

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Friday, 12th August, 1887.

Construction of Telegraph from Derby to Wyndham—Return Tickets on Eastern Railway—Increase of Salary to the Director of Works and Engineer-in-Chief—Vote for Harbor and Jetty Accommodation at Cossack—Message (No. 31): Water Supply for shipping at Champion Bay—Message (No. 32): Published report and papers of the Colonial Conference—Message (No. 33): Sen-going Dredge; High Rate of Infant Mortality—Message (No. 34): Utilisation of Guano Deposits—Message (No. 35): Construction of the Derby and Wyndham Telegraph Line—New Rules of the Supreme Court—Pearl Shell Fishery Regulation Acts Amendment Bill: further consideration in committee—Bills of Sale Act, 1879, Amendment Bill: 3rd reading—Small Debts Bill: report of committee adopted—H.M.S. Prohibition Liquor Bill: in committee—Crown Lessors Arbitration Bill: in committee—Butterine Bill: report of committee adopted—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at seven o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE DERBY AND WYNDHAM TELEGRAPH LINE.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works whether he understood that the resolution passed on August 5th, with reference to Telegraph extension in Kimberley, contemplated that the line should be carried on to Wyndham, and not merely from Derby to the Goldfields?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said he understood that the resolution with reference to Telegraph extension in Kimberley contemplated the line being eventually completed to Wyndham, as was the intention of the Government to do.

RETURN TICKETS ON THE EASTERN RAILWAY.

SIR T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL—on behalf of Mr. Harper, who had given notice—asked the Commissioner of Railways whether it was his intention to give effect to the opinion expressed by the House in respect to the extension of time for which it was desirable that return tickets should be made available on the Eastern Railway; and, if so, when?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said it was his intention to propose the matter for the sanction of His Excellency the Governor, at an early date.

INCREASE OF SALARY OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser), in accordance with notice, moved the following resolution: "That in the opinion of this Council the salary of the Director of Works and Engineer-in-Chief should be raised, from the current year inclusive, from £800 to £900 a year; which latter rate has already been authorised by the Council, on the understanding that the present occupant of the post may hereafter be continued in office, at the same salary and without compensation under any conditions rendered necessary by the introduction of Responsible Government." It would be in the recollection of the House that when the subject of the re-organisation of the Works and Railways Department was under consideration, during the session of 1884, a select committee of the House, to whom His Excellency's message on the subject was referred, recommended that the salary of the Director of Public Works and Engineer-in-Chief should be a sum not exceeding £900 a year—which was the sum it was now proposed to give that officer.

MR. PARKER said he only rose in order to move an amendment in the wording of the resolution. He thought the House should not pledge itself to any arrangement it may be desirable to make hereafter, as to the continuance in office of the present or any other head of the department, under another form of Government. He wished simply to move the insertion of the words "at the pleasure of the Government," after the word "may," in the ninth line.

MR. VENN said he had much pleasure in supporting the resolution. He did not think that a more popular motion had been submitted to the House this session, or at any previous session. Whatever differences they may have had with the Commissioner as regards some of the items of expenditure on the Supplementary Estimates, they all knew, and they all freely acknowledged, that he was an excellent official; and the House, he hoped, would express its unanimous approval of the motion to increase his salary. He did not think himself that the amount was sufficient for a gentleman of Mr. Wright's abilities, and for

the responsibilities attaching to the office. However, as the Colonial Secretary seemed to think that the proposed increase was enough, and as such must be the opinion of the Government, he had much pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. HENSMAN did not quite understand the proposal. He agreed with the suggestion as to increasing the salary of the present Commissioner, but he did not understand the latter portion of the resolution. He should be glad to know the meaning of these words: "On the understanding that the present occupant of the post may hereafter be continued in office at the same salary, and without compensation, under any conditions rendered necessary by the introduction of Responsible Government." If it was simply intended that the salary of the Commissioner should be raised in future, he agreed with the proposition, but he did not see the good of all this rigmarole at the end of the resolution. He made these observations advisedly. If it meant that the present Council was to pledge a future Council, he would have nothing to do with it.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said he would have no objection to striking out the words referred to, if the House thought necessary. He should like to see the extra £100 placed on the Estimates for this particular officer. His successor might not be as good a man, and he thought the resolution should be so worded that the House did not pledge itself to this increase to any future occupant of the office. As to the latter part of the resolution, he should have thought the amendment of the hon. member for Perth would meet the case.

