, when it would cost as much to bring it to Warwick as they would get for it? Now, it is to be hoped that there will be an end to this talk about the Warwick and St. George line. The matter is now in the other Chamber; let them decide about it. There is not the slightest doubt that the hon. member for Dalby would not have introduced the motion, and spoken at such length on it, had he not been surprised, and disagreeably surprised, at the excellence of the products exhibited last week in the Legislative Council's committee-room.

Everyone who looked at those exhibits must admit that the country which produced such things ought to have a railway. The hon. gentleman who just sat down, and who says the country will not produce wheat, is making a mistake. He says it requires rich land to produce wheat; he is wrong there. The rich black soils have proved themselves most liable to rust. The Hon. John Douglas and Sir Arthur Palmer said here years ago in this House that light soils were most suitable for wheat, and I have come to the same conclusion; on the ridges and slopes and the light soil there will be the best wheat produced in the colony. Now, Goondiwindi has a light soil, and I am sure the district will be the best wheat-growing district in the southern portion of the colony.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I claim the indulgence of the House to make an explanation. The hon. gentleman said I doubted whether the productions were grown in that district. I do not doubt that; I only pointed out that this was an exceptional season, and anything produced in such a season as this could not give the slightest idea of what would be produced in average seasons.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I think it is a great pity the hon. member for Darling Downs does not try to be a little more consistent in his facts. When he wanted to get the Kilarney railway some seven or eight years ago, he proved to his own satisfaction that a farmer growing wheat in that district could make £4 10s. per acre net profit every year. If he wants to get a railway to Beauaraba, he will show conclusively that that is the finest agricultural district in the whole colony. Now, he wants to get a railway to Goondiwindi, and of course it follows that Goondiwindi is the only place in the colony where wheat can be grown. But yet we find that in the whole of the large police district of Goondiwindi the area under cultivation of all crops is some 55 to 57 acres.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not think this matter would have been touched upon; I thought it would be left in the hands of the gentlemen who have charge of it at present, but it seems otherwise. Now, I would just like to point out to you, Mr. Speaker, with reference to the bunch of wheat that came from Goondiwindi, that there is no doubt it was a fine bunch of wheat, but there is not a field of wheat in Australia that could produce such a crop if we took it regularly. There is no doubt that those few heads of wheat were excellent, but a field, and possibly several fields, must have been picked over for them, and it is exceedingly doubtful that they came from the district whence they were said to have been taken. A crop of such wheat would yield from 100 to 120 bushels to the acre, and there is no land in Queensland that will carry that. I do not intend to take any notice of the hon. member for Warwick. It is a craze with him when he gets up to blackguard the members for Toowoomba. He tells us that we are under the thumb of the Hon. James Taylor. I can say that that is a falsehood. I know it to be a falsehood, and it is unjust on his part to say so. I do not think the Hon. James Taylor will lead me, for I have a will of my own, and although I may not express my opinions in the best possible way, I am generally able to act up to them.

Mr. HORWITZ: I did not say the hon. member for Aubigny was under the thumb of the Hon. James Taylor. I was referring solely to the members for Toowoomba.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I will now show the House where interested motives come in. There is one gentleman in that district who owns something like 70,000 acres of land, already cut up for

sale when this line will pass through. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, has 24,000 or 25,000 acres which will benefit by the construction of the railway, and the hon. member for Warwick has 3,000 or 4,000 acres waiting to be sold immediately the railway passes the Upper House.

Mr. KATES: I have not a single acre of land on the line between Warwick and St. George.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I am free to admit that; but it is only a very few miles away.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to enter into this question of Warwick *versus* Toowoomba; it is a very paltry thing to be imported into the question at all. As I have said before, Toowoomba can stand on its own merits, and the members for Toowoomba can stand on their own merits; and I think our past conduct has shown, Mr. Speaker, that neither you nor I care anything whatever about the Hon. James Taylor. Nothing in our conduct has ever shown that we regard the Hon. James Taylor in any other light than as a mere citizen of the town, or that we bow down and worship him or accept any dictation he chooses to make. My main object in rising now is to say that it is very unfair on the part of the hon. member for Warwick to do, as he has done on more than one occasion—to bring matters before the House concerning yourself when you are in the chair, and are not in a position to defend yourself or make any explanation you may deem necessary. If the hon. member would only wait until the House is in committee, and then make his little paltry attacks upon you, it would be all right, for I am quite sure you would squelch him very quickly indeed. He has told us about a telegram that he has received—

Mr. HORWITZ: I did not receive it.

Mr. ALAND: One cannot understand the hon. member. Will the hon. member tell us what he did say?

Mr. HORWITZ: I distinctly said that the telegram in my hands was sent to Mr. Hunter from a person at Goondiwindi, in reply to the hon. member, Mr. Groom.

Mr. ALAND: I understood the hon. member to say that he had received the telegram from Goondiwindi, but he only read the substance of the telegram, and did not say by whom it was signed. I should like to say a word about that telegram. Two members of this Assembly were informed—by Mr. Hunter, I think—that there were some 400 acres of wheat, like the bunch to which the hon. member for Aubigny has referred, under cultivation at Goondiwindi. That was mentioned to my hon. colleague, Mr. Groom, who at once sent a wire to a relative of his, named Bell, at Goondiwindi, asking him how many acres of wheat were under cultivation at that place. The reply came back to Mr. Groom that there were some 5 acres of land under wheat. That telegram was perfectly justifiable when such a monstrous assertion—for it really was a monstrous assertion—was made that there were 400 acres under wheat cultivation at Goondiwindi. I do not know whether that statement was made to the select committee of the other Chamber, but it was made to two members of the Assembly, who told it to Mr. Groom, with the result that I have stated. Is it not monstrous that such an assertion as that should be made when we know, from statistics laid on the table of the House, that there are not more than 65 acres of land under cultivation at Goondiwindi altogether? But I take it that, as far as this Assembly is concerned, the question of the Warwick to St. George railway is at an end. To use a legal term it is *sub judice*, and it is almost

a pity that it should have been dragged forward this afternoon. At the same time it is quite right that we should know how much the witnesses who were brought down to give evidence in favour of the railway expect to be paid for their patriotism. A remark was made by an hon. member that it was a very indecent thing on the part of some gentleman living at Toowoomba to interview some of the members of the Legislative Council on this question. I have my own opinion on that subject, but I think it was much more indecent on the part of some gentlemen, who do not live in Toowoomba, to interview almost every other member of the Legislative Council on the same question. That is all I have to say.

Mr. JESSOP, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—Some hon. members seem to have rather misunderstood my motive in bringing forward this motion. I did not bring it forward in order to interfere in any way with the action of the Legislative Council with regard to the Warwick to St. George railway, but simply to let the House and the country know the expenses which were to be paid to the Goondiwindi witnesses examined before the select committee. The hon. member for Warwick said the petitions against the proposed railway were written out in Toowoomba. I can say, from my own knowledge, that that is not true as far as the petitions from Dalby and Roma are concerned. I am glad I did bring the motion forward, for the simple reason that it has brought out some facts from the hon. member for Aubigny which we never knew before in reference to the land to be sold by auction as soon as the Warwick to St. George railway is passed.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

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

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

POSTMASTER-GENERAL—SALARIES, CHIEF OFFICE.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving that £13,147 be granted for salaries connected with the chief office, Postmaster-General's Department, said the vote showed an increase of £320 upon the appropriation of last year, which was accounted for by provision being made for salaries amounting to £240, which had been previously paid out of contingencies. The remaining portion of the increase was small increases of £10 a year to junior clerks, amounting in all to £80.

Mr. DONALDSON said he would take that opportunity to get some information from the hon. gentleman in charge of the estimate with regard to telegraph rates. About three years ago, when the present Government came into office, a promise was made that a considerable reduction would be made in Press telegrams. An estimate was made by the department and intercolonial telegrams were reduced, and attempts had been made to get the reduced rates throughout the colony, but that had not been done. Last session he drew the attention of the House to the fact that the country Press was suffering under considerable expenses as compared with the city Press. They had to pay 4s. 2d. per 100 words for messages sent to any part of the country, whereas a telegram of 100 words could be sent from a neighbouring colony to Cooktown or any part of the coast for 3s. That was, of course, an unfair handicap on the local country Press, because they had to pay nearly

50—at any rate, over 40—per cent. more for telegrams within the colony than was paid for telegrams from the adjoining colonies. Again, the price of those intercolonial telegrams to the Government was one-half—18d. per 100 words—so that they actually charged 4s. 2d. for what they paid 18d. for. It had been stated that if the concession asked for was given, such an amount of work would be put upon the lines that they would be unable to carry it, and that the duplication of certain lines would be necessary before the concession could be granted. However, it was two years and a-half since that report was sent in, and the reduced rate had not been brought into operation yet. Surely, if that objection held good then, it should not hold good now, because during that period the duplication of most of the lines had taken place. The Government were very tardy in making the reduction, and the want of it pressed very heavily upon the Press of the colony.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the matter referred to was receiving the consideration of the Postmaster-General, and he was prepared to state that a reduction would be made, and would commence from the 1st January. He was not in a position to say what the figures would be; but he was in a position to state that it was intended that the reduction should commence on the 1st January, with a restriction as to the number of words that should be transmitted, until the following telegraph lines were completed:—Springsure to Taroom, Clermont to Ravenswood, and Ravenswood to Junction Creek. Until the duplication of those lines was completed the present lines would be inadequate to carry the very much larger number of messages which would probably be sent under a lower tariff than were transmitted at the present time. It was expected that these lines would be completed by March, and the limitation as to the number of words to be contained in one message would then be removed.

Mr. DONALDSON said he hoped those portions of the colony where the duplication had been completed would not be deprived of the benefit of the reduction, because the lines mentioned by the hon. gentleman had not been completed. Those lines could not be very important ones. He was sure the Springsure one was not; there was not much revenue from it. He thought it would be very unfair that, because those places had not got the duplication, other parts of the colony should be deprived of the lower rate. With regard to the rate, he would ask whether the rate of 2s. for 100 words, recommended some time ago by the department, was to be the rate charged under the new system?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. gentleman must see the reason for not having differential rates. It was inadvisable to make a reduction favouring one part of the colony at the expense of another, and it would be better to wait and initiate a uniform tariff applying to all parts of the colony, even with a temporary limitation. The department had not yet arrived at a decision as to what the tariff should be. The rate previously considered was 2s. per 100 words, but he did not wish hon. members to infer that he was expressing the views of the Government in stating that that rate had been previously considered. The reduction which was to take place would, he hoped, be satisfactory to all concerned.

Mr. NORTON said that if he was not mistaken there were differential rates charged now.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: In Queens land?

Mr. NORTON: Yes. Telegrams were sent between Brisbane and Sydney at a low rate, and a high rate was charged for sending them short distances within the colony.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Press rate for telegrams was 4s. 2d. per 100 words, and the charge was uniform all over the colony. The rate between the colony and Sydney was 3s. per 100 words.

Mr. NORTON said the Press rate from Sydney to Brisbane was lower than the Press rate from Brisbane to Maryborough. That was a differential rate; and it had always been a ground of complaint, that the Press rate from another colony should be lower than from one part of this colony to another part of it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the difference in the rates could only be defended on the ground that the Queensland lines were inadequate to the work of carrying a large number of messages until the third line was completed. It must be borne in mind that the colony was losing annually by the Post and Telegraph Department something like £150,000; that was without making provision for the interest on three-quarters of a million of loan money expended on telegraph construction; so that whilst it was desirable to give every accommodation and reduce the rates, it must be remembered that in doing so they were imposing on the general taxpayers additional burdens.

Mr. NORTON said the Committee were aware of that. But there was an understanding come to when the hon. member for Warrego brought the question up some time ago, that as soon as possible Press rates from Brisbane would be reduced to the same rate as was charged from Sydney.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Mr. NORTON said it did not seem equitable that Press messages from Brisbane should be still charged at the higher rate, and he thought that the sooner it was reduced the better.

Mr. SCOTT said the hon. member for Warrego had made some objection in regard to the Springsure line; but the reason why more business was not done on that line was because there was a gap between Tambo and Springsure which had never been filled up. It was well known that the inland lines were not subject to such severe storms as the lines along the coast; and as soon as the gap in that line was filled up communication would be opened between Brisbane and the far North, and a large amount of business would be done.

Mr. DONALDSON said his contention was that there was no reason why, because the work of duplication was not completed in some parts of the colony, other parts should not get the benefit of the lower rates. Those parts which had been so unfortunate as not to get duplication could wait, and they need not complain of other parts of the colony getting the benefit.

The PREMIER: Wouldn't they?

Mr. DONALDSON: It would be worth trying at any rate.

The PREMIER: The North!

