

not be regarded as a portion of the general revenue. The 31st section of the Act provided that, for the purpose of defraying the cost and expense of carrying the Act into effect, there shall in each year be levied and paid in respect of all sheep depastured and kept in any part of the Colony for every 1,000 sheep a contribution of £2, and so on, in proportion, for any greater or smaller number possessed by one owner. Nothing was said about the tax being increased or reduced in accordance with the requirements of the Act. At any rate, he did not think the matter was of such importance that the House should be asked to consider another Bill on the subject at this late period of the Session.

MR. STEERE thought it would be a breach of faith on the part of the Government if they showed any opposition to the motion before the House. No doubt a mistake was committed by whoever prepared the Bill passed last Session, or by somebody else, in omitting to provide that the Governor should be empowered to regulate the amount of the contribution according to existing requirements. So impressed was Governor Ord of the necessity of rectifying the error that, as had already been said, he had purposely refrained from putting the Act in force, in order to enable him to levy a smaller tax than the Act in its present shape allowed him to do, and on the understanding that the Act would be amended in this respect during the present Session. This fact had been brought under the notice of Governor Robinson by himself and others who had waited upon His Excellency on the subject. The Governor favorably entertained the proposal, and he (Mr. Steere) thought a Bill would have been sent down to the House before now, to remedy the omission. He had no doubt if the subject were again mentioned to His Excellency he would consider that he would only be keeping faith with the House if he introduced a Bill for the purpose in question.

THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. G. W. Leake): To-night, the Government is twitted with a breach of promise. Sometimes they are twitted with larceny, but now the indictment is varied, and we are twitted with bad faith. Are we really expected, at this

late period of the Session, to bring in yet another Scab Bill? Hon. members say so. Let them bring their own Bills in.

The motion of the hon. baronet was agreed to.

The House adjourned at nine o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Wednesday, 25th August, 1880.

Extension of Eastern Railway—Audit Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

EXTENSION OF EASTERN RAILWAY.

MR. SHENTON, in moving the resolution which stood in his name, affirming the desirability of extending the railway from Guildford to York, by way of Spencer's Brook, said he thought it would be acknowledged that the subject was one of the most important ones that had been brought before the House that Session, and his only reason for deferring it until now was that he was waiting until the Estimates were submitted, so that hon. members might have an opportunity of judging what expenditure would have to be provided for the ensuing year, and of considering the question of ways and means. The Estimates were now before the House, and he thought there was nothing to be gained by any further postponement of the present resolution. When the Bill for raising the loan for the construction of the first section of the Eastern Railway came before the Council, and was passed, it was never the intention of any single member who supported it that the line should stop at Guildford, but that, as soon as it got to that town, it should

be extended eastward. As they were now told by the Director of Public Works that the first section of the line would be handed over to the Government not later than February next, it was time that House should decide whether they should go on with the extension or not. As to the question of route, he was of the same opinion now as he had always been, that if we had the available means, the line ought to go by the valley of the Avon, Chittering Brook, Newcastle, and Northam, to York; but that question was fully discussed on a former occasion, and it was concluded that the finances of the Colony would not admit of the expenditure which a line going that way would entail. Two other lines had recently been surveyed—one going direct from Guildford to York, and the other from Guildford to Northam; and the House was now in possession of the Director of Public Works' report upon the two routes, and also of the plans accompanying it. On referring to the Director's report, hon. members would find that the country through which it was proposed the railway should pass presented no engineering difficulties, and that from the easy nature of the work generally, the contemplated extension would cost less per mile than the first section. The length of the line from Guildford to York was said to be 53 miles, 60 chains, and 20 links, and of the line from Guildford to Northam 56 miles, 45 chains, 37 links. The latter route presented even less engineering difficulties than the former, and therefore the cost per mile was estimated at somewhat less than the cost of the other line. The Commissioner estimated that the mileage rate on the line from Guildford to York would be £4030, and on the Northam line, £3840, or about £200 less than the former. But in considering the relative merits of the two routes, and in considering the general question of railway extension, he thought they should carefully bear in mind what were the relative advantages offered to the Eastern Districts generally. If the line went to York direct, in the first instance, it might be said that it would virtually shut out the Victoria Plains and the Newcastle districts, for the distance from Newcastle to York was about as great as the distance from New-