The verbal amendment submitted by Mr. PARKER was then put and passed; and the resolution, as amended, agreed to, on the voices.

HARBOR AND JETTY ACCOMMODATION AT COSSACK.

MR. McRAE moved that an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that he would be pleased to place upon the Estimates for 1888 the sum of £500 for the purpose of providing additional harbor and jetty

accommodation for the port of Cossack, and make provision for a supply of water in case of emergency for that port, as recommended by a public meeting held there on the 8th June, 1887; such sum to be recouped to general revenue from the loan vote of £20,000 for that district, should any balance remain after completion of the works now in course of construction. At the public meeting referred to, it was suggested that a main pipe should be laid down for a distance of about eight miles; but, as it was considered that that would be too expensive, it was proposed that trucks should be made, and he believed the whole cost would not be more than about £100. In ordinary seasons the supply of water was sufficient, but not so in the case of a dry summer; and the difficulty would be increased with the increase of population. He felt certain in his own mind that the amount required might be spared out of the loan money, without trenching upon the general revenue.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) regretted to say that the available balance out of the loan would not be sufficient to provide a water supply that would meet the requirements of the port. No one more than himself believed in the necessity of providing a water supply for Cossack; but he was afraid that it would cost £10,000 to do any good. The only way it could be done would be to have a service station on Mount Welcome, 10 miles from the town. He thought the inhabitants of Cossack, as of many other places, should be taught to conserve the rain water as much as possible. If what the hon. member wanted was simply to bring the water down by tramway, it might be done, but not at the cost which the hon. member contemplated. He should be glad to go into the matter, and inform the hon. member what it would cost, when he received the Resident Engineer's report.

MR. RICHARDSON deprecated any delay in providing a supply of wholesome water for the port of Cossack. He thought nothing could be more culpable than delay in this matter, which at any moment might result in an outbreak of typhoid fever.

The motion was adopted.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR.

THE SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following Messages from His Excellency the Governor, replying to various Addresses adopted by the House:

MESSAGE (No. 31): WATER SUPPLY
FOR SHIPPING AT CHAMPION BAY.

"In reply to Address of the Honorable the Legislative Council No. 6, of the 8th ultimo, the Governor has the honor to inform the Council that, should the means at his disposal allow, he will endeavor to comply with the request of Your Honorable House with reference to a water supply for the shipping at Champion Bay.

"Government House, Perth, 12th August, 1887."

MESSAGE (No. 32): PAPERS RELATING
TO THE COLONIAL CONFERENCE
AND THE FORTIFICATION OF KING
GEORGE'S SOUND.

"The Governor has the honor to inform the Honorable the Legislative Council, in reply to Address No. 26, of the 5th instant, that he expects to receive at an early date the published report and papers of the recent Colonial Conference in London, and that he will lay them before the Council, or, should the Session have closed, otherwise make them public.

"2. In the meantime, it is considered inexpedient to publish papers relating to Defence questions discussed by the Conference.

"Government House, Perth, 12th August, 1887."

MESSAGE (No. 33): (1) PURCHASE OF
SEA-GOING DREDGE; (2) HIGH RATE
OF INFANT MORTALITY.

"In reply to Addresses Nos. 29 and 30, of the 10th instant, the Governor has the honor to inform the Honorable the Legislative Council that the question of the purchase of a first-class sea-going Dredge will, as desired, be considered in connection with the next Public Works Loan, and that the Medical Board of the Colony will be requested to give their attention to the present high rate of infant mortality,

"and to favor the Government with a report on the matter.

"Government House, Perth, 12th August, 1887."

MESSAGE (No. 34): UTILISATION OF
GUANO DEPOSITS.

"In reply to Address No. 31 of the Honorable the Legislative Council, the Governor has the honor to state that the action recommended in the Report forwarded by the Address, having for its object the further utilisation of Guano Deposits within the Colony, will be taken.