Mr. DONALDSON said it was a matter of fact that some telegrams went through at the lower rate at the present time if they came from Sydney. He understood the Treasurer to state that there would be a limitation of the number of words sent through in one message, but that limitation could be put on now, and if messages exceeded the limitation they could go through at the present rate. He was confident that would meet with the approval of a large number of proprietors of newspapers in the colony. The

hon. gentleman also referred to the fact that there was a large deficiency in the working of the Telegraph Department. He granted that, and was very sorry that such was the case; but on account of the high rates now charged, the papers actually limited the number of words to be sent. He was assured that the *Courier* had sent instructions to all its agents throughout the colony to send as short messages as possible, and only on important subjects, on account of the high rate. He had not got that information from any of the proprietors or managers personally, but from a gentleman connected with the journal, who had seen the instructions sent out. No doubt it would be beneficial to the readers if they could get a larger amount of telegraphic news. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Melbourne *Argus* published columns and columns of matter sent by telegraph, whereas the *Brisbane Courier*, the leading paper in Brisbane, only contained as much telegraphic news as could be read in five minutes. If there were lower rates there would be no excuse for not furnishing the readers of newspapers with more telegraphic matter. The city papers were at a great advantage compared with the country papers, because they got messages from Sydney at 3s. per 100, and acting as agents for the country papers, sent the same messages at 4s. 2d. per 100 words.

The PREMIER: The country papers could get them direct.

Mr. DONALDSON: They would have to pay an agent at the other end. It was well known that the country papers arranged with the head papers in the capital for telegraphic news. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Melbourne *Argus* supplied nearly all the country papers in New South Wales and Victoria with news. It was all very well to say that news could be sent from Sydney to Toowoomba, for instance, at the lower rate, but it might not pay the papers in Toowoomba to employ an agent, and pay him in addition to the charges for the telegrams. A telegram sent from Brisbane to Ipswich would cost 4s. 2d. per 100 words, whereas a message could be sent through from Cooktown to Sydney for 3s. per 100 words. He did not think that was fair, and the Colonial Treasurer knew in his heart it was not fair; in fact, it was not consistent with the hon. member's own ideas on the subject.

Question put and passed.

POST AND TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that there be granted a sum not exceeding £105,603 to defray the expense of the Post and Telegraph Department. That item exhibited an increase of about £12,100 over the Estimates for last year. In the list of postmasters there was a new salary, in consequence of the appointment of a gentleman to Charters Towers at a salary of £270. Under the head of "managers," there was an increase of £1,600, on account of the Cape York extension, on which five managers were required, also one at Charters Towers; then there was one at Clermont-Ravenswood line, and one at Darr River—in all, eight managers. For operators, there was an increase of £5,420, necessitated by thirty-four additional operators, at salaries ranging from £120 to £200—ten at Brisbane; four at Bowen; one at Bundaberg for the telephone; two on the Central Railway; Cressbrook, one; Croydon, one; Emerald, one; Gympie Railway Extension, one; Junction Creek, one; Magnetic Island and Muttaborra, one each; Normanton and Pittsworth, one each; Ravenswood, two; Tambo, four; Yeppoon, one; relieving operator, one. In the item of clerks there was an increase of £40, being an increase of £10 each to four clerks. There were five new

line repairers in charge—one at Keppel Bay, one at Bauhinia Downs, one at Clermont-Ravenswood line, one at Rochfort, and one at Rolleston. In the item of clerical assistants, there were three new salaries of £180, to provide additional assistance to country officers. There were two additional stampers and sorters at £150, and eighteen new sorters and letter-carriers, £1,680. In the item of line repairers, the Cape York extension demanded four at £150, one on the border of New South Wales, £120, and one for Clermont-Ravenswood line, £120. These constituted the whole of the increases. He must admit that in framing the Estimates the increase in that department gave him a considerable amount of concern, and, in addition to the care exercised by the Postmaster-General, he had endeavoured to keep down the requirements of the department as much as possible. The extension of the line to Cape York Peninsula was particularly costly.

Mr. NORTON: When will that be opened?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he thought in about three months. Not only was it an expensive line to work but to maintain—as manager, operators, and labourers would have to act as a sort of police, able to defend the stations against the attacks of the blacks. That and other extensions had necessitated the expansion of the department to its present dimensions. He must say, in regard to the Post and Telegraphs, that whatever requirements had been put down on the Estimates-in-Chief had not been exceeded and, therefore, a new vote was not required in the Supplementary Estimates. The department asked for the full appropriation for salaries for the current year, though that appropriation might not all be required in the first quarter or half-year. It was very satisfactory that, although provision was asked for the whole year, it would not be exceeded, and possibly a portion would be saved. He might say that his colleague, the Premier, had just informed him that the Cape York line would be opened before the wet season set in.

Mr. BLACK said it was quite impossible for anyone to criticise the details of that department, from the way in which the Estimates were framed. There were so many managers, operators, and clerks, that they could only assume that they were really required. The Treasurer had pointed out that more than the amount voted last year had not been required. £319,177 had been voted, and £304,237 was expended. For the present year they were asked to vote £22,520 more than was voted last year, so that really, as the expenditure was £16,000 less last year than was anticipated, the increase for the present year was £38,000 on the whole department more than it was last year. He believed that the department was managed as economically as it well could be, though it was impossible to criticise it. But the fact remained, as the Treasurer had pointed out, that there was a loss to the country of £150,000 a year by its working. Now, he asked, could they not arrive at some scheme by which that enormous loss could be diminished? Why, the loss on that one department alone was quite sufficient to upset all the calculations of the Treasury! If it meant the necessity of additional taxation, why should there be such a loss? They were often told that it was necessary, in the interest of the whole community, that information in the shape of newspapers should be diffused all over the colony; but he thought that in times like the present, when the Treasurer had been obliged for the last two years to come down with extra taxation proposals, and would probably do so again next year, some care should be taken to obviate the

loss of some part of the £150,000. It was quite possible for the department, instead of carrying newspapers, as now, for nothing, to impose a halfpenny or farthing tax, and he thought the Government should during recess take that into consideration. He could speak as to the anxiety of the Postmaster-General and his Under Secretary to pay attention to every requirement of a reasonable nature which was submitted to them. He could not conscientiously criticise anything in those estimates beyond the one fact that he had referred to, that there was a high loss accruing to the whole country, which, he assumed, was owing to the carriage of immense parcels of newspapers without any remuneration being received by the department; and, speaking in the most friendly way, he really thought the Government should consider the necessity of in some way reorganising the Post Office system so that the country should not lose that immense sum of money. They would have a very serious state of affairs to face when they met again next year, and he knew the Treasurer was very anxious on the subject; and he therefore hoped that something would be done to make that department, which at present was a tremendous loss to the country, in some measure self-supporting.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he inadvertently led the hon. gentleman to state that which was not strictly correct. In speaking of the loss of the department he had referred to previous years, and he would therefore like to correct the figures which he had used. The receipts of the Post and Telegraph Offices for 1884-5 amounted to £181,583, and the expenses to £304,236, leaving a net loss of £122,653. Last year's receipts showed a considerable increase, which arose in consequence of the sales of stamps being included in the receipts of the Post Office. He was free to admit that there was a great deal of force in what was said by the hon. member for Mackay, that there was an immense loss sustained in the carriage of newspapers; but the public had now got so accustomed to cheap telegrams and cheap postage, and to the carriage, post free, of newspapers throughout the colony, that it would be regarded as a great burden if taxation was imposed in the way suggested by the hon. member. It was interesting to observe that, during last year, the number of papers which were delivered within the colony amounted to 6,162,360.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was the weight?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Being an increase of 1,050,749 over the preceding year, or an increase of over 20 per cent. There were despatched from the colony 988,000, as against 754,000 in the preceding year, an increase of 234,000, or 31 per cent. The papers received amounted to 1,643,000, an increase of 3 per cent.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was the weight? We can tell nothing from those figures.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said there were no statistics showing the weight. Even if postage were imposed it would not be by weight. It would be, as in other colonies, upon each paper. However, there was no doubt there was a large amount of matter carried free by the railways, and by the postal service, in the shape of newspapers, and that tended to increase the very large deficiency which was connected annually with the working of the department. He knew the matter had been receiving the very careful consideration of his hon. colleague, the Postmaster-General, but he (the Colonial Treasurer) was not prepared at the present time to express the views of the Government upon the imposition of a newspaper duty. It would fall very severely

upon people resident in the interior, and would tend to circumscribe the circulation of local papers. Altogether he was afraid, although it would be a financial benefit, it would be a great social disaster.

Mr. FOOTE said he fully agreed with the remarks of the hon. member for Mackay. He remembered the question being brought forward for many years past, and it had always been a burning question. He thought the department wanted rearranging to a very considerable degree. They had had the usual debate upon cheap telegrams every session of late years, and the argument was used that they would offer great facilities to the Press. Well, he thought the Press had very great facilities. Their papers were carried free all over the country, and that was a point to which he wished to direct attention. He thought the Government ought not to carry those papers free, and that a stamp duty should be imposed. It was well known that many of the contracts for mail delivery were much higher than they would otherwise be if the newspapers were not carried free. He thought the system was not fair to the general taxpayer of the colony, and it would be no hardship for the persons using those papers, to at all events pay some part of the cost of carriage. If some papers were charged 1d. and others of greater weight 2d., that would be a fair charge. He would suggest a liberal allowance. An excessive rate should not be charged upon newspapers, but it should be a reasonable sum—something to relieve the taxpayer of the colony and something which would go against that very heavy loss annually sustained by the department. He thought it was not fair that such liberal allowances should be made to the Press in the form of cheap telegrams, and free carriage of printed matter; and he believed that the latter system was the cause of bringing a lot of newspapers into existence which would subside if a tax were imposed, and the country in many instances would not lose much by their subsidence.

Mr. CHUBB said that the hon. member for Mackay had objected, when criticising the estimates for the Postmaster-General's Department, that the information given was not sufficient. He (Mr. Chubb) would suggest that when those estimates were brought up next year something on the lines of the way the Colonial Secretary's Department dealt with the officers of petty sessions in the Estimates should be done. They would then see the localities where the officers were, and have as full information as was given with regard to officers of petty sessions. It would be more satisfactory in every way, as they did not know where the officers in the Postal Department were located, and whether their salaries were large enough, or whether they were too large. At present it was very difficult indeed to see where officers were, and to know whether they were all really wanted, or whether more were not required. No doubt the loss on the department was very great last year—he understood the Colonial Treasurer to say it was over £120,000. Why that would pay the interest on three millions of borrowed capital, and relieve them greatly. It was a consummation devoutly to be wished for, if the department could be managed in such a way as not to bring in that loss of £120,000 a year. Reference had been made to the cause of the loss. The Treasurer had not given them the particular items that went to make up the loss, but he assumed it was having to pay more for the carriage of mail matter than they received in postage from both inland and over-sea mails. The hon. member for Bundamba, Mr. Foote, referred to the fact that the Government carried newspapers free. They did carry them free, but

only if they were posted within a week of their issue, and after that they, of course, had to pay at postage rates. In the report of the department for the year, on page 11, some of the principal causes of loss were stated. In regard to newspapers being taken over sea to England, it said :—

"But, as according to the regulations at the Queensland end, newspapers are sent at 1d. each irrespective of weight, while payment for transit is regulated by actual weight, a considerable loss is caused to this colony on papers such as the following, which exceed in weight the limit (4 oz.) for one rate :—

<i>Sydney Mail</i> ...	...	weighing ...	11	oz.
<i>Australasian</i> ...	...	" ...	9	"
<i>Melbourne Leader</i> ...	...	" ...	8	"
<i>Town and Country Journal</i> ...	...	" ...	7	"
<i>Queenslander</i> ...	...	" ...	6	"
<i>Illustrated Sydney News</i> ...	...	" ...	6	"
<i>Otago Witness</i> ...	...	" ...	5	"

Then the illustration was given in this way :—

"Take, for instance, the *Town and Country Journal* and *Australasian*, which together weigh 1 lb. and produce a revenue of 2d., while the payment to France and Italy alone is 4d., to which would have to be added, under the proposed arrangement, the Australian transit charge of 3d. per lb., and the cost of transit by steamer probably 6d. more—equal to 1s. 1d. expended, as against 2d. received.

"Or take three *Queenslanders*, weighing in all 18 oz., on which the postage would be 3d., and the payments to France and Italy 43d., Australian transit 33d., steamer transit say, 63d.—that is an expenditure of 1s. 2½d., as against 3d. received."