castle to Guildford, and they could not count upon receiving any traffic for the line from those parts if it went direct to York. On the other hand, if the line went to Northam, as recently surveyed, it would be equi-distant between Newcastle and York, and would command all the traffic of nearly the whole of the Eastern Districts. On reference to the plans accompanying the Commissioner's report, there would be found a dotted line marked in the map from Spencer's Brook, on the Northam route, to York, and it might be in the recollection of the House that at an earlier period of the Session he had asked whether the Director of Works could furnish them with an approximate estimate of constructing this line from Spencer's Brook to York. The information asked for was given, and, owing to the fact that the intervening country presented little or no engineering difficulties, it was estimated that the cost of the line would not exceed £3000 per mile. Now in a matter of this kind, where there was a difference of opinion as to the merits of the proposed routes, he thought that the fairest way to solve the difficulty was to endeavour to compromise the matter, and as far as possible to recognise the claims of all parties. That was what he proposed doing that evening. He proposed that instead of the line going direct to Northam from Guildford, as suggested by the Commissioner of Railways, it should stop at Spencer's Brook, and that it should there branch off to York. From Spencer's Brook to Northam was about five miles, and to York about fifteen. Deducting the five miles (which would be saved by not going farther towards Northam than the Brook), from the distance between the Brook and York, would add about ten miles extra to the line, and this would bring the cost of the whole line from Guildford to York, viâ Spencer's Brook, up to about £240,000. There was hardly any difference in the estimated cost of the direct line from Guildford to York and the line from Guildford to Northam; the former was estimated at £216,622 11s. 6d., and the latter at £217,216 10s. 2d. By adopting the compromise which he suggested, it would be observed that it would prove advantageous to the whole of the Eastern Districts, and not to York alone, as would be the case if the line

went direct to that town from Guildford. That, then, was the course which he would adopt, if we were in a position to carry the line the whole distance. But, at present, he was afraid that was not the case; and the best thing to be done under the circumstances was to accomplish what they could, and work on gradually, by degrees. The Commissioner of Railways in his report said: "As to whether the line should be carried on to York or Northam, I consider a matter upon which I am not called upon to express an opinion in this report: but would suggest that, as the route for the first twenty-five miles is common to both, this might be undertaken as the second section, before any final decision was arrived at as to which of the townships referred to should be the terminus of the Eastern line." Although he would prefer to see the line constructed right through to York by way of Northam, still if it should be found that the state of our finances did not warrant that expenditure at present, he thought it was highly desirable that they should have this twenty-five miles constructed, as recommended by the Commissioner. It was universally admitted that if the line stopped at Guildford, and went no farther, the traffic between that township and Perth would not pay working expenses, much less contribute anything towards the payment of interest and providing for a sinking fund. But by extending it twenty-five miles farther on, a great many advantages would be presented, and the sources of traffic would be largely increased. In the first place, the line would pass by the stone quarry at Green Mount. Either next year, or shortly afterwards, the municipality of Perth would have to expend large sums of money upon their streets and footpaths. He believed it had been decided last year, before he came into office, that any new roads or streets requiring to be macadamised would have to be done out of a loan raised for that purpose, as the ordinary income of the municipality was absorbed in the maintenance of existing thoroughfares. And, as the City Council's overdraft would, he hoped, at the end of the present year be wiped off, and the municipality be thus placed in a position to borrow money for the construction of new roads, he need hardly point out that large quantities of material would be required for that purpose; and if the railway went past Green Mount Quarry a considerable traffic would be opened for it from this source alone. It was acknowledged that there was no material equal to the stone at this quarry for road-making purposes, and if railway communication were established between the city and the Mount no other material would be used, not only for making new streets, but also for repairing the present roads. Another advantage which would be gained by extending the line as recommended by the Commissioner of Railways in his report was that we should be going through the very heart of some splendid mahogany forests. It was well known that, at present, it was almost an impossibility to get timber in Perth, and building operations were sadly crippled in consequence. In fact, people were almost afraid to embark in that trade simply because of the difficulty experienced in obtaining the necessary timber. Nor was this difficulty confined to Perth. It extended to Fremantle, and not only there, but, at the present moment, to his own knowledge, a large quantity of timber was required for Champion Bay, while the whole of the North-West settlements depended upon this part for their timber supplies. As he had already said, if this railway were extended some twenty-five miles beyond Guildford, it would pass through the very centre of a magnificent timber forest, and we should thus add another important item of traffic for the railway. He believed that these two sources of income alone—stone for road-making, and timber for building and other purposes—would of themselves pay the working expenses of the line, independent of any traffic that might come from the transport of stores and agricultural and other produce. There was yet another advantage that would be gained by the proposed extension. We should then be at the junction of the York and Northam roads. The distance between York and Guildford and Northam and Guildford would be reduced one half, and there was every reason to suppose that teams would no longer travel all the way from York or from Northam to Guildford, when they could deliver their loads half way. This was another important