"Government House, Perth, 12th August, 1887."

MESSAGE (No. 35): CONSTRUCTION OF
DERBY AND WYNDHAM TELEGRAPH
LINE.

"The Governor has the honor, with reference to Resolution No. 2 transmitted by Address No. 32 dated the 11th inst., to inform the Honorable the Legislative Council that, in view of the now apparently assured prospect of the establishment of a gold-reefing industry on a considerable scale in the Kimberley District, he agrees with the Council that the construction of the Derby and Wyndham Telegraph Line should no longer be delayed, and that he will give instructions that tenders for the erection of the line be invited, and that the telegraph material for the Wyndham portion of the line, which has been stored at Singapore, be forwarded to its destination.

"Government House, Perth, 12th August, 1887."

NEW RULES OF THE SUPREME COURT.

MR. HENSMAN, in accordance with notice, moved that an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that the new Rules of the Supreme Court, recently made by the Judges of that Court, might be annulled. These rules, in accordance with the provisions of the Supreme Court Act, had been laid before the Legislative Council at its present session; and the Act provided that if an address be presented to the Governor by the House praying that such rules might be annulled, the Governor in Executive Council

might thereupon annul them. The rules, he might say, were those made in England under the Judicature Act, with regard to which there was considerable difference of opinion among the profession. He was not animated by any hostility to the rules as a whole, but they were very numerous and very cumbrous, and some of them seemed to be objectionable. They were rules, as he had already said, which had been most of them made in England and had become law there, but very few, as he believed, of the profession in the colony had fully considered them, and it might be well that the profession should consider them, and be in a position to make suggestions for their improvement, before they became law. The only way in which this could be done was by annulling the present rules; and he was in a position to say that the Chief Justice had no objection to this being done. He had not had the opportunity of mentioning the matter to Mr. Justice Stone, but possibly some other member of the profession might have done so. The motion was in no sense a hostile motion. It was not proposed that the rules, if confirmed, should come into operation until October; and, as the Council would meet again in November, no harm whatever could arise by postponing the consideration of the rules until then.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said he rose for the purpose of seconding the motion. He had, himself, personally, very strong objection to many of the rules, and he knew that a large number of the profession in England objected to them, led by the present Lord Chancellor. They only became law there in consequence of there being only a few members of the House present when the vote was taken on them. [The hon. and learned gentleman here explained at some length the opposition which he and others in the House of Commons had shown to the adoption of the new rules of procedure.] He had understood from Mr. Justice Stone that neither he nor the Chief Justice were wedded to the rules which it was now proposed to annul. He thought it would be rash indeed to allow them to pass without further consideration. He said that, without a breath of hostility towards the learned Judges who had made them.

MR. PARKER said he thought it should be borne in mind that the Judges had revised the rules of the Court in accordance with the wish of members of the profession. He was sorry that the profession had never met on the subject, nor showed that interest in the matter which might have been expected. But, when the Judges had really acted on the request of the profession, and when it was borne in mind that the new rules were much better than the present rules, with the advantage of being in harmony with the English rules, he thought they should be allowed to pass at once.

MR. HENSMAN, in replying, explained that the only object of his motion was to prevent the rules becoming law before there had been a little time for the members of the profession to be able to look into them. He was not at all desiring the rejection of the rules, or of showing any kind of disrespect to the Judges. He was merely moving their annulment in order that before the next session they might possibly be amended. He had not in the least expected there would be any opposition. It was a friendly motion, to which the Judges themselves felt no objection.

MR. RANDELL: Is the hon. member in a position to say that, if these rules are annulled, other rules will be framed by the Judges?

MR. HENSMAN said of course he could not pledge the Judges in the matter, but he had no doubt whatever that if these rules were annulled their Honors would, next session, bring in either the same rules or an amended code.

MR. SHOLL spoke against the motion on the ground that the Judges were the best able to say what the rules of their own Court ought to be.

MR. SHENTON said that the Attorney General had stated that the Judges had hardly looked at these rules. He (Mr. Shenton) had them before him, and they looked as if the Judges had bestowed a great deal of labor on them.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): I must rise. I never said the Judges had hardly looked at them. What I did say was that—

THE SPEAKER: Order. The hon. member must not speak again.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): I was only going to say that these rules—

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must sit down.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): Then I'll sit down. [The hon. gentleman then sat down, but rose again.] I only wanted to say that I never said the Judges had hardly looked at these rules.