That was a very great loss—a loss of 4d. on every *Queenslander*, or, in connection with the other colonies, their proportion of 4d. for every *Queenslander* sent over sea. So far as he could understand the report, that was the total loss on the contract, which would be made up by all the colonies sending their various mail matter home. The illustration given in the case of Queensland at any rate showed what the loss really was, and it was a very heavy loss for the colony to have to bear. Possibly the loss might be excused on the ground of its being in the nature of an advertisement to intending immigrants. Newspapers were sent home to friends and relatives of people in Queensland, and Queensland news was by that means disseminated in Great Britain, and it might be considered that the colony received some indirect benefit by the circulation of the information relating to Queensland. On that score there might possibly be some excuse urged as against the great loss sustained in the carriage of those papers over sea, though that excuse would not hold good in respect of the inland mails. The newspapers were carried free all over the colony. Mail contractors contracted to carry the mails for so much a year, and had to carry everything that was posted, and he had seen some of the country mail bags stuffed full with newspapers, and he dared say nine-tenths of the mail matter was newspapers. He thought the matter was worthy of some consideration, and that some slight charge should be made upon the carriage of newspapers in order, in some way, to prevent the loss of £120,000 a year to the colony. Of course the whole loss must not be charged to the Postal Department, as he believed a large portion of it was attributable to the cost of the Telegraph Department in the cost of messages, and the expenses of new lines that returned no adequate revenue, or at all events did not return sufficient revenue to cover the expenses in connection with them. Such long lines, for instance, as the line to the Gulf of Carpentaria cost a great deal of money, and the revenue from them was small, though the indirect advantage to the colony was very great. All that must be taken as justifying to some extent the enormous expenditure and loss which the country apparently suffered every year in that department.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it was time the attention of the Government was directed to the enormous loss the country was suffering every year from the carriage of newspapers free through the Post Office. They appeared to be regular martyrs to the Press in this free and enlightened country, and the Press levied blackmail upon them in every way. £12,000 a year for advertising at one slap, and then all their wares had to be carried about the colony at the expense of the general taxpayer. He had had some correspondence upon the subject outside of that Assembly, and from what he could make out the amount of subsidy which the three-headed monopoly in Queen street enjoyed amounted to somewhere about £9,000 a year for the free carriage of the papers alone. That was to say that it cost the country for carrying about the *Courier*, *Queenslander*, and *Observer* something like £9,000 a year, and that was in addition to all the moneys spent for advertisements in those papers. Then, again, they were never satisfied, for they wanted to get their telegrams for almost nothing. The newspapers were after all merely a financial speculation, and the papers were produced for sale and not for use. They were joint-stock companies that enjoyed special privileges, and they denounced any attempt to apply the same privileges to any other industry. Under the circumstances, the Government should take into consideration the advisability of insisting that papers should be stamped, and thus supply some of the deficiency in the revenue; and if they did so it would not be giving the proprietors of those papers that undue advantage over other commercial men and traders in the colony that they had at present. A grocer or hardware man had to pay for the carriage of his goods throughout the colony, and why should the newspaper man go scot-free and have his goods carried for nothing? He (Mr. Hill) might just as well advocate that the carriage of wool by the squatter over their railways should be free, because he was a public benefactor. He maintained that the squatter did much more substantial good and benefit to the colony than newspaper men, because he really did bring some substantial money into the colony in the shape of a return for the produce sent out. Newspapers were utterly irresponsible, and nobody had any check upon them. They dubbed themselves "we," and called themselves "public opinion," and after all they only gave the opinion of some fellow who slung scurrilous personalities at the rate of 15s. a column. That, he was given to understand, was the price now paid for leading articles—for public opinion—and the more spicy they made it the greater the circulation, and the better the paper sold. It did not matter to the writers of those articles; they could revile or abuse anybody with perfect impunity, and they did. He should think he was neglecting his duty if he did not come in for a certain amount of their criticism. However, he hoped they would not take his harsh criticisms to heart. He was speaking in the interests of the taxpayer; he himself, as one of the taxpayers, had to contribute towards having their rubbish hawked about all over the colony and into other colonies for nothing, and he had a right to complain. He most strongly recommended the Government to take into consideration during the recess the advisability of letting those gentlemen pay for the carriage of their wares, by putting a stamp duty upon them. If he wrote letters he had to stamp them, and he did not see why the newspaper people should have additional privileges.

Mr. CHUBB said he wanted to correct a statement he had just made, because he found he had done the telegraphic branch an injustice.

He had said he thought a large amount of the loss was attributable to the Telegraph Department, but he saw at the end of the report a very useful table, which showed that the total amount of cash received for messages was £78,684, while messages sent on account of the Government, for which of course cash was not received, were put down at £20,898, making the total receipts £99,582; against which had been set, salaries £64,483, and contingencies £25,177, making a total of £89,660. If they took off the amount credited on account of Government telegrams, there was a loss on the department of only £11,000 for last year, while, if they credited the whole of the Government telegrams, there was a profit of £10,000 on the working of the office.

Mr. GROOM said he would like to say a few words on what had fallen from the hon. member for Cook. If the proposal the hon. member had foreshadowed—that the Colonial Treasurer should levy a tax on newspapers by imposing postage on all papers carried by mail—was adopted it would fall on the general community, and not on the newspaper proprietors.

Mr. CHUBB: They would not buy them; they would borrow them.

Mr. GROOM said he did not think it would have much effect on the circulation of newspapers. It must be remembered that it was not only the papers published in the colony which were carried post-free. When he was in Sydney he was shown the number of copies of one weekly—the *Town and Country Journal*—which were sent to Queensland, and carried throughout the country, more particularly the Northern district, where the mails were conveyed by coach or by horse. He had seen the figures, and he could certify that the number of copies of that one journal circulated in this colony was greater than that of any Queensland newspaper. There was not a single newspaper published in Queensland to his knowledge that had a circulation as large as that which the *Town and Country Journal* had in this colony alone. The *Sydney Mail* had also a very large circulation, though not so large as the other. The next in point of circulation to the *Town and Country Journal* was the *Australasian*, a high-class journal, published in Melbourne, which was taken, he supposed, in almost every home where there was a taste for high-class literature. The loss on the Postal Department, therefore, was not caused entirely by the free carriage of newspapers published within the colony.

Mr. DONALDSON: The *Australasian* pays.

Mr. GROOM: I was not aware of that.

Mr. NORTON: In Victoria and South Australia they pay.

Mr. GROOM said that at any rate the *Town and Country Journal* did not pay, and the Queensland population were called upon to pay for its circulation in this colony, while it contributed nothing whatever towards the revenue. On that particular point, perhaps, there was something in the contention of the hon. member for Cook; but if a stamp duty were imposed on the outside Press, they would have to make the principle of general application, and then the provincial Press would suffer. Taking a tri-weekly journal, published in the country, the proprietor would have to pay a penny on each issue—3d. a week; that would amount to 3s. 3d. in the quarter, or 13s. in the year. Now, he did not suppose the hon. member wished to handicap the country subscribers of a journal to that extent, but that would be the real effect of adopting his suggestion. At the same time a large weekly journal would only pay 1d., or 4s. 2d. in the year, and consequently there would be a great advantage given to the weekly journals published in

1886—5 R

Brisbane as against the provincial Press. If the hon. gentleman wished to put a tax on newspapers generally, he should adopt the old English plan, that no newspaper should be published except on stamped paper; and then the daily journals in Brisbane, which were not carried by the postal authorities at all, but were delivered by hand, would pay equally with the others. He did not think there would be any objection to that, and it would certainly benefit the revenue. He wished to say one word about another matter alluded to by the hon. member for Cook. He was sorry the hon. member had such a low opinion of gentlemen who wrote leaders in the newspapers. Would the hon. member allow him (Mr. Groom) to tell him that as a member of Parliament was not by nature born, no more was a leader-writer by nature born. It required a considerable amount of deep reading, great research, and very considerable ability indeed to write leaders for newspapers, and there were gentlemen in the city devoted entirely to that calling who certainly thought much higher of themselves than to write leaders at the rate the hon. gentleman mentioned—15s. a column. If anyone in Brisbane was ready to work so low as that, he (Mr. Groom) did not think his leaders would be admitted into any high-class journal, nor did he think that any newspaper of standing in Brisbane would offer such a price as that to a journalist for an article.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: They do.

Mr. GROOM said he was very much inclined to doubt it. He hoped the hon. member would be a little more generous in his estimate of newspaper proprietors. He might mention that there were men in England who devoted a lifetime to journalistic labours who would not write an article under five guineas, and who got five guineas.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Certainly.

Mr. GROOM: If the hon. gentleman wanted a case, he could give it. Take the *Nineteenth Century*. They would not offer a writer for a high-class journal of that kind a lower amount than five guineas, or even ten guineas. The hon. gentleman must consider also that there were leader-writers on *The Times*, *Daily News*, and *Daily Telegraph*, whose incomes were £1,000 a year. There were plenty of high-class journalists—such as Robert Lowe (since Lord Sherbrooke), Mr. Leonard Courtney, Mr. Besant, Mr. Forbes, Mr. Sala, and others—who obtained a far higher price for their work than that which the hon. member mentioned; and there were leader-writers in Brisbane—and he knew something of their work—who were as highly paid, proportionately, as their contemporaries in London.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Not at all.

Mr. GROOM said he knew from his personal knowledge and experience that they were. There were some leader-writers in Brisbane who had had a long experience in journalism, and who obtained a good price for their leaders; they named their figure and obtained it, and he could assure the hon. member that it was a far higher figure than 15s. a column. Just now he mentioned that the *Australasian* paid for its circulation in the colony. He had since learnt that the *Australasian* was stamped in Victoria, and that Queensland derived no benefit from it whatever.

Mr. NORTON: It is the same with the South Australian papers.

Mr. GROOM said he believed the *Weekly Observer*, a high-class newspaper published at Adelaide—better, as far as its agricultural columns were concerned, than even the *Australasian*—had a considerable circulation in this colony, and was carried all over by the Postal Department

for nothing. There was something, as he had said, in the contention of the hon. member for Cook, and it was a subject which would no doubt receive the consideration of the Government during the recess, more particularly in face of the heavy loss the department was sustaining at the present time.

Mr. MACFARLANE said it was very creditable for so young a colony that it should offer so many facilities for the spread of knowledge among its population. What with free education, scholarships, exhibitions to universities, and the free postage of newspapers, there was no other colony—he might even say no other country—that could show so liberal a record. But when they saw an annual deficit in the department of £120,000 they had to face a very serious question. He did not blame the Postmaster-General or the department for the deficiency; it was the fault of the country for allowing certain things to be carried free. He did not intend to advocate putting a stamp on all newspapers, but something would certainly have to be done to make the income and expenditure of the department balance a little more equally. It had been said by the hon. member for Toowoomba that to put a penny stamp on newspapers would be rather hard. That was also his opinion, but he did not think a halfpenny stamp would be a very serious item, or cause very much grumbling amongst the people of the colony. The fairest plan would perhaps be that suggested by the hon. member for Toowoomba—namely, to put a stamp on all newspapers, instead of only upon those which left the district in which they were published. The Government would be compelled to devise some means of meeting the deficiency, and the sooner they set about it the better.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was surprised to hear the hon. member for Toowoomba, who, he understood, was a journalist, advocating the imposition of a stamp duty on newspapers. That would be manifestly unfair, because it would be levying a tax on the papers which were distributed at the cost of the publisher as well as upon those which were carried by the Postal Department. His contention was that the taxpayers of the colony should not be called upon to pay for the free distribution of all the newspapers which came into the colony. A halfpenny stamp, such as they had in Victoria, would not be felt by anybody, and would go a long way towards covering the deficit in the department; and it would, besides, have the effect of checking the wholesale flooding of the country with useless papers that were sent by every mail. Some of the papers from the other colonies—such as the *Australasian*, the *Town and Country Journal*, and the *Sydney Mail*—were very bulky; many thousands of them were circulated in the colony, and they paid nothing whatever towards the revenue. When the hon. member for Toowoomba was speaking he (Mr. Donaldson) interjected that the *Australasian* was stamped. That was true; it was stamped in Victoria, but he did not know what arrangements existed between the colonies as to Queensland being paid for its share of the postage.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: There are none.

Mr. DONALDSON said that perhaps the other colonies reciprocated by carrying the Queensland newspapers free. But it would be far better in the interests of the people of the colonies if all newspapers sent by post were stamped. He did not think the circulation of the *Australasian* in Victoria was in any way affected because it bore a halfpenny stamp, and the stamp duty on newspapers transmitted by post returned a very large revenue to Victoria. To carry those large weekly inter-colonial newspapers for nothing was far too much. Anyone who did not know much of the interior

would be surprised to see the immense numbers of newspapers that were put upon the coaches at the end of the railway. He had been told by drivers that they had nearly a ton of mail matter on board, and all that contributed not a penny to the revenue. He would like to know whether the Railway Department charged the Postal Department for the carrying of mails?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No charge is made for carrying the mails.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was informed that they did charge for carrying the mails.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is put down as non-paying traffic.