consideration in estimating the traffic which would be available for this line, and which would form a material item of revenue to the railway. Exception had been taken to the proposal to stop half way with the line, inasmuch as the buildings which it would be necessary to put up for station and other purposes would be useless when the line was carried on to its ultimate destination. But he thought they could get over this by simply erecting structures that could be removed and utilised elsewhere—buildings constructed of wood and galvanized iron, and removable at pleasure. He was aware that objections would be raised to the line going this way, as many hon. members conceived that it should go direct through to York, which it was said was the principal centre of population in that direction. But he hoped the House would bear in mind that they had the claims of the whole of the Eastern Districts to consider, and not those of York alone. It was wholly unnecessary for him, at this time of day, to point out that the future welfare and advancement of those districts depend upon railway extension. Complaints were heard on all sides that our farmers were unable to compete even in our own local markets with the farmers of South Australia, simply owing to the difficulties of transport, and he hoped the Council would see its way clear to remove those difficulties, and that there would be no necessity to stop at the twenty-five miles, but that the means would be forthcoming for carrying the line right through. That brought him face to face with the question of ways and means. He noticed that the Governor, in the speech with which he opened the present Session, estimated that the deficit at the end of the current year would be reduced to £57,000. But, on looking at the Estimates, he (Mr. Shenton) saw there were various items there in which he thought considerable reduction might be made. Moreover, he himself believed that the revenue for the last six months of the present year would realise more than it was estimated. The wool ships and the tea ships would be due in the course of that period, and he hoped that by the end of the year the deficit would be little if anything more than £50,000. If this railway were con-

structed right through, it would cost some £240,000 or £250,000, according to the estimate of the Commissioner: and if we could be allowed to tack to the loan required for the railway a sufficient sum to pay off our deficit, or, in other words, if the Home Government would allow us to raise a loan of £300,000, we should be able not only to construct our railway right through to Northam or York, but also set our surplus revenue free to pay the interest on the loan, which, with the provision that would have to be made for a sinking fund, would be about £18,000 a year. In favor of including this £50,000 in the loan, it might be urged that had we not undertaken the construction of the Eucla Telegraph line out of the general revenue—which was now admitted to have been a mistake—the deficit represented by that sum would not have been created. He believed that if this loan were sanctioned, the country would cheerfully submit to a stamp tax, as a means of increasing the revenue. Hon. members would recollect that one great objection raised to the introduction of that tax when submitted last Session was that it ought to be reserved until such time as it would be necessary to have resort to that means of taxation for the purpose of paying the interest upon a loan for railway extension. He believed the same opinion still prevailed, and that very little if any opposition would be raised to the imposition of such a tax, so long as it was distinctly understood that the revenue derived from it should be devoted towards paying the interest upon money borrowed for railway construction. They could not enter the money market at a better time for borrowing than at present. Less than two years ago, our present loan of £200,000 was quoted considerably below par, but he found, by the last mail, that it is now quoted in the London market at 104—or $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. premium. That showed that our credit was good at any rate. And he felt sure that another Western Australian loan now placed in the money market would be floated, if not at a premium, certainly at par. He was not disposed to take the gloomy and altogether dismal view of our financial prospects that some people did. He certainly saw no reason for despair, but, on the contrary, he saw