THE SPEAKER: A statement has been made, and the hon. gentleman has contradicted it, but the hon. gentleman wants to say a good deal more.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): That is all I want to say. I'll sit down.

MR. HENSMAN: May I withdraw my motion, so as to get the opinion of the Judges?

THE SPEAKER: You may if you get leave.

MR. HENSMAN: Then I ask for leave.

THE SPEAKER put the question that leave be given to withdraw.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) objected.

The question was then put—That the address be presented.

A division being called for, the numbers were—

Ayes 6

Noes 14

Majority against ... 8

AYES.
Mr. Congdon
Hon. Sir M. Fraser
Mr. Hensman
Mr. James
Hon. J. A. Wright
Hon. C. N. Warton
(Teller.)

NOES.
Mr. H. Brockman
Mr. E. R. Brockman
Mr. Forrest
Mr. Keane
Mr. Layman
Mr. Loton
Mr. McKee
Mr. Pearce
Mr. Randell
Mr. Richardson
Mr. Shenton
Mr. Sholl
Mr. Venn
Sir T. C. Campbell, Bart.
(Teller.)

The motion for the presentation of the address was therefore negatived.

PEARL SHELL FISHERY REGULATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

The House went into committee for the further consideration of this bill.

Clause 4: Penalty for not returning natives at close of the season:

This clause was reverted to.

MR. RICHARDSON (having withdrawn the amendment which he had submitted when the clause was under consideration before) moved that the words "notwithstanding such fine and penalty, together with the said sum of £50," be struck out, and the following words inserted in lieu thereof: "provided such fine or penalty, together with the said sum, shall not exceed £50." Under the clause as amended an offender could not be mulcted in more than £50 altogether, including the cost of conveying the native back. This would provide to some extent against the law being abused, as regards the charge made for having a native taken back. It was possible, under the clause as it stood, for a magistrate to take an extreme view of the law and put the employer to a great deal of unnecessary expense.

MR. SHOLL said if the Government fined a man £50 they would have a very good margin left for paying for having the native taken back.

MR. McRAE considered it very necessary to limit the expense to which magistrates might put an offender, who probably was an innocent offender. Unless they put some limit, a magistrate, if he chose, might charter a boat at £2 2s. a day to convey a solitary native back, and the boat might be wind-bound and be a month on the passage.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said the Government had no desire to make the charge excessive, or that a boat should be chartered as suggested. All they wanted was some security that in addition to the fine, the offender should be made to pay the cost of sending back the native to his own district. Perhaps the hon. member would not object to making the maximum £55 instead of £50. This would leave a margin of £5 for the cost of conveyance, in addition to the other penalty. He would point out that it was a maximum limit.

The suggestion of the Attorney General was accepted, and the clause as amended ordered to stand part of the bill.

Clause 5.—Agreed to *sub silentio*.

MR. HENSMAN suggested that provision should be made for suspending the operation of the new Act until parties at the North had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with its provisions.

He thought, also, that provision should be made to the effect that the Act should be read and construed with the Acts already in force.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) was always happy to accept any reasonable suggestion coming from his hon. and learned friend. He would move that the following New Clause be added: "This Act shall be read and construed as far as is consistent with the tenor thereof, with 'The Pearl Shell Fishery Regulation Acts, 1873, 1875, 1883,' and shall come into operation on the 1st day of January next."

Agreed to.

Preamble and title:

Agreed to.

Bill to be reported.

BILLS OF SALE ACT, 1879, AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

SMALL DEBTS BILL: REPORT STAGE.

The Committee's report on this bill was adopted.

H.M.S. PROHIBITION LIQUOR BILL.

This bill passed through committee without comment.

CROWN LESSEES ARBITRATION BILL.

The House went into committee upon this bill.