Mr. JORDAN said he regretted that there was such a loss in the working of the department, and should be very glad to see it remedied. At the same time, he should regard it as a calamity if the very large circulation of newspapers in the colony were to be diminished, which would certainly be the result if they were dealt with in the way suggested by the hon. member for Toowoomba. He believed the effect of stamping newspapers, as suggested by some hon. members, would be to greatly diminish their circulation. There were papers, highly respectable and creditable in every respect, published daily in this colony for 1d., and if they cost 2d. the circulation would be very largely diminished—probably by one-half. He believed that if they adopted the system of stamping newspapers their circulation throughout the colony would be very largely diminished, and he should regard that as a national calamity. He regarded the circulation of good literature throughout the colony as a grand national advantage. It tended to keep men, working men especially, out of public-houses when they could get good newspapers to read like the *Australasian* and other journals that had been spoken of, and the very respectable newspapers published in the city and in all parts of the colony. He believed the circulation of newspapers greatly diminished the consumption of ardent spirits in public-houses, in the bush especially. Men out there had few resources for entertainment, except such as were furnished by the circulation of good cheap literature. He believed the effect of such a system as that proposed would be calamitous in the extreme. It would be a very great step in the wrong direction, if they were to adopt such a system for the sake of raising a bit of revenue, and he hoped it would not be done. He would be even more liberal than they were. It was a great advantage that they could get their newspapers circulated through the Post Office for nothing. This was a large city; it was growing very rapidly, covering an immense area in proportion to population; and he would like to see the pillars which were now in use for the reception of letters made available for the postage of newspapers also. He thought they were capacious enough; they must hold a great many letters, but there was no means of posting newspapers in them, the perforation not being large enough. He would certainly like to see the facilities for the posting of newspapers extended to those pillars all over this great city.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the discussion reminded him very much of the silversmiths of Ephesus, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The craft was in danger. He thought that the arguments adduced, especially by the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, who no doubt knew a great deal on the subject, went to show that a considerable amount of rubbish was carried about the colony for nothing. It appeared that people preferred to go to New South Wales and get the *Town and Country Journal*, and even as far as Melbourne to get decently written

articles—decent literature—and that more of those newspapers were circulated in the colony than were circulated by the journals of the metropolis itself. That bore out what he had stated—that the price paid for literary matter by the Press here was very low. It was conducted upon strictly economical principles.

Mr. CHUBB: Cheap and nasty!

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he had been credibly informed by people who had written for the leading journals here that the price paid was 15s. a column. They could not expect much for that, and the sort of stuff that did appear in those papers, according to his lights, was certainly well paid for at 15s. per column. He was perfectly aware that on many of the leading journals at home, such as the *Nineteenth Century*, to which the hon. member for Toowoomba had alluded, the *Times* and *Daily News*, men were very highly paid indeed, and earned very handsome incomes—probably much over £1,000 a year—for writing for those journals. But the thing was impossible here. He knew perfectly well that here they were mere slaves, underpaid sort of hirelings who would write for such paltry remuneration as they got. Of course, the stuff proved it. He did not wish to cast any reflection upon the Press as a body—the intelligent Press and the literary world—because he had been indebted to it all his life for pleasant reading, and moreover for educational purposes; but what he complained of was the rubbish that was published here and which was carried about the country at the country's expense.

Mr. ALAND: Start a newspaper of your own.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that that was not in his line of business, although if he could not write better articles than some of the 15s. a column stuff he should be very sorry indeed. He maintained that if a stamp duty was imposed to pay for the services performed, and the cost of newspapers was thereby enhanced, the people would more cheerfully pay it if they got better matter, and it would do a great deal more good than disseminating the masses of rubbish that were circulated now at the expense of the taxpayers. Of course, they could now afford to send out any amount of it, because it was carried for nothing, and the cheaper they got it written the better. The matter that was circulated had really a most deleterious effect upon the public. The hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, said that if they imposed a duty of that kind more spirits and beer would be consumed. Well, there would be some satisfaction in that, because it would contribute to the revenue. At present they put a stamp on beer-casks—even on the Bulimba beer made in Brisbane—and why not put stamps on newspapers? The poor man had to pay for his beer—he did not suppose the brewer paid for it—and he should also pay for his newspaper, and pay for it being carried about the country. The hon. member for Toowoomba, who was an authority on the subject, said that the subscribers would have to pay, and if that were the case, he (Mr. Hill) did not see why the newspaper men should grumble at all, but he knew they would grumble a good deal if they were made to pay.

Mr. PALMER said it was a question whether the colony would be any better off if the tax advocated by the hon. junior member for Cook was put upon newspapers. Hon. members might put it as they liked, but it was a tax upon knowledge.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: A tax upon lies!

Mr. PALMER: It was a tax upon knowledge in this way: People out in the Western districts,

who formed a considerable portion of the population of the colony, were debarred from the advantages which residents in the town had; they were the people who received a great deal of benefit from the dissemination of newspapers, and they would be handicapped, as they were now by differential rates on the railways, and be made to suffer by the imposition of such a tax. He certainly thought they ought to be considered in a matter of that kind. There were thousands and thousands of newspapers that would not be sent out into the interior that were sent out now if there was a tax put upon them in the way of postage, and he maintained that the country benefited to that extent. If they were going into the revenue and expenditure part of the question, he thought, before beginning in the colony, they ought to take up the matter which had been referred to by the hon. member for Bowen about the enormous postage that had to be paid here on newspapers sent to Great Britain. The hon. member for Bowen had pleaded that the dissemination of those newspapers in Great Britain aided immigration and disseminated knowledge. They had far greater means of acquiring knowledge in Great Britain than in the interior parts of Queensland, and if the argument would apply in the one case it would apply in the other. Fourpence was the rate paid in the colony for sending a newspaper to Great Britain, where, he supposed, they had the grandest supply of literature in the known world. The question of surcharges, he thought, came in under that vote. They knew that book packets could be landed, say at Cooktown, from Victoria, at a less rate than they could be landed at Cooktown from Brisbane, and he understood that the Postmaster-General, in order to meet that difficulty, had made a surcharge of the balance. For instance, a packet weighing 11lb. going from Victoria to any part of Queensland was charged 4d.; but the same packet going from Brisbane to any other part of the colony cost 8d. Was that a legal charge? He recollected that when the member for Balonne was Postmaster-General the present Premier once objected to paying the surcharge, and gained his case; but he supposed the present Postmaster-General, being a lawyer, knew what he was doing in making the surcharge.

Mr. CHUBB said he recollected that when he was a boy a red penny stamp was affixed to every newspaper published in England. That had been abolished, and there was now a postage rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. on every newspaper posted within seven days of publication. In Victoria there was a postage rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. on newspapers; and there was no reason why a postage rate should not be imposed on newspapers in Queensland. It would not be fair to impose a tax on every newspaper published, but some charge should be made for the carriage of papers through the country.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that newspapers posted in Victoria had to be stamped, but when they were sent to Queensland they were carried without further charge, so that Queensland derived no benefit from the charge made in Victoria. A large proportion of the deficiency caused by carrying newspapers free was owing to the carriage of papers published in other colonies. In addition to the *Australasian* and other newspapers published in Victoria, that colony recently endeavoured to get Queensland to distribute free the magazines and enlarged pamphlets arriving from that colony. The Postmaster-General now surcharged those magazines on arriving in Queensland at the rate of 1d. per oz., and he thought it would be agreed that the Postmaster-General should insist on that charge. The imposition of a charge on the

carriage of local newspapers was not a matter to be decided in a debate like the present; and there was no doubt that such a charge would restrict their circulation, especially that of the provincial newspapers. It would handicap papers that were issued more frequently than once a week, as against those which were issued only once a week; and, all things considered, unless the Government were driven to that source of revenue, he could not say that the project met with his approval. They were justified in collecting a revenue from the carriage of papers published outside the colony. Referring to the pillar post-offices, which the hon. member for South Brisbane wished to be extended for the purpose of receiving newspapers as well as letters, he might point out that the present pillars were not adapted for the reception of newspapers, and that if they were extra labour and extra vans would be required in collecting those newspapers. That would impose on the department an additional expense in regard to a work on which there was already an annual loss.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said if the Treasurer, in the face of the deficiency, still thought it necessary to go on supplying intellectual pabulum to the public at the expense of the taxpayer, he hoped the hon. gentleman would at all events give them the truth as it appeared in *Hansard*—stuff that was not written for hire, and for which the people who uttered it were responsible to their constituents in a measure. That would be some sort of enlightenment to the people. They would know then what their representatives were doing, and other representatives also; whereas now they got at the expense of the taxpayer a garbled and mangled version of what went on. He had no doubt that there would be a great outcry tomorrow among the “coppersmiths” on account of the criticisms to which they had been subjected, but he maintained that it would be far better if the Government could see their way to give the public something of what really did happen in that Assembly, and also the *Government Gazette* notices, without the expense of paying £12,000 a year in advertising in the newspapers, public and otherwise. He thought it was not at all an unmixed evil sending that class of cheap literature for which 15s. per column was paid—now much more than 1d. per line—went through the length and breadth of the land, and, moreover, at the expense of the general taxpayer.

Mr. DONALDSON said it appeared to him to be the general opinion of the Committee that newspapers posted in the colony should be stamped; but there also seemed to be a fear of incurring the censure of the proprietors of those papers. He thought the Government would be quite willing to impose a postage rate but for fear of the Press; and he asserted that they were losing too much money in trying to accommodate the Press. In Victoria he had not heard any complaint on account of the postage rate on newspapers, and in that colony most of the mails were carried by rail. There was not one instance in which the mails there were carried more than 150 miles by coach, whereas in Queensland they were in some instances carried 1,000 miles by land, and the bulk of the heavy newspapers coming from the other colonies were carried free in Queensland. They certainly saw several copies of the *Sydney Mail*, or *Australasian*, or *Town and Country Journal* for one copy of the *Queenslander* in the interior of the colony. He would ask the Government to seriously consider whether they should not reduce the deficiency of the Postal Department by putting a tax on newspapers sent through the post. Reference had been made to the postal pillars in the city. He was sorry he could not compliment the depart-

ment upon those arrangements. The pillar-boxes were cleared at 6 o'clock in the morning, while the Western mails left town at ten minutes to 6. In the suburbs of Melbourne, a considerable distance out of the city, the pillar-boxes were cleared at such an hour as would enable the letters posted in them to be sent by the first mail in the morning. It was quite time that the system in Brisbane was altered, and he believed it was only necessary to mention the matter to have such a change made as would prevent the inconvenience of people having to go to the General Post Office to post letters which they wished to be sent by the first mail in the morning.

Mr. GROOM said there was another thing which should be taken into consideration in discussing that question. The tendency of the legislation of the Imperial Parliament was rather to abolish the postage duty on newspapers. In fact, there was a strong agitation going on in England just now to abolish that duty altogether. There was also a strong agitation there to reduce the ocean postage to a penny. It was strongly advocated that there should be penny postage all the world over.

Mr. DONALDSON: There is a large profit in England on carrying mails.

Mr. GROOM: I do not think there is such a large profit.

Mr. DONALDSON: Yes, there is a profit.

Mr. GROOM said the profit at all events would be materially reduced by an ocean penny postage, more particularly on the postage to the Australasian colonies. At the same time, he would like to correct a statement made by the hon. member for Warrego, to the effect that he (Mr. Groom) absolutely advocated a stamp duty on all newspapers issued. What he said was that if the Committee were inclined to impose any duty at all on newspapers, that would be a more equitable one than a penny postage on all newspapers circulated through the post. He was sure that among the Press generally the disposition would be to submit to a tax of that kind rather than to the proposal that a penny stamp should be put on all newspapers carried by the Postal Department. If the latter plan was adopted, and a penny postage was charged for each paper, a subscriber who now paid £1 4s. a year for his paper, would have to pay 14s. additional, so that his paper would actually cost him £1 18s. And, as the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, had observed, if that tax was imposed, it would be almost prohibitory to newspaper readers. But, as the Colonial Treasurer had stated, the question was a very broad one, and one that could not be settled by that Committee. At the same time it should not be overlooked that in England there was an agitation going on to abolish the postage on newspapers. He thought it would ill become a young colony like Queensland to commence a policy of retrogression in that particular, when at home they were considering whether they should not abolish the tax on newspapers altogether, and they would, no doubt, do that in course of time.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not think anyone that evening had advocated a newspaper tax; at least he had not heard it if they had. He did not think it would be a good thing to put a tax on newspapers, and he would object very strongly to any such proposal. He did not see why newspapers should be taxed any more than making a boot should be taxed; but when they carried an article through the post then he thought the person who sent it or received it should pay for the service rendered. That was all that was asked. He thought even the Press, which some members of that Committee seemed

very much afraid of, would not find very great fault with that proposal. He did not think the payment for the postage of newspapers would enhance the price of newspapers to the general public. If they looked at the newspapers in Victoria, where postage was charged, they would find that the papers, whether weekly or daily, were of the same size or larger than the papers published here, and were just as cheap; and as far as the cost of producing papers was concerned he did not think it was less in Victoria than it was in Queensland. There was not much difference between the cost of production in the two colonies. He was of opinion that in the present state of the public finances the Treasurer would be justified, if called upon to impose fresh taxation, in introducing a measure that would compel the people posting newspapers to pay for the service rendered in carrying them by post. The Treasurer, in an earlier part of the evening, had said that people had been so long accustomed to having it done for nothing that they would grumble very much if they had to pay postage on newspapers; but people would grumble in paying for anything, so long as they could get it for nothing; so that that argument did not carry much weight. As to the statement of the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, that, because there was an agitation in England to abolish the tax or postage on newspapers there, they should not commence to make a charge for postage in this colony, he thought that argument failed entirely, because in England they had a very large surplus revenue from the Post Office, and probably they could afford either to abolish or reduce the postage on newspapers. He (Mr. Macrossan) was quite certain that the Postmaster-General in England would make no alteration that would bring the Post Office of that country into a deficiency equal in proportion to the deficiency shown by the department in Queensland. The deficiency here was nearly one-third of what they paid, the amount of the deficiency being £120,000, while the amount paid for the carriage was £360,000, or £320,000. He did not see that there was any liberality shown in such a practice as carrying mails at so great a loss. It was very well to be liberal, but he did not think they should be liberal at the expense of the general body of taxpayers. As far as encouraging the spread of knowledge was concerned, he did not think that they could say Victoria was less anxious to spread knowledge than they were. It was quite as democratic a country as Queensland, and yet the people there were obliged to pay for having their newspapers carried, and he thought they should also be required to pay for that service in Queensland.