much that was encouraging in the prospects of the Colony. We had an enormous territory, and our staple products and industries presented a very cheerful outlook, on the whole. And what was now wanted to drive us ahead was that impetus which railway communication with our agricultural districts could not fail to produce. To that end, he now begged to move the resolution standing in his name—"That in the opinion of this Council it is expedient, in the interests of the Colony, that the extension of the Eastern Railway to York, *viâ* Spencer's Brook, should be proceeded with at once, as such route would be equally beneficial to the New-castle, Northam, and Beverley Districts."

MR. STEERE said, if it was desired that we should get the sanction of the Secretary of State to the proposal to raise a further loan for extending this railway, he certainly hoped it would not be allowed to go forth that, in the opinion of this House, the section of the line already in course of construction would not, as stated by the hon. member who had just sat down, pay its working expenses. If such a statement as that went home, he could not fancy how the Secretary of State could be expected to sanction a further loan for a similar purpose; for, when his approval to the raising of the present loan was obtained, it was distinctly stated that in the opinion of the Legislature there would be amply sufficient traffic on the line not only to pay its working expenses, but it was also hoped the interest on the money. And he thought it would be very inadvisable indeed that it should now go forth that it was the general opinion of the members of this House that the first section was not likely to pay even the working expenses of the line. The Secretary of State would naturally say—if that was the case, our first loss had better also be our last one. But in his (Mr. Steere's) opinion—and he did not think he stood alone in that view—the first section of the Eastern Railway would do more than pay its working expenses, even if it went not beyond Guildford. If our finances had been in a more flourishing condition than they were just at present, he should most gladly have supported the adoption of the route pro-

posed by the hon. member for Toodyay, because he quite agreed with the hon. member that it would be a very great advantage indeed to other districts besides York, placing railway communication, as it would, within the reach of the Toodyay settlers; running closer still to Northam; and bringing it to the very doors of the residents of the York district. But it appeared to him, if they were going to take the line that way—if they proposed to incur so large an expenditure as a railway traversing that route would entail—he was very much afraid we should overshoot the mark altogether, and get nothing at all. Therefore he intended to propose as an amendment upon the hon. member for Toodyay's motion, that the line should go direct from Guildford to York, as indicated in the Commissioner of Railways' report. As to undertaking another section merely going twenty-five miles beyond Guildford, and then stop, he could not think such a proposal advisable for a moment. Such a line might meanwhile be of some service to the settlers in that particular part of the country, but as we should certainly have to carry it further before we could expect to derive any real benefit from it, it would only involve unnecessary delay, for we should then have to go through the formality of obtaining permission to float yet another loan. He did not think it would be anything as advantageous and remunerative to construct the line half way, as it would be to run it right through at once, while we were at it. He believed we were far more likely to obtain the Secretary of State's assent to such a proposal, than we would if we were only going to carry the line into the midst of a mahogany forest. A great many people seemed to think that by carrying the line direct to York from Guildford we should be only serving one end of the Eastern Districts. But, in reality, if hon. members looked at the map of those districts, they would find that York, so far from being at one end of them, was almost in the centre of what might be regarded as the Eastern Districts, and there was a large area of good land to the South and South-east of York,—which was another reason why the line should be carried direct to York. He hoped the time would arrive, and