Clause 1:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said he recognised the force of the objection raised the other day by the hon. and learned member for Greenough as to the bill conferring rights upon lessees holding land under the old regulations which the lessors never contemplated, and he therefore proposed to strike out the first clause of the bill, and to substitute the following in lieu of it:—

"When a pastoral lessee was under the Land Regulations of 1872 or of 1878 or of 1882, as the case might be, entitled to compensation for the fair value of improvements from a purchaser or special occupation lessee or licensee, and appointed a person to act for him, and gave notice to such purchaser, special occupation lessee or licensee, to appoint another person to act together with such first-named person for the purpose of

ascertaining the fair value of such improvements, and such purchaser, special occupation lessee or licensee did, after the expiration of 30 days from such notice, refuse or neglect so to appoint such other person than the person appointed by the pastoral lessee, shall have power to decide the amount of such compensation, together with such costs not exceeding £50, and his decision as to the amount of such compensation and of such costs shall be binding on the said purchaser, special occupation lessee or licensee, and shall be final and conclusive, without appeal. When such purchaser, special occupation lessee or licensee, has appointed a person to act together with the person appointed by such pastoral lessee for the said purpose, any difference arising between such two persons shall be determined as provided by the Land Regulations of 1872 or of 1878 or of 1882, as the case may be."

MR. A. FORREST said he was still at a loss to know why the bill had been introduced. The old Land Regulations and the present Land Regulations contained a provision to the effect that "nothing therein contained shall affect or be construed to affect any contracts" made under them. He therefore did not see how a contract which a lessee had entered into with the Government when he took up his land under the old regulations could be affected by the provisions of the present regulations. It seemed to him that the bill was opposed to the regulations, for it said that lessees who took up land under the old regulations could have their disputes as to compensation for improvements settled under the provisions of the regulations now in force, although a different principle altogether had been introduced into the latter regulations as to the nature of the improvements for which compensation could be legally claimed. He did not see that the bill was wanted at all. He was sure the Land Department did not want it. Why should a purchaser pay for improvements outside the land he had purchased? The clause now before them was meant to make certain lessees pay for land outside their purchases—pay what was called "consequential damages," as well as for the actual improvements.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): Not at all. The object

of the new clause is to guard against exactly what the hon. member refers to.

MR. A. FORREST said he did not know of a single instance in which the bill would do any good; and he should like to know at whose instance the bill had been brought in. He thought it was fair that a purchaser should pay for the actual improvements, but nothing more.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): That is all the bill proposes.

MR. LOTON said the object of the clause was simply to provide certain machinery which was not at present provided under the old regulations as to arbitration. The clause did not touch the existing regulations at all. It gave lessees no additional rights. It simply provided that when a purchaser refused to appoint an arbitrator, the arbitrator appointed by the lessee could make his award, and the purchaser would have to abide by it.

MR. HENSMAN pointed out that the Home Government had always preserved its right to frame the Land Regulations of the colony, or at any rate to sanction any regulations framed, before they became law; and he would suggest to the Attorney General whether it was competent for that House to alter the regulations in this way, affecting contracts previously made under a former set of regulations. The holder of the land held it under the regulations in force at the time he took it up, and he had contracted to go to arbitration in the manner provided by those regulations. Now it was proposed to compel him to go to arbitration in some other manner. Assuming that the old regulations were defective in this respect, still those who had taken up land under them were bound by them; and this was an attempt to do by statute what Her Majesty had not approved under the land regulations in force at the time. It was *ex post facto* legislation, and *ex post facto* legislation of a kind which he for one could not support. If any lessee holding land under the old regulations had appointed an arbitrator, years ago, and the purchaser had not appointed one, the lessee's arbitrator, if this bill became law, could immediately proceed to make his award, without the purchaser knowing

anything about it; and the purchaser would have to abide by that award. It was an alteration of the status of people who took up land under former regulations.

MR. RICHARDSON thought the object of the bill was a very good one. Under the old regulations no provision was made for compulsory arbitration, and anyone who wished to act the part of a rogue, knowing that the lessee could not compel him to appoint an arbitrator, took advantage of that omission, and neglected to do so, and the lessee was deprived of compensation for his improvements. That never could have been the intention of the Legislature when it framed those regulations, and the object of the present bill as he understood it was to prevent such people from evading the spirit and intention of the law. He thought it was perfectly competent and perfectly just for that House to compel such men to comply with the spirit and intention of the regulations, and not to allow them to take a mean advantage of the regulations by a mere flaw in them, when the object and intention were clearly manifest.