Mr. FOXTON said he thought the arguments were all in favour of charging for the postage of newspapers—for the imposition of a halfpenny postage. The suggestion made by the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, in reference to pillar-posts, opened up a phase of the question which he thought had not been touched upon by any previous speaker, and that was that the papers which were sent away from the newspaper offices in the city were sent in very large parcels, and conveyed by vehicles to the General Post Office. The papers which would be posted in the pillar-posts would be probably only papers sent by individuals who would have already received their papers through the post, and it would therefore be a second postage of the paper. He believed, though he was not quite certain, that that was an evasion of the law. He did not know whether it was, but he knew it was done, and that very frequently; papers were reposted every day. The limit, of course, was

seven days; but a paper could be posted seven times in seven days. If postage were payable in respect to newspapers, they would not be reposted over and over again. He believed himself that the status of newspapers would be very much improved for the better, and that the mental pabulum which they supplied would be of a very much higher class if postage were payable. He believed that the proprietors would find it necessary, if the readers had to pay postage, to make the reading matter of a higher class than it was at present, in order to induce persons to pay the postage.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said he did not agree with hon. members who were pleading for the imposition of postage on newspapers. He thought it hardly seemed right that they who spent close upon £200,000 for the education of young folks should stick at £10,000 or £12,000 for the carriage of the stuff that was to educate the old folks.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: £120,000!

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said he did not admit that the whole loss of £120,000 arose from the carriage of newspapers. He thought £12,000 or £15,000 would be a very large amount to allow for that. They were beginning at the wrong end of the road to grumble at that, while spending £200,000 on the education of the young. Nor did he believe with hon. gentlemen in running down the Press. He knew very well that they heard the same sort of talk in Queen street. Hon. members had talked of the rubbish that was published, and in Queen street it was a common thing to hear people talk of papers as "rags," and of the nonsense in them. Some hon. gentlemen might have heard of the man who thought he could preach, but who when he got up on a platform could not get on very well, and then stuck altogether. At last he said, "If any of you folks have any conceit of yourselves in your ability to talk, come up here and try it." He said the same of the hon. gentlemen. If they thought what the papers published was stuff and rubbish let them sit down and try to write day after day a leading article, and they would find it a different sort of thing from what they imagined it. The newspaper, however, had had its fair share of discussion, and he now wished to say a few words on a different matter in connection with the vote. Perhaps some hon. members besides himself had noticed in an issue of the *Telegraph* in February last an article of two columns in length. It did not exactly appear whether it was an advertisement or a contribution, but he would assume that it was an advertisement. When he saw that article two things crossed his mind. One was that the men who contributed those two columns must have been in a state of real downright exasperation before they did it. The second thought was that, if those allegations were true, something needed looking into in the Post Office Department. He was quite sure if those matters were in any way correct, they were in direct opposition to the spirit of the Postmaster-General. Since then one of his own constituents had placed in his hands a copy of a communication which had been forwarded, he believed, to the department. But he would refer to the two columns in the *Telegraph*. The principal points in that article might be thus stated: The carriers and sorters complained of the long hours. They were required to go in at 7 in the morning, and were kept at it for 13 or 14 hours daily. When kept to 6, 7, or 8 at night, scarcely any time was allowed for refreshment. Twenty minutes were allowed to them to go out at 7 o'clock or later, when all the places that provided refreshment were closed, or when

was very difficult to obtain refreshment. They also complained that they were shorthanded, and that there had not been such a revision of the runs as the increase of population called for. Hon. members knew very well that the population of Brisbane had increased so rapidly that a run which five years ago might be a fair area for a letter-carrier to work would be very different to-day. There were more houses, a larger population, and a larger amount of work. He did not know whether much stress could be laid on those two points, for persons who sought work in the post office knew the long hours and the work, and if they did not like them they could clear out. Another point that seemed to involve an injustice to the public was the capricious shifting of the letter-carriers from one run to another, and that sometimes when the letters for a delivery had been sorted and put up ready for delivery. That, it was alleged, had been done on the first of the month, when, they all knew, there was a larger amount of matter to be distributed, such as accounts, than at any other period. The letter-carriers, it was alleged, were shifted from runs which they knew to runs which they did not know. That led to delay in delivery of letters and to considerable inconvenience to the public. A case had come under his own experience to which he might refer, and so remove the matter from mere doubt and uncertainty to actual fact. A letter-carrier came to his house in Warry street about 4 o'clock one Saturday afternoon. He produced a bundle of letters and asked "Are you Mr. So-and-so?" "No." "Can you tell me where he lives?" He (Mr. Brooks) looked at his bundle of letters and found a strangely mixed lot. "That one," said he, "is for So-and-so down there." "I have been there," said the man. "Then you will have to go back again." Another was for Gregory terrace. "I have just come from there," again said the letter-carrier. Now, that was the morning delivery which the man was making, and it was then half-past 4 in the afternoon. The man had still forty or fifty letters to deliver, and he could see that there was very little prospect of that man getting through with his morning delivery before 6 o'clock in the evening! He must have had to go over his run again and again. He (Mr. Brooks) did not think it was fair. If a man was put on a new run, he should have a guide who knew the district. The letter-carriers asked further that they should have the whole of the public holidays. They took letters out to the city offices, and nearly all those were closed. It seemed to him a useless piece of work that the letter-carriers should be sent out through the city on public holidays. Hon. members knew that the people of Brisbane were thorough holiday-makers. They did not go to their offices for letters on those days, and it was useless for the letter-carriers to deliver them. Another regulation was imposed upon them, and that was that on Saturday afternoons, no matter how far it might bring him, the letter-carrier was required to return to the office after his second delivery that his time might be noted. If a man lived at Bulimba, for instance, and finished his delivery there, he had to go back to the central office in order that the time he finished his work might be noted, and so with all the other letter-carriers. The letter also referred to the boorish treatment they received at the hands of some of the underlings—he spoke of them relatively, overseers, he supposed they would be called. That part was worth reading:—

"For instance, when we are spoken to by him it is in tones of anger, whatever may be the nature of the work we may be engaged in at the time. When thus spoken to we must move as if by magic; if not we are bawled at as if we were so many bullocks in a team or a number of blackfellows on a plantation.

"If we address him civilly, as we always do, we are generally met by a sneer. When we reach him a letter or other document, which we often have to do, it is seldom taken from us without being snatched in the most disagreeable manner possible.

"If we attempt to explain any little matter or to remonstrate with him for his misconduct, we are told to shut up or we shall be immediately reported to Mr. Wright for giving him cheek. These and other indescribable annoyances we have had to put up with in the past."

It seemed to him that, however humble a man might be, or how low his position, he should be treated with courtesy, and none but a boor would treat him otherwise. The main objection seemed to be that the men who signed that statement of grievances were not dismissed for it, but certain conditions were imposed upon them which it must have been known would lead to their dismissal. For instance, one of them had lived twenty years at West End, and knew the district thoroughly; but he was ordered, on a certain day, to take the Bowen Hills and Bulimba run, of which he knew absolutely nothing. The Bowen Hills and Bulimba man was sent to West End, of which he knew nothing. One who lived in South Brisbane was sent to Spring Hill, and of that district he knew nothing. The only result that could accrue from that was that the men were behind time, and were charged when they had done their work with having broken the regulations, and were requested to resign. He did not say that all those allegations were correct; it was possible that some of them might be a little over-stretched; but he was sure that the Colonial Treasurer, who had charge of the Estimates, would deal frankly with the matter, and in the most thorough good faith, and show that some of the charges were explainable, as he (Mr. Brooks) hoped they were. Certainly there were some points that were most decidedly unworthy of such a department as the Post Office.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Post Office was a very large department, and, like the railway and some other departments of the Government, required to have its employés in a state of discipline. Where large numbers of men were employed there were sure to be some who were dissatisfied, and who would endeavour to instil their dissatisfaction into the minds of the other employés, and who would like their cases brought forward in Parliament by some of their friends. The case mentioned by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley was no exception to the general rule, because one of the signatures to the letter quoted was that of a man who was constantly dissatisfied, and who continuously endeavoured to create dissatisfaction in the minds of others. The hon. gentleman must be well aware that where large numbers of men were employed, if they imagined they could get their grievances brought forward by members of Parliament, it would be entirely subversive of discipline. Therefore, unless there were very strong grounds for believing that an individual had sustained an injury or a grievous wrong, he strongly deprecated the management of the Government departments being ventilated in Parliament with a view solely to give publicity to the grievances of a few individuals, who perhaps would not be satisfied with any change. When the hon. gentleman first represented that matter to him, he had the courtesy to inform him that it had been pressed upon his attention, and he (Mr. Dickson) admitted that, on the face of it, there was subject-matter for consideration. But the information he had received had put an entirely different complexion upon the injustices which were alleged to have been committed. In regard to the length of hours, he might inform the hon. gentleman that the department could not pledge itself to any

certain number of hours for its employes, in the matter of letter delivery. When the employes were detained in the evening for a late delivery of English mails they received additional payment. The department certainly did not confine itself to what might be called the "eight-hours system," nor could it be expected to do so. When an oversea mail arrived late in the evening, it was necessary that the mails should be delivered promptly, and if the men were delayed a considerable time on account of it they received a certain amount of remuneration for the extra labour. So far as he could learn there had been no dissatisfaction whatever expressed or felt by the employes upon that head. The second matter mentioned by the hon. member was with respect to the change of venue, or change of beat, for the letter-carriers. The principle adopted was that it was desirable to familiarise the letter-carriers with the different quarters of the city, so that in the event of any one carrier being taken ill the department would not be disarranged. The object was that if, say two letter-carriers were ill, or prevented from making their regular rounds, some other person in the department would know the beat, and a great deal of trouble would be saved. After that explanation hon. members would see that it was desirable that the letter-carriers should be familiarised with the different portions of the city, so that they could be transferred to one another's beats without there being any disarrangement in the public service. The third matter was in reference to returning to the office after delivering the letters; and the hon. gentleman particularly referred to the deliveries made on Saturday at midday, and cited as an instance the carrier who delivered letters at Bulimba having to return to the central office to give an account of himself. The reason of that was very easy to be seen. It was to show that the men had completed their deliveries, and the department considered it was the best way of preventing anything like secreting letters, or holding them over until another time for delivery. That had been done in some cases, and it was considered that each letter-carrier ought to return and report that he had completed his round, and that there were no letters undelivered. It was very easy to find fault with the administration of a large department like the Post Office, but he thought statements like those made by the hon. gentleman should be taken with a grain of salt. The hon. member might rest assured that the department had no desire to inflict any injury or hardship upon the letter-carriers. If those hardships were generally acknowledged, he did not think there would be such a large number of candidates for employment as there were constantly calling upon the Postmaster-General. In reference to pillar-boxes, the department did not keep a night-service for emptying them—the last clearance was made between 5 and 6 o'clock in the evening; but the hon. gentleman would remember that there was a box at the railway station, and that letters could be posted up to within five or ten minutes of the starting of a train. To have a general clearance of the pillar-boxes at night or early in the morning would necessitate a large increase in the staff.