that it would not be many years hence, when the railway might be extended from York, along the valley of the Avon, to Newcastle and Northam, and thus bring it to the very doors of the inhabitants of those districts. But one thing was clear—we could not accommodate everybody at once. No doubt the Newcastle people considered that the railway should pass their way, and the settlers of Northam and Bindoon were equally certain that it ought to go in their direction. In fact he had been seriously told by one of his own constituents that the railway should go by way of Bindoon, if it was ever going to pay. No doubt the Newcastle people were of the same opinion as to the expediency of the line going their way. But what we had to bear in mind was that, in this as in other matters we must cut our coat according to our cloth—we must be content for the present to take the railway along such route as would be within our means. There was one product which would form a considerable item in the receipts if the line went to York, and that was—sandalwood. A large proportion of the exported wood came from that district, whereas very little came from the Newcastle district, and what did come was of a very inferior quality. Taking all things into consideration, he could not help thinking it would be far more advisable to take the line direct to York than follow the route indicated in the motion before the Committee. It was not his intention at this stage to enter into the financial aspect of the question, for they would have another opportunity of discussing that, after they went through the Estimates, and saw what was required for ordinary expenditure, and what would then be available for paying the interest upon another loan. The hon. member for Toodyay, when dealing with this subject, based his calculations as if this were the only public work which it was intended the Colony should undertake. But there were other parts of the country besides the Eastern Districts that required some consideration at their hands, and especially the North-West settlement. And he hoped that the next loan to be raised would include provision for extending the telegraph to Roebourne, which was becoming more and more of a necessity every day. He now

begged to move, as an amendment upon the original resolution, "That in the opinion of this Council it is expedient in the interests of the Colony that the extension of the Eastern Railway should be proceeded with as soon as possible, and that the route to be adopted should be the one indicated in the Report of the Commissioner of Railways."

MR. SHENTON said that so far as the increased cost of one line over the other went, it was not much—certainly nothing commensurate with the advantages presented by the route to Northam via Spencer's Brook. The estimated cost of that line up to Northam was £217,216; and deducting five miles (the distance between the Brook and Northam), at £3,840 per mile—equal to £18,200—reduced the cost of the line now proposed to £198,000 in round numbers. On the other hand, the cost of the direct line from Guildford to York was £216,622. The difference in the cost of that and the line by Spencer's Brook would only be £26,000.

MR. VENN said, as it was just possible he might be the only elected member who would be found indisposed to vote for either line, he thought that in justice to himself he ought to say a few words before the question went to a division. He was not inclined to be carried away like a great many people seemed to be by this cry for railway extension, for the very simple reason that he could not see that we were in a position to pay for it. Had the question of the Eastern Railway cropped up for the first time this Session, he would certainly have been disposed to raise his voice against starting the railway where it had been started, namely, at the wrong end of the line altogether. The consequence was, he was by no means certain that the line was going to pay. He did not think that House would be justified in running the Colony into debt just for the sake of the honor and glory of being engaged in carrying out public works, without knowing what such works were likely to bring in. Our past experience in this direction had been anything but encouraging, or flattering to our vanity, and he thought we might reasonably conclude that the cost of the first section of this line would cost about £150,000 by the time it was finished, and