MR. LOTON, referring to what had fallen from the hon. member for Greenough, said if a notice to proceed to arbitration was made years ago, and the purchaser had neglected to appoint an arbitrator, that notice should certainly be given again, if this bill passed; so as to give the purchaser an opportunity of doing what he had neglected to do under the old regulations, and which the law could not compel him to do at the time.

MR. RICHARDSON pointed out that there were objections to the suggestion of the hon. member who had last spoken. There may have been improvements on the land, years ago, when the notice was first given, and properly given, which improvements may have vanished by this time; and arbitrators appointed now would therefore award no compensation, so that a lessee who had done all that was necessary to protect himself would be robbed of what was once due to him, and which might be considered to be equitably due to him still.

MR. RANDELL moved that progress be reported, and leave given to sit again. Agreed to.

Progress reported.

BUTTERINE BILL: REPORT STAGE.

The report of the Committee upon this bill was adopted *sub silentio*.

The House adjourned at half-past ten o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Monday, 15th August, 1887.

Railway Proposals: Esperance Bay to Hampton Plains, and York to Eucla—Commission to inquire into Working of Government Schools—Commission to inquire into the Agricultural Interests—Appropriation Bill (Supplementary), 1887: first reading—Small Debts Bill: third reading—H.M.S. Prohibition Liquor Bill: third reading—Butterine Bill: third reading—Building Act Amendment Bill: in committee—Quarantine Bill: further consideration in committee—Beverley-Albany Railway Contract (Immigration Clause): adjourned debate—Revision of Customs Tariff (Message No. 15)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at seven o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

LAND GRANT RAILWAY PROPOSALS:
ESPERANCE BAY TO HAMPTON
PLAINS, AND YORK TO EUCLA.

SIR T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL, in accordance with notice moved: "That the report of the select committee on Land Grant Railway proposals from York to Eucla and from the Hampton Plains to Esperance Bay be taken into consideration, with a view of passing the following resolutions based upon the recommendations embodied in the report: That this House has not before it such information as would justify its members in recommending that the Government should enter into negotiations with Mr. Ritso for the construction of a railway on the Land Grant System between York or Northam and Eucla: That with respect to the proposals of the Hampton Plains Syndicate to construct a railway, on the same principle, between their leaseholds and Esperance Bay, this House accepts

the recommendations of the select committee, and advises that the Government should enter into negotiations with the directors of the Company for the purpose of ascertaining whether, in their own interests and in those of the colony, they might not be induced to connect their Hampton Plains tenancies with the settlements and railway system of Western Australia, rather than with an isolated port in the Southern Bight." There were, the hon. baronet said, two very important schemes referred to the committee—one a gigantic scheme for the construction of a railway from the Eastern Districts to Eucla, and another for the construction of a railway from Hampton Plains to Esperance Bay. It was needless to dilate upon the advantages of such a scheme as a transcontinental line, but many hon. members seemed to think that such a work was not likely to be realised for a very long time to come. He might have thought that himself, but for the very rapid progress the colony had made during the last few years, and the large number of works carried out during that period. A dozen years ago they would never have dreamt that the works to which he referred could have been undertaken and carried out by this colony. They need not, therefore, despair that in the near future a transcontinental line may be commenced. It was impossible, however, for them to advise entering into negotiations with the gentleman making these proposals, Mr. Ritso. They had before them the evidence of Mr. Burt, one of the delegates to the Colonial Conference, who said he had made some inquiries about Mr. Ritso and could not learn anything about him. All that they knew was that there was an agreement for signature, and correspondence from certain agents of his with the Government on the subject, and that recently there was a gentleman here representing him. When the committee were sitting, however, there was no one from whom they could obtain information. The committee inferred, therefore, from all the details in their hands that Mr. Ritso was not a gentleman well known in the financial world. Under these circumstances, the committee had thought it undesirable that the Government should enter into negotiations with Mr. Ritso. His object apparently in seeking for this