

# Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 16th August, 1921.

Adjournment, Illness of the Leader of the House

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## ADJOURNMENT—ILLNESS OF LEADER OF THE HOUSE.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.33]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, 23rd inst.

We all very much regret the necessity for the adjournment, since it is due to the fact that the Leader of the House is seriously ill. I know that I voice the opinion of every member when I say we all hope that on Tuesday next Mr. Colebatch will be here, restored to health and able to discharge his duties as Leader of the House in that efficient manner which is characteristic of him.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [4.34]: I second the motion. I, too, regret very deeply the occasion for the adjournment, and I hope that on Tuesday next we shall find Mr. Colebatch thoroughly restored to health and leading the House with his customary efficiency.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [4.35]: I support the remarks that have fallen from the preceding speakers. I greatly regret the enforced absence of Mr. Colebatch. But whilst expressing my regret at the Minister's illness, I take this opportunity to urge upon the Government and members of the House the necessity for appointing some other member to occasionally relieve the Minister for Education in the conduct of the business of the House. It is unfair that the whole of this burden should fall upon one member. It must make that member exceedingly anxious and nervous in looking after the business. Moreover, there are 29 of us with whom time is of some importance. We are prepared to get on with the business, and therefore, the business should not have to be held up because of the absence of one particular member. Next month will be the month of agricultural shows throughout the State and, generally speaking, all members are expected to attend the shows in their respective provinces, and in consequence they must absent themselves from the House. Yet here we have to lose a fortnight, unable to get on with the work, whereas if we had an assistant leader, the break could be avoided. It is only right that somebody should be appointed to assist the Minister for Education in his onerous duties, which he carries out with such marked ability that, I am afraid, he does not like

to leave them to anybody else. However, the Government must appoint somebody to help him. As it chances, this week is rather opportune for an adjournment, inasmuch as during the next two days the annual horse show will be held at the Royal Agricultural Society's ground, which will enable members to get an idea of the quality of stock being bred in the State.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.37]: I have no intention of opposing the motion. I am glad to support it. On the other hand, I am sorry to learn from reports received just before lunch that the Minister for Education is seriously ill. Mr. Colebatch, an old friend of mine, is by no means in a fit state of health to leave his home. I wish to help him in every way; yet I am sorry that the notice to adjourn for a week should have been brought forward, because I think we might have been getting on with the debate on the Address-in-reply until we finished it, with the exception of the Minister's remarks. Thus we could have granted some measure of relief to Mr. Colebatch on his return to the House.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Who would reply to your criticisms?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The Minister, at the conclusion of the debate.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It would be a bit of a task for the Minister to have to read the whole of the debate in "Hansard."

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: He could read from day to day what was taking place in the House. It would save him many hours of listening to the debate after his recovery. If the Minister be not recovered on Tuesday next, I will suggest that we go on with the debate. Mr. Holmes or Sir Edward Wittenoom could move the adjournment of the House at the conclusion of the evening's debate, and so between us all we could carry on the more formal business until the Minister's return.

Hon. J. Duffell: What will be the position next Tuesday if the Minister is not able to attend?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I suggest that we make progress with the debate.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member is scarcely in order in discussing what is going to happen next Tuesday.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I was merely suggesting what could be done to relieve the Minister in the event of his not having sufficiently recovered to be here. I am sure that Mr. Holmes or Sir Edward Wittenoom would readily take charge of formal business, and the debate on the Address-in-reply could then be concluded, except for the Minister's speech. In the meantime, the Minister could read what was being said, and so on his return he would be in a position to reply. It would save him sitting many hours listening to the debate.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.40]: No member regrets more than I the necessity for the motion. My sympathy is with Mr. Colebatch in his illness. I trust he will soon be sufficiently recovered to again take charge. I sympathise with him, too, in the fact that the whole of the responsibility for conducting the business of the Chamber is on his shoulders. For nearly four years I sat beside him, and so I know the arduous nature of his task. In asking one man to take such responsibilities, the Government are asking too much. I know that some of the Ministers are out to practice economy in the direction of saving expenditure, but I am certain there are members of the House quite prepared to act as Honorary Minister without payment. If the business of the House is to be carried on without jeopardising the health of the Leader of the House, the Government ought to appoint somebody to assist him at a time like the present, and again when the full rush of work is on. As the result of my experience as a Minister I can see that the suggestion thrown out by Mr. Lovekin is unworkable. We cannot expect any Minister to reply to criticism, unless he is sitting in his seat to take notes of what is being said.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 4.43 p.m.*

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m. and read prayers.

### QUESTION—CIVIL SERVANTS, LEAVE.

Mr. DAVIES (for Mr. Teesdale) asked the Premier: What was the number of civil servants, and other officials employed by the Government, absent on Wednesday, 10th August, on sick or other leave?

The PREMIER replied: Out of 2,945 officers employed in the metropolitan area, 123 were on extended sick, annual, or long service leave; 403 were given leave for the afternoon or a portion thereof conditionally on the time being made up, or deducted from annual leave, or in lieu of payment for equivalent overtime previously worked; 32 were permitted to absent themselves on condition that their work was kept up to date.

### QUESTION—RAILWAYS AND TRAMWAYS DEPARTMENTS.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Railways: 1, How many additional administrative positions have been created in the staff of the Railways and Tramways Departments since the appointment of the present Commissioner? 2, What are salaries and all other expenditure attached to the positions so created to date? 3, Does he consider it necessary to further increase the administrative staff while reductions are being made in the total number of employees? 4, What is the total cost, including salaries, expenses, etc., and haulage of inspection car of the economy committee over the railway system? 5, Are the officers in charge of the various departments and districts incompetent or incapable of making recommendations in regard to the economical working of the services mentioned? 6, What are the names, grade, and status of the members of the economy board? 7, Is he aware that a similar board was created some years ago and made many recommendations which were afterwards found absolutely impracticable? 8, Did one of the officers of the previous board make a recommendation in regard to amalgamation of offices and although experienced in that particular position unmistakably failed to perform the duties when these were subsequently allotted to himself?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, One. 2, General Manager, Tramways and Electricity Supply, £1,000, formerly Electrical Superintendent at £800 per annum. 3, No. 4, If the Suggestions and Economics Board is referred to no such expenditure has been incurred. No additional expense was incurred. 5, No. 6, The members of the Suggestions and Economics Board are:—Mr. Maxwell, Chief Draftsman, Way and Works; Mr. Bromfield, Auditor of Disbursements; Mr. Backshall, Officer-in-Charge Operation. 7, No board created some years ago was analogous to that to which this question refers. 8, I am not aware, neither is the Commissioner of Railways aware, whether this is so or not. Addendum.—The questions being somewhat difficult of interpretation the Commissioner of Railways will be pleased to afford the hon. member any information required, should the replies given herewith not deal with the matters the hon. member has in mind.