possibly we should have to go in for another loan to complete it. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: No, no.] It was possible. Under any circumstances, he was not prepared to advocate any large expenditure upon Public Works out of a loan, in the present state of our finances. He had listened with some interest the other day to the discussion that cropped up with reference to the votes that were being asked for local works of minor importance, and the feeling prevailing among some hon. members appeared to be that we should put on one side every local work, no matter how desirable or how urgent, in order to enable us to go on with this railway. He thought this would be very unfair and even a very unwise policy. He saw no reason why every district in the Colony was to be debarred from having such local works as were necessary carried out, simply because we wanted all we could scrape together to construct a line of railway from Guildford to York. If we were in a position to carry this out concurrently with works of minor importance, but of urgent necessity, in other parts of the Colony, it would be a different thing, and he would readily and cordially support the proposition now before the Committee; but seeing that the railway, if we could afford to construct it at all, could only be so by sacrificing the claims of other districts, he for one was not prepared to join in the immolation. True, a sort of sop was thrown out in the shape of a proposal to include in the contemplated loan a sufficient sum to extend telegraphic communication to the North-West—a proposal which in his opinion ought to take precedence of any railway extension. He said it again, if all the other necessary works throughout the Colony were to be laid on one side just for the sake of enabling us to indulge in the luxury of this railway, all he could say was, it would be a bad thing for the Colony, and a most impolitic movement. It was like a man spending all he had in buying a new silk dress for his wife, when she had not even stockings to wear with it. Hon. members were very anxious indeed to go on with this railway regardless of our financial difficulties; but when a comparatively trifling sum was asked for in order to carry out works of local necessity, such as hospital accommodation for

the sick, the cry went forth—"we can't afford it, we must spend every penny we have to bolster up our railway system," even though every other district in the Colony be made to suffer in consequence. As to the argument put forward by the hon. member for Toodyay in favor of extending the line to the heart of a mahogany forest because of the alleged scarcity of timber, all he could tell the hon. gentleman was, if he found any difficulty in procuring timber for building operations, or anything else, let him come to the Southern Districts and they would supply him with all he wanted. As for the idea of constructing an expensive railway in order to provide the municipal council of Perth with stone to repair its streets, that was all nonsense, and the municipality could very well manage to conserve the streets without it. He certainly would not support the proposal in favor of any railway extension, under existing circumstances, though possibly he might be altogether singular in his opinion on the subject.

Mr. STONE said although he was as anxious as most hon. members in that House to see the railway extended to the Eastern Districts, he thought it would have been better if the question had been postponed until the financial position of the Colony, and the important financial problem which was awaiting solution, had been discussed and solved. He considered that the extension of this railway depended in a great measure upon the propositions that would be brought forward with a view to getting rid of the present deficit. But as neither the original motion nor the amendment sought to bind hon. members to vote in favor of this extension under any circumstances, and without reference to our financial difficulties, there could be no great objection to their being discussed at this stage. As for the question of route, he hoped the House was not going to repeat the mistake it had made with reference to the route adopted for the first section of the line. There could be no doubt now that a blunder had been committed in adopting the North side of the river from Fremantle to Guildford, and he hoped the blunder was not going to be repeated, by extending the railway along a route that would, in his opinion, be as great a mistake as it was to run

the line on the North to Perth. He was given to understand that if the line proceeded along the route suggested by the hon. member for Toodyay, via Spencer's Brook, tapping the Northam district, and benefiting the Newcastle district, as well as York, it would tap some very good country on its way, and particularly so between Spencer's Brook and York. On the other hand, if the line went direct from Guildford to York, it would go through a great deal of country that was utterly worthless. And although the other line would involve a trifling extra expenditure in its construction, he thought that was really nothing commensurate with the manifold advantages likely to be derived by the opening up of fresh country. He thought they were all agreed that the proposal to construct this railway was brought forward with a view of benefiting the community generally, and this end could best be attained by the opening up of new country and affording increased facilities for transport to as many of the settlers as possible. It could not be doubted that this would be more effectually accomplished by taking the line as suggested by the hon. member for Toodyay than by going direct to York. As had been pointed out by the hon. member, if the line went via Spencer's Brook it would, among other advantages, be available for the inhabitants of Newcastle and Northam—who had as much right to be considered in this matter as the inhabitants of York. On the other hand, the line would solely benefit the York district if it followed the route proposed in the amendment, while at the same time it would pass through a great deal of intervening country that was worthless for the purposes of cultivation. He thought the great end to be kept in view, and the earnest desire of all parties, was that the line, when constructed, should pay as much as possible towards the expense of its construction and of its upkeep, as well as provide for the interest on the loan, and that with that view their object should be the greatest good of the greatest number. For that reason, he should be inclined, upon the question of route, to go with the mover of the original resolution. But he hoped the hon. member would alter the wording of that resolution, so as to bring it more

in accordance with the amendment, with reference to the question of the expediency of proceeding with the work "as soon as possible," rather than as proposed by the hon. member for Toodyay, "at once." He thought before the House committed itself to that proposition, it ought to be in a position to know whether we could afford or provide the means for undertaking the work "at once." Until he was so assured he would not be prepared to support the resolution as it was now worded.