Mr. NORTON said he did not fall in with the hon. gentleman's argument that the postmen should be obliged to return to the office to show that they had been their rounds, and had come back clean-handed, because if they wanted to secrete letters they could keep them in their pockets. After all the Post Office would be no wiser, and did not gain much. He would like to say a word or two upon the subject of postage on newspapers. He quite admitted that hon. gentlemen who had advocated the stamping of news-

papers had a great deal of force in their arguments; but at the same time he did not think it advisable to change the policy of the country without very serious consideration. He thought it had been urged that the tax would not fall on the people who took the newspapers but upon the Press, but his experience was quite the reverse. Some years ago there was a newspaper postage imposed on papers in an adjacent colony. At that time he was taking a weekly paper, and as soon as the newspaper tax was imposed the charge for the paper was increased by the amount of the postage. That was some years ago, but whether it was done now he did not know. Whether that was the effect in Victoria and South Australia he did not know. He was referring to New South Wales. It was a good many years since the tax was imposed, and it was continued for some time, but had since been discontinued. The effect there was certainly to increase the cost of the newspaper; and he thought that in all probability if a tax was imposed here the same effect would be apparent—that the people who took the papers would have to pay the extra cost. If that was so, then he said the tax would fall very largely upon people living in the country. Now, was it fair that people in the country should be bound to bear the greater share of the burden? Was it fair that they should be bound to pay even an equal share? He would point out that at the present time the people in the town enjoyed, at the expense of the people in the country, the endowments upon their schools of arts. They enjoyed an endowment upon their reserves; and in many other ways they reaped benefits at the cost of the whole country which a number of the country people could not enjoy at all. In the matter of education, as he had often pointed out, people were living in some parts of the country where they could not send their children to school, and the children would not get any education except from their parents or from someone employed to teach them. Yet those parents contributed to the cost of the whole of the State schools, the endowment upon grammar schools, and everything of that kind. They also contributed to the endowment upon reserves and schools of arts, and upon everything which was for the benefit of those who could use it, and he said to ask them to pay a larger share of the loss on the carriage of newspapers was scarcely fair. That was the reason why he did not join in with the arguments used in favour of newspaper postage. There were other matters upon which he wished for information. He wished to ask the Colonial Treasurer at what age telegraph boys were taken into the service of the department. He had seen some little imps delivering messages who could not be more than ten years of age, and they seemed to him to be exceedingly young to be employed in such work. He presumed there was some minimum age at which they were employed, and he should like to know what it was, because some of the boys appeared to him as if they ought to be at school.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was informed that the boys were taken into the department between the ages of fourteen and fifteen. They might seem small for their age.

Mr. NORTON said then their growth must have been stopped in some mysterious way. One or two of the boys did not appear to be more than ten years old.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: They are very intelligent.

Mr. NORTON said they must have been dosed with gin when young. They were a decent, nice-looking lot of boys, but they seemed very young for the work. What hours were they employed? It was not a fair thing to employ them for a long day.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hours were long, especially when Parliament was sitting, and the boys had to be in attendance on the House until it adjourned.

Mr. NORTON: All day?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes, all day. The occupation was at all events a healthy one.

Mr. NORTON said it need be healthy if the boys were kept at work so long. If they came to work at 9 o'clock, and stopped until the House rose, that was too long. He presumed the boys employed about the streets were not kept so long at work?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: About half-a-day on and off.

Mr. NORTON said that was very reasonable, and he did not think the boys had anything to complain of, but they should not be employed under the age of fourteen. He did not think it was fair to employ any boy below the age of fourteen. If they were not at school, then the education system was at fault. There was one other matter he would like information upon. The hon. gentleman referred to the fact of three or four men being kept at one place on the Cape York line. What distances were the stations apart, and how would the line-repairing business be done? Would a man have to go out alone?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he had already mentioned that the number employed at each station would be four—one manager, one line repairer, and two labourers. The stations would be fifty or sixty miles apart, and the line repairer would be accompanied by a labourer. Two men would go out together to effect repairs, so that one would cover the other in case of hostility on the part of the natives.

Mr. NORTON said if that was so they must have rather a lively time of it. If the line happened to be broken on each side of the station two of the men would have to wait at the station until the repairer and his mate got back from one side. If the stations were sixty miles apart also they would have to camp half-way, as they could not cover the sixty miles in the one day in a country like that, especially in wet weather.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that such a contingency as the hon. member referred to—the breaking of the line on each side of the station simultaneously—was not likely to occur. At any rate the present staff of four men at each station was considered sufficient.

Question put and passed.

CONVEYANCE OF MAILS AND CONTINGENCIES.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that the sum of £222,929 be voted for the conveyance of mails and contingencies. As hon. gentlemen would observe, the vote showed an increase of £10,279 on the appropriation for last year, and the necessity for that additional appropriation he would explain. The appropriation for the mail service *via* Torres Straits remained unaltered, of course. Then the vote for the conveyance of mails coastwise amounted to £18,000, and that was represented by the subsidy for carrying the mails from Brisbane to Cooktown, £9,500; from Cooktown to Normanton and Burketown, £5,500; Maryborough and Keppel Bay, £1,750; Gladstone and Keppel Bay, £450; Port Douglas and Daintree, £80; and Cairns and Edithvale, £50. There was no increase in the item, but he merely explained the amounts of which the vote of £18,000 was comprised. For the conveyance of mails *via* Melbourne and San Francisco, there was an additional £1,000 asked for—£16,000 for the present year in lieu of £15,000 for last year, on account of the increased service; approximately,

£6,500 was paid to the P. and O. Company, £7,500 to the Orient, and about £2,000 to the San Francisco line annually. Then there was a new vote of £3,000 allowance to officers in lieu of commission on sale of stamps and fees on private bags. It was deemed advisable that the officers receiving those fees should, in common with other Government officers, pay into the consolidated revenue all fees given to them in the shape of those additional emoluments, and in lieu of that allowance an addition was made in the salaries, so that, although the additional amount appeared on the Estimates, it was recouped to the Treasury in another form. In the vote for "repairs to buildings, furniture and fittings," an increase of £500 was asked, and a similar increase for "mail-bags, uniforms, forage, and incidentals," and the amount for advertising was not altered. An increase of £1,000 was asked for "instruments, batteries, forage and incidentals," an increase of £1,000 for the "maintenance and repairs of lines," £400 for "fuel, light, and water," and an increase in "forage allowances generally" of £840. The amount voted last year for forage allowances was a considerable increase on the vote for the previous year, in consequence of the state of the country; and although an increase in forage allowances was absolutely necessary for the present year in consequence of increased service, no doubt the amount asked for would be sufficient. An increase of £384 was asked for "labourers for protection of stations," and an increase of £1,655 was asked for allowances to cover the extra cost of provisions for officers on Northern and Western lines. Those items represented the increases in the vote to the extent, as he had said, of £10,279.

Mr. NORTON said the sum put down for the conveyance of inland mails was the same as that voted last year. He understood it would not cover any additional services that might be commenced, and if so, how would the extra expenditure be provided?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was informed that additional services were inaugurated last year, and that the estimate for last year was sufficient to cover them. There were no new services for the present year, and, as the appropriation for last year was sufficient, a similar appropriation was considered sufficient for the current year.

Mr. NORTON said there were new services in most years, but the question he asked was, where new services had to be provided for, how the money was provided; would the £68,000 for "inland mails" be found sufficient for everything?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said another reason why the amount voted had been found sufficient was that the length of coach services was being continually reduced by the extension of their railways, and, on that account, the amount voted would, he believed, be sufficient to cover any new services.

Mr. NORTON said that was explicit enough. In respect of the allowance to officers in lieu of commission on sale of stamps, he believed that under the old system officers requiring stamps sent in the money to the Stamp Office and the stamps were sent to them, and they received an allowance of 10 per cent. on the sale of them. He supposed the stamps would now be supplied to the different stations, and he wanted to know what guarantee would be required from the postmasters?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the former plan was that postmasters were allowed 10 per cent. on the sale of stamps; now the stamps were supplied to them and the receipts were paid into the consolidated revenue. The

Postmaster-General's Department had a separate policy for the fidelity of its officers—entirely apart from the general Civil Service policy which was held by the Treasury—which covered that and other financial risks.

Mr. ADAMS asked what the postmaster at Cania received for his services?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: £6 per annum.

Mr. ADAMS said that was not enough to pay house-rent for a box to keep the letters dry.

The PREMIER: He can resign, and somebody else will take it.

Mr. ADAMS said there were other patriotic men in the colony as well as the Premier, and he had no doubt the gentleman who held the office would do the work without remuneration for the purpose of serving his neighbours. Many persons would do that rather than see people walk miles and miles for their letters. But if they were to be remunerated for their services they should get sufficient remuneration. He hoped that before next year the Postmaster-General would see fit to remunerate the man, at any rate, sufficiently to keep a house over his head, if he did not remunerate him for the services he rendered.

Mr. NORTON said he happened to know something about the Cania post office. Cania was not a very large place, but the gentleman who undertook the work and received £6 a year for it had carried it out for nothing for six years. That showed he had some public feeling, and £6 was certainly not as much as he deserved to get.

Mr. CHUBB said he was reminded of a discussion which took place last year in the House of Commons, when an Irish member asked the Government when a certain school teacher was going to be promoted, and added that the Government would have to consider the matter very seriously. He (Mr. Chubb) wished to know how it was that the mails brought by the A.S.N. boats were almost invariably ten hours behind the other steamers. There was an instance that evening. There had been an accident to the A.S.N. boat, and the Q.S.S. steamer brought the mails. But for that they would have arrived ten hours later. Of course, it was often important to be able to answer letters by the return mail, and when they came by the fast steamers it gave correspondents ten hours more to attend to their business.

The PREMIER said he supposed the opposition steamer tried to beat the mail steamer.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that in these days of ocean racing, perhaps the A.S.N. Company did not choose to push their boats ahead of others. They delivered their mails at the time agreed upon with the department.

Mr. CHUBB: What was the specified time for the mails from Cooktown to Brisbane?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said they were timed to arrive on Thursday evening, for delivery on Friday morning.

Mr. MACFARLANE asked when the contract for the present Torres Straits mail service terminated?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: On the 10th February, 1889.

Mr. NELSON said there was £7,000 down for country post offices and receiving offices. He did not wish to raise again the discussion which they had had last night, but he believed there was also a large amount of loan money paid for post offices—for country offices built of weather-board. For instance, there was £592 from loan for a post and telegraph office at Durah, in his own

electorate. He was referring to the report of the Acting Colonial Architect circulated a short time ago. Then there was Hughenden, £432; Jundah, £1,066—

The PREMIER: Out of loan?

Mr. NELSON: Yes; all out of loan. Maryborough, additions and repairs, £552; Ravenswood, £1,111; Redcliff, £450; St. George, £1,225; Springsure, additions, £104; Tambo, additions, £150. That seemed a very considerable amount of loan money to be spent upon country post offices.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the £7,000 to which the hon. member referred was not for buildings but for salaries. There was no provision made for buildings in the present Estimates. All buildings were provided for by the Works Department.

Mr. FERGUSON said he wished to call the attention of the Government to the state of the Rockhampton post office, the accommodation in which was so inadequate that the postmaster found it impossible to carry out his duties satisfactorily either to the department or to the public. Had any representation to that effect been made to the department by the postmaster at Rockhampton?

The COLONIAL TREASURER replied that frequent representations to that effect had been made. He was informed that Mr. Connolly had been instructed to proceed immediately to Rockhampton to ascertain what was best to be done, and he was told that the Postmaster-General, immediately after the close of the session, intended to go there and see that adequate accommodation was provided.

Mr. FERGUSON said the reply was almost the same as the one he got two years ago. At that time instructions were given to the Colonial Architect, Mr. Clark, to prepare plans for certain additions to the post office at Rockhampton. The plans were duly prepared, and tenders were called for. Afterwards it was reported to the Government that to make the proposed alterations would be a waste of money. That report was adopted by the Government, and fresh plans for an entirely new post office were prepared. To his own knowledge those plans had been ready in the office for twelve months, and no notice whatever had been taken of them from that time to the present. Now, he was informed that the Colonial Architect was instructed to look into the matter. The post office at Rockhampton was built in the early days, and was not at all suitable for the requirements of the place now. He hoped the Government would at once take in hand either a new building or the erection of additional accommodation. The excuse made last year was that there was no money voted for the purpose. But there was a sum of £100,000 on the Loan Estimates for 1884 for buildings generally. A portion of that might be appropriated for the Rockhampton post office. He hoped no further excuse would be made as far as money was concerned. The money was voted, and the building was much required.

Mr. DONALDSON asked when it was intended to construct the telegraph line from Charleville to Adavale?

The COLONIAL TREASURER replied that that would depend upon the construction of the railway beyond Charleville. Until that question, which was now under consideration, was determined, he could hold out no promise on behalf of the Government.

Mr. DONALDSON said that a sum of £10,000 was placed on the Loan Estimates of 1884 for the construction of a telegraph line to Adavale, and £60,000 for the construction of the railway

beyond Charleville. It was evident that the Government had not the slightest intention to carry the railway west of Charleville, but he trusted that that would not prevent them from continuing the telegraph line to Adavale. The survey had been promised by the Minister for Works over and over again, and now that hon. gentleman had informed him that he had no intention to proceed with the survey west of Charleville. If that was the case, it would be very unjust to the people of Adavale, who, upwards of two years ago, subscribed a sufficient sum to guarantee the working expenses of the line. He would ask further whether it was a fact that the whole of the money available for the construction of telegraphs out of the Loan Fund had actually been spent?

The PREMIER said everyone would agree that it was not desirable to make two lines of telegraph to Adavale. It was quite certain that when the railway line was extended beyond Charleville there must be a telegraph line alongside of it. That had been really the cause of the delay. The money for the work was available. He did not know when the railway would be proceeded with beyond Charleville; but whether it was or not there was no reason, as far as he could see, why Adavale should not have its telegraph line.

Mr. DONALDSON said he would ask the Minister for Works when it was intended to proceed with the survey, so as to allow the telegraph line to be proceeded with?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the action of the hon. member for Warrego had done more to retard the extension of the line westward than anything else he could think of. The hon. member had harped about the rates until the Government had been forced to reduce them, and they had reduced them so low that the line was not paying. It was a question for the Government seriously to consider whether the line should be carried any further westward at present. They were now carrying wool from the interior—300 miles—at £5 a ton.

Mr. DONALDSON: What has that to do with the question before the Committee?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Sit down!

Mr. DONALDSON: I rise to a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Sit down!

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has a perfect right to rise to a point of order.

Mr. DONALDSON: The point of order was: Was the hon. gentleman discussing the question before the Committee?

The PREMIER: Of course he is.

Mr. DONALDSON: Nothing of the kind.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member had been badgering him for information, and when he was told the truth he objected to it.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was much obliged to the hon. gentleman for his courtesy in the way he addressed him. As for his (Mr. Donaldson's) action regarding the construction of the telegraph line, the hon. gentleman knew perfectly well that that statement was untrue. He had, from time to time, asked the hon. the Minister for Works when he would have the survey made in order that the telegraph line might be constructed. In fact, it was he who suggested, in order that the country should not be put to unnecessary expense, that the telegraph line should be constructed along the railway line. He made that suggestion nearly two years ago, and the hon. gentleman had not given him an answer now. He therefore asked him again, was it his intention to survey that line?

Mr. GRIMES rose to a point of order. He would like to know whether they were discussing the survey of a railway line or the telegraph vote?

Mr. DONALDSON said he was quite in order. He was discussing the construction of the telegraph line, and, as the hon. the Premier had pointed out, it was necessary that the telegraph line and the railway line should run together. He quite concurred in that, and he asked the hon. the Minister for Works if it was his intention to make a temporary survey—not a permanent survey—in order that the telegraph line might be constructed along it. The hon. gentleman had not replied to that question.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was quite prepared to answer the question. It was not usual to survey a railway line for the purpose of constructing a telegraph line beyond the terminus of the railway. If the Telegraph Department wished to construct a telegraph line, they must survey it themselves. It was not the duty of the Railway Department to survey lines for the erection of telegraphs. He had repeatedly refused the Postmaster-General to survey telegraph lines at the cost of the Railway Department.

Mr. DONALDSON said he believed that already an attempt had been made to run a flying survey some distance beyond Charleville, but in consequence of the drought the surveyor had to be withdrawn. The Minister for Works had said since the drought had broken up that he would send him out there again, in order to ascertain exactly the route the railway would take. If the hon. gentleman fulfilled his promise it would be quite possible for the Telegraph Department to erect the telegraph line along the railway survey. He (Mr. Donaldson) had been assured by the Postmaster-General that if the survey was made he would run the telegraph line there; and he would now ask once more, was it the intention of the Minister for Works to survey that line or not? If he did not intend to survey the line why not say so?

Mr. NORTON said he thought that as the Minister for Works was in a good humour he ought to answer a civil question civilly. The Premier had led the hon. member for Warrego to understand that the survey of the railway line and the telegraph line ought to go on together. He (Mr. Norton) assumed from that that the survey of the telegraph line would not be made until the railway survey was made; and what the hon. member for Warrego wanted to know was whether the Minister for Works would proceed with the survey of the railway—not with the intention of carrying out the railway, but merely in order that the telegraph line might be extended along the route to be used for the railway.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he knew perfectly well what the hon. member for Warrego wanted to know, but he did not think that the Railway Department ought to be called upon to make surveys for the construction of telegraph lines until such times as the Railway Department required the erection of a telegraph line for the convenience of that department. The Railway Department should not be called upon to make surveys for the purpose of a telegraph line where a railway might never go. It was quite possible that the survey would be resumed. The reason the surveyor was taken off was because during the time of the drought there was neither water nor grass to be had in that district. If it had not been for the drought possibly the survey would be proceeding now; but the action of the hon. member for Warrego had made it very doubtful

whether it was wise to extend the line beyond Charleville. That was a matter for the Government seriously to consider. There was a considerable length of line still to be constructed, and he presumed that the Government would consider the matter, and if they came to the conclusion that the line should be extended beyond Charleville, as a matter of course the survey would be made. What he wanted to impress upon the hon. member for Warrego was that it was not the duty of the Railway Department to survey telegraph lines.

Mr. DONALDSON said the hon. member had twice charged him with having retarded the progress of that line, probably with the intention of damaging him (Mr. Donaldson) in the eyes of his constituents.

Mr. NORTON : You are made the responsible minister.

Mr. DONALDSON said the hon. the Minister for Works had made him responsible for the stoppage of that line, according to his assertion. He could only give the statement a flat denial ; he was not going to argue in the same way as the hon. gentleman had done just now ; he would merely contradict the statement. With regard to the answer the hon. gentleman had just given, he did not think it was necessary that the construction of the telegraph line should be kept back until the railway survey was made, because the Minister for Works had plainly intimated that there was no desire to go on with that work. The hon. gentleman had further stated that it was not the duty of the Railway Department to survey lines for telegraphs. Such being the case, and there being no intention to go on with the railway line, was it the intention of the Government to take the telegraph line in another direction, or direct to Adavale ?

The PREMIER said he did not think that the telegraph line should be taken direct to Adavale ; it would simply be a waste of money. What was the distance ?

Mr. DONALDSON : About 120 miles.

The PREMIER said he thought it was more than that. At any rate, it was considerably out of the direction that the railway would run ; it was north of west, and the line would go south of west from Charleville. It was certainly not desirable to have two lines of telegraph. He did not think it was likely there would be much delay in making the survey.

Mr. DONALDSON said his desire was to try and save the country from unnecessary expense, and in order to do so he had suggested to the department, nearly two years ago, that it would be desirable to run the telegraph line along the railway line, and he believed that advantage had been taken of that suggestion. At that time the survey was going on, but the drought compelled the surveyor to give it up. He had every reason to believe that the line to Adavale would be a very paying one. The people there had shown their confidence in the line by expressing their willingness to deposit the sum asked for by the Postal Department. He had no hesitation in saying that every possible obstacle had been thrown in his way of getting that line constructed because the Minister for Works would not make the survey, and the Postmaster-General would not go on with the work until the survey was made. The two departments would not work together ; that had been the whole cause of the delay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it would be unjust and unwise for the Railway Department to be saddled with the cost of surveying a telegraph line to Adavale, seeing that if the railway line was extended out west

it would never go to Adavale. There was a vote for the construction of telegraph lines, and the Postmaster-General might survey the line himself.

Mr. DONALDSON : The Postmaster-General says there is no necessity to have two surveys.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was extremely jealous of the funds of the Railway Department being used for any other purpose than that intended by Parliament when voting the money. The hon. member for Warrego was unreasonable, but he hoped the hon. member would not expect him to survey the remainder of the line from Charleville to Adavale, because the railway would not go to Adavale if it were extended west.

Mr. DONALDSON said he never asked that the hon. gentleman should make a survey to Adavale. He merely asked when it was intended to survey the line of railway for which money had already been voted on the Loan Estimates. He did not want the Railway Department to be put to any unnecessary expense.

Mr. BLACK said it was the first time the vote of £3,000 for "allowance to officers in lieu of commission on sale of stamps, and fees on private bags," appeared on the Estimates. On what principle was the money to be distributed among the different officers ?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it had been the custom hitherto for officers to purchase a certain quantity of stamps for sale, and get discount at the rate of 10 per cent. They had also received fees on private bags. But the Government had discontinued the practice of emoluments being received by officers in addition to their salaries, and had placed the sum of £3,000 on the Estimates to be paid to those officers in proportion to the amount of emoluments received before.

Mr. BLACK said the £3,000 would be left to the patronage of the department. The Committee had always protested against additions to salaries over which they had no control, and it would be far better to give Civil servants salaries sufficient for the duties they had to perform, and give them no extras at all. There was no saving to the country in the change, and the vote was a most unsatisfactory one.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the more information hon. gentlemen received the less they appeared to be satisfied. Had the vote been put on the Estimates in the form at first intended by the department, very likely it would not have received the attention which it had obtained, because it would have been included in the vote for country post offices and receiving offices, which would have been increased thereby to £10,000. It was considered better, however, to show how the increase was occasioned, and the expenditure would be on the basis he had mentioned before. The hon. gentleman might as well say that the sum of £7,000 for country post offices was in the patronage of the Postmaster-General. The £3,000 would be paid along with the £7,000 for country post offices and receiving offices ; but next year it would perhaps appear in a different form.

Mr. BLACK asked whether the emoluments received by each officer would appear next year in the schedule to the Estimates ?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said they appeared in the schedule at the present time.

Mr. BLACK said the vote for repairs to buildings, furniture, and fittings, was increased from £3,500 to £4,000. He did not suppose that was too much, but as the Minister for Works appeared to be in a good humour, he would refer

the Treasurer to a promise made by the Minister for Works at Mackay during the recess. The new post and telegraph office was brought under his notice, and it was pointed out that it was incomplete without a clock. The hon. gentleman admitted the modesty of the request; he said it was a small matter, that there would be no difficulty in obtaining it, and that on arriving in Brisbane he would consult his colleagues. He would now ask the Colonial Treasurer whether steps had been taken to instruct the Minister for Works to go on with the matter?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member was not quite correct in his statement. He had been very careful in any promises he made. The matter referred to was brought under his notice, and he did say he thought it was a small thing, and that he would represent the wishes of the people in the proper quarter, and that was to the Postmaster-General. He had done that, and in doing so had fulfilled his promise. It was not his fault if the clock had not been provided; he did not promise to provide it.

Mr. BLACK said the remarks of the hon. gentleman bore out what he had stated. He now asked the Colonial Treasurer whether any steps had been taken to provide the clock?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he understood the matter was before the Postmaster-General, and that he was favourable to granting the clock, providing the expense was not of a heavy character. In the meantime the department was making inquiries as to cost.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I hope the hon. member for Mackay will be satisfied now that I have done my duty.

Mr. BLACK: I am satisfied that the hon. gentleman always does his duty to the best of his ability.

Question put and passed.

METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATION.

The PREMIER said he would move the next item, that the sum of £713 be granted for Meteorological Observation. That was a new vote altogether, and he moved it because he had taken a very great deal of interest in the matter. Up to the present time there had been voted annually a sum of £250 for the Meteorological Observer in Brisbane, and last year a sum of £500 was voted for the purchase of instruments. Practically, the present meteorological service was useless. From the report laid on the table, made by Mr. Wragge, it was clear that the returns with regard to the rainfall of the colony were perfectly valueless. He (the Premier) thought it was extremely foolish economy not to make proper provision to obtain reliable information respecting the natural conditions of the country. Queensland was favourably situated, not only for ascertaining the rainfall and climatic conditions of isolated places, but also for drawing general deductions from a comparison of the observations at different points in the colony with those made at other parts of the Australian continent. He believed himself that most valuable information might be deduced, if they had a competent man capable of generalising from the different observations. For instance, a great many people had noticed the frequent coincidence of a particular kind of weather prevailing in Sydney and a particular kind of weather prevailing in Brisbane. Of course, that coincidence arose from general causes, and if they had a man in charge of the Meteorological Department capable of drawing deductions from the observations, he believed they would get most valuable information. He hoped the Committee would not grudge the small expenditure which it was proposed to incur for

that purpose. It was proposed to appoint as meteorological observer a thoroughly competent scientific man, who would devote his whole time to the subject at a salary of £400 a year.

Mr. NORTON: Have you anyone in view?

The PREMIER: Yes; he believed they could get two or three very competent men, each of whom would be willing to give his services for that amount. An assistant would also be appointed at a salary of £150 per annum, and £300 was asked for the purchase of instruments. He believed that would be sufficient for the present year, but he thought that even if it were necessary to incur an expenditure of £1,000 or £2,000 it would be money well spent. No new arrangements had been made up to the present time, because it was thought that in a new departure such as that they should get the sanction of Parliament before making any definite arrangement.

Mr. NORTON said he supposed the headquarters of the meteorological observer would be in Brisbane?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. NORTON: And that the present arrangement would be abolished?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. NORTON said the sum of £500 had been voted last year for the purchase of instruments. Those of course still belonged to the department?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. NORTON said it was very unsatisfactory to find that, after all these years, the rainfall was incorrect. They had had a number of gentlemen devoting days and nights to making up those tables to show the rainfall, not only how much had fallen, but what they should get each month in future, provided everything went right. If those tables were all wrong, it explained why they had not got the right quantities; some months they had got more rain than they ought to have got, and in other months too little. He did not think the gentlemen who made the calculations from the data given to them should be blamed; it was rather hard that their reputation as weather prophets should be damaged when the information supplied to them was inaccurate. He had heard a great many complaints respecting that department, but he had always been quite willing to make allowances for exaggeration. However, he believed there was a good deal of ground for complaint. For his own part he would have no objection to the proposed vote if it would bring about more satisfactory results, because, as had been pointed out, the money spent hitherto had been wasted—all they had got for it was their meteorological instruments.

The PREMIER said he thought it right to say, in justice to the officer conducting the work at the present time, that he had done all he could, but the erection of the meteorological instruments in country places was never supervised, and they were placed in such positions that they were not calculated to give correct records as to the rainfall or anything else, except, perhaps, heat. The barometers, he believed, had never been adjusted. So far as the relations of the Meteorological Observer to the country districts was concerned, he was practically only a computer. There was no doubt that the thing ought to be thoroughly organised, so that they could get such reliable information as would give them a general idea of the climatic conditions of the colony.

Mr. NORTON said he believed that the gentleman in charge of that work hitherto had done all that could be done by him, and he had

been told that in some cases he had been spending his own money in order to get more information than he could otherwise have obtained.

Question put and passed.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that the sum of £125 be granted for miscellaneous expenses, and said that that amount was the salary of the Meteorological Observer for six months.

Mr. NORTON asked if there was any objection to mention the name of the gentleman to whom the appointment of meteorologist was to be offered?

The PREMIER said it was proposed to offer it to Mr. Wragge, who was a very distinguished meteorologist. He had already visited a great many stations in the colony, and had given a report on them.

Question put and passed.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that there be granted the sum of £6,195 to defray the expenses of the Auditor-General's Department. That showed an increase of £550 upon the requirements of last year—namely, an additional assistant examiner, £250; incidental expenses, £50; and travelling expenses, £250. When the extent of the territory of the colony was remembered, and the very minute investigations made by the Audit Office of all transactions connected with the Government departments and local authorities, they must be well satisfied at the economy displayed and the efficiency of the department, which was well worthy of the highest commendation.

Mr. NORTON said he would suggest that if possible the information should be furnished a little earlier. The Auditor-General's report should be circulated as early as possible.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that was an object which the Government were sincerely desirous of attaining. Correspondence which had been placed on the table of the House would show that the matter had been very carefully considered. He trusted that correspondence would bear some fruit, and that next session the Audit Act would be so amended that immediately after the termination of the financial year the Auditor-General's report would be issued. He was quite aware that at present a long time elapsed before the report was in the hands of hon. members, and that many of the facts recorded in it had lost their interest. The Premier and himself had considered the matter in various lights, and he trusted that some alteration would be made next session by which the report would be in the hands of hon. members during the current ordinary year.

Question put and passed.

PACIFIC ISLAND IMMIGRATION.

The PREMIER moved that there be granted out of the Special Funds the sum of £14,875, for Pacific Island Immigration. Up to the present time the Immigration Agent, who was the nominal head of the department, had been paid £100 out of the fund. It was thought desirable to take the matter out of his hands and make a department practically apart from the Immigration Agent—the officer in charge to communicate directly with the Colonial Secretary's Department. Out of the £100 so taken it was proposed to give half to the officer in charge of the department, and give an increase of £25 to the senior clerk. In respect to the inspectors some changes had been made, not, however, resulting in any actual

increase to the department. The inspector at Beenleigh was still to receive £300, so was the inspector at Bundaberg, with an assistant at £250. At Ingham, the police magistrate formerly acted as inspector at a salary of £100. That was undesirable, as the only other justices available in the district were employers of Polynesians. The work to be done was more than one officer could overtake, and it was thought best to appoint an inspector at the salary of £300, leaving the police magistrate to do his own duties. Hon. members would recollect that the salary of the police magistrate had been increased from £300 to £450. The assistant inspector at Geraldton remained as he was. The vacancy caused by the transfer of the assistant inspector from Mackay was filled by the transfer of the assistant from Townsville at a salary of £250, or £50 a year more than he was getting at Townsville. He resigned, and another was appointed in his place at that salary. At Maryborough no change was made. At Townsville one inspector only was proposed, as there was no necessity for two. The amount for supernumerary agents had been reduced by one-half, which would be probably sufficient, as the number of ships was rather less than it had been. The allowance for contingencies was the same as before, except at Townsville, Geraldton, and Ingham. In respect to the hospitals for Pacific Islanders, there was no change in the salaries. Fifty pounds had been put down for forage allowance for the surgeon at Geraldton, who had no allowance last year. The amount for the maintenance of the hospitals had been increased from £3,000 to £5,000—unfortunately not more than was required for the four hospitals. If hon. members desired any further information as to the expenditure of the department, he would be very glad to give it.

Mr. BLACK said he would ask the Chief Secretary if the inspectors were also general immigration agents?

The PREMIER said that the inspectors at Bundaberg, Mackay, Maryborough, and Townsville, were also immigration agents.

Mr. BLACK said he would point out that it was hardly just to charge the whole of their salaries to the Pacific Islanders' Fund. The duties they had to perform in connection with European immigration were considerable, and as the Pacific Islanders' Fund was a contribution from those employing labour, it was only just that a proportion of the expense of those officers should be defrayed by the European Immigration Department. He did not know whether the Premier viewed it in that light; but as a matter of equity a certain proportion of the salaries of those officers should be charged against the general revenue.

The PREMIER said the matter had been under the consideration of the Government, and he was at first disposed to think there was a great deal in it. But, practically, all the work done by those officers was in connection with Pacific Islanders, with the exception of the immigration agent at Townsville. When he said practically all, he meant a very large proportion, and the proportion of the salary which could be charged to the general immigration vote would be very small. He did not think it would be more than £50 in any case, except perhaps at Townsville. The matter had been considered for some time, and it was thought better not to make any change during the present year. Next year he thought it would be better to divide the salaries between the Estimates-in-Chief and the vote before them.

Mr. BLACK said, notwithstanding the decrease in the number of islanders in the country,

the vote was increasing steadily, and he did not know how the hon. gentleman proposed to meet the increase. There was not the slightest doubt that greater economy would have to be exercised. The inspector at Ingham received £250.

The PREMIER: £300.

Mr. BLACK said he was receiving that now.

The PREMIER: He was receiving that at Mackay.

Mr. BLACK said he had a very intimate knowledge of that gentleman's—he would not say ability but want of ability—and if he succeeded in embroiling the planters on the Herbert with the Colonial Secretary like he had the planters at Mackay the hon. gentleman would be very sorry he had ever sent him there.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman was not quite just. The gentleman referred to had a great amount of zeal, and considerable ability, although his methods were not always the most fortunate. He had had the pleasure—or rather the duty—of reading most of his reports, and although they were rather voluminous, he was nearly always right. He sometimes wished the reports were briefer; but he read them carefully, and on not more than one or two occasions did he differ from the action he had taken. With respect to the increase referred to, it would be observed that it was under the heading of "Hospitals," and he hoped the expense would be reduced, as it had been a source of considerable anxiety. At Maryborough the expense had been very heavy in proportion to the number of islanders in the district, and correspondence had been going on for some time with the committee, as to how it could be reduced. The matter was almost entirely in the hands of the committee, who were left to make their own arrangements, as they were also at the Mackay and Geraldton hospitals. Notwithstanding the 30s. capitation fee, there would be a deficiency in each of the hospitals during the present year. It was anticipated that there would be a deficiency at the Ingham Hospital of £660, and £150 at the Geraldton Hospital. He was not prepared to say what would be the deficiency of the other two; but still the fund was in a better state than it was last year. On the 30th June last year the balance to the credit of the fund was £4,700, and on the same date this year it was £6,365. On the 30th September this year it had increased to £8,000; but that was an accidental fluctuation. He was happy to think that the fund was likely to last as long as the system was in force.

Question put and passed.

CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SHEEP.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton) moved that £3,517 be voted for the Chief Inspector of Sheep—salaries and contingencies. There was a slight decrease in the total amount of the vote. There had been some changes. Three clerks, who had been paid out of the amount for clerical assistance, had been put on at annual salaries; and there was a sum of £300 down for quarantine buildings at Rockhampton. £500 had been put down for those buildings before, but £300 had lapsed, and was now put on again.

Mr. NORTON said, with regard to the inspectors of brands and country inspectors, he presumed the system had been followed out of appointing the police officers, as far as possible?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the principle was to appoint the police officers whenever it was possible to do so. No new appointments had been made up to the present time, except the police officers in the district.

Mr. NORTON asked if the hon. gentleman could tell them how many inspectors there were who were not police officers?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was Mr. Gray, at Hughenden; Mr. Ross, at Rockhampton; Mr. Middleton, at Springsure; Mr. Gadsden, at Toowoomba; Mr. Megles, at Texas; Mr. Roebuck, at Maryborough; Mr. McAuley, at St. George; Mr. Brooke, at Bowen; and Mr. Friend, at Gladstone. The rest were police officers.

Mr. NORTON said he would like to know if those gentlemen went round their districts every year? He heard some time ago—he did not know whether it was the present one or not—that one inspector had never been round the district. That was why he had asked the question.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he understood that the inspectors sent in monthly reports, showing that they had gone through some parts of the district during the month. They were supposed to visit the districts as often as they possibly could. Whether they went through their districts once a year he did not know.

Mr. NORTON said he was inclined to think that the portions of the districts which some of the inspectors visited were the portions near their residences, and that the rest of the work was done by the police. If that was found to be the case, the sooner those gentlemen were allowed to resign and the police put in their place the better, because if they were paid a salary they ought to do the work.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he quite agreed with the hon. gentleman, and would take very good care that in future the reports were full and sent in regularly.

Question put and passed.

REGISTRAR OF BRANDS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the sum of £4,178 be granted for the Registrar of Brands. His previous remarks with regard to the clerical work of the department would also apply here. Instead of the clerks being paid from a "clerical assistance" vote, they were now put down at the proper salaries, they having been two years in the department. Altogether there was a slight decrease in the vote, although there was an increase in the item "Printing directories and Gazette notices." That was becoming a heavy item, but the sum put down was the estimate of the Government Printer as to what the work would actually cost. Of course, hon. members knew that there was a particular type required for that work, which cost a little more than ordinary type and had to be kept up.

Question put and passed.

POLICE SUPERANNUATION FUND.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that a sum not exceeding £4,989 8s. 4d. be granted for the Police Superannuation Fund. Of course that was provided for by Act of Parliament, and had to be paid.

Mr. NORTON said there was one matter he would like an explanation about with regard to the fund. During the year a pensioner died, and he would like to know whether in some cases the money paid to the widow exceeded the amount which the pensioner would have been entitled to up to the time of his death? He had been informed that in some cases an extra amount had been given equal to the pension for the whole year, notwithstanding that the pensioner died during the currency of the year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was sorry that at the present moment he could not give the information. The Commissioner for

Police was not present, but he would make inquiries and give the information to-morrow, if that would suit the hon. member. He had not quite understood the question.

Mr. NORTON said that during the year a pensioner occasionally died, and in some cases the widow had only received the pension up to the time of her husband's death, while in other cases the full year's pension was paid, notwithstanding the fact that the man drawing the pension died in the course of the year. He would like to know if that were the case, because if so he did not see why any distinction should be drawn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would make full inquiries, and inform the hon. gentleman to-morrow.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he might add that had any case of the kind mentioned by the hon. member occurred, he thought he should have been made aware of it, because the Auditor-General would certainly object to it unless authority had been given by Executive minute. He, therefore, did not think that any such case could have occurred.

Mr. NORTON said he did not pretend to say that it had. He had been informed that such cases had occurred, and he thought that some mistake had been made.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that a sum not exceeding £6,902 be granted to the Government Savings Bank. The estimate showed an increase of £68 only upon the estimate for the preceding year, and, when it was borne in mind that last year the deposits in the Savings Bank had increased to the extent of £127,000, he was sure it would be admitted the department was most economically managed. In fact, it must be economically managed, because it must be a self-supporting institution. Hon. gentlemen would see that the margin of profit had been considerably reduced on account of the lower rate of interest paid by the banks on Government deposits.

Mr. NORTON said he believed it was one of the most economical branches of the whole department, and the way in which the work was performed was a great credit to the colony. He said that with a very great deal of pleasure, because the officers connected with the Savings Bank Department deserved to get every commendation in connection with the way in which they carried out their work. He could speak of the universal civility and attention one met with in the office. He often went in there, and noticed that even if there was a crowd every person who went to the counter received exactly the same amount of attention—poor or rich, whoever he might be.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. After private business to-morrow, we propose to deal with the amendments of the Legislative Council in the Liquor Bill, and then to proceed with the consideration of Supply.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes past 10 o'clock.