After a considerable pause,

Mr. BROWN said he regretted to see so much hesitation on the part of hon. members in addressing the House on this most important question; and it was only in consequence of the hesitation thus manifested that he felt induced to rise to speak on the subject. He had spoken upon it year after year, for the last eight or ten years, and he was delighted to find they were face to face with the question at last. It was generally agreed now, that if hon. members would only consent to sink their little differences of opinion as to the respective merits of this or that particular route, this long-looked for railway was now within our reach. But if it was still the wish of the House to postpone the settlement of the question indefinitely, all he would say was—let the House support the resolution put forward by the hon. member for Toodyay, by all means. He need not point out what that would entail. In the first place it meant the introduction (as he heard it said the other day) of another competent man from the other side, who would also have to be a competent man on this side, in order to survey the line from Spencer's Brook to York. Plans would then have to be prepared, and detailed information furnished, for they knew by this time that the Secretary of State would require to be supplied with every single particular with reference to that fifteen miles before he would assent to a Loan Bill at all. So that, if that resolution were adopted, it would be necessary, before that House could urge upon the Governor the desirability of bringing in a Loan Bill for the construction of the line, to wait at least another twelve-month. As to the proposition to run the railway a distance of twenty-five miles from Guildford, and

then stop in the heart of a mahogany forest, where no one lived, all he could say was—if that were the only proposition before the House he certainly should vote against it. He would prefer seeing the railway stop at Guildford than extend it only that short distance, and for this reason—he did not think there would be any additional traffic corresponding with the additional expense. He considered it very desirable that, in extending railway communication, they should do so in the direction which presented the greatest probability of securing traffic, so that in course of time they would be in a position to show—if it possibly could be shown—that the line was worked with profit. He thought they would get more than double the goods and passenger traffic from York alone than they would from the whole of the other portions of the Eastern Districts put together, and, from this point of view, he considered it was their bounden duty to adopt the amendment of the hon. member for the Swan, and construct the line, in the first instance, direct to York. The hon. member for Toodyay, in dealing with his resolution, had referred to the financial aspect of the question, and he regretted the hon. member had done so at this stage. But as the question of finance had cropped up, he also intended to refer to it. It was well known to all hon. members on the elected side of the House, that they saw their way perfectly clear to carry out this project from a financial point of view. They had no doubt in the world as to their being able to undertake the work, if they could only get the Government of the Colony to see the matter in the same light as the elected members did; in fact, the only obstacle in the way of this railway being constructed—if any obstacle did arise—would be created by the Government themselves. But he believed, and firmly believed, that the Government would view the matter in precisely the same light as that in which the members of that side of the House did, and that consequently there would be no obstacle interposed to carrying out this project into fruition—if members could only agree together as to the question of route. The hon. member for Toodyay had referred to the financial deficit, of which a great deal had been said of late—it was a capital

thing this deficit to write about in the Press, and a capital thing to speak about on the hustings, to be able to refer to the scandalous manner in which the Government administered the financial affairs of the country, and so forth. All he could say to those who wrote and who spoke in this strain was—let them look around at the financial position of those colonies possessing that wise and perfect system of Government under which no blunders were ever made, under which no Administration ever squandered the public funds. And what would they see? They would find a difficulty in putting their finger upon one of them that did not owe something more than £50 per head of their population, taking into consideration their deficits and their debts. But what was the case here? What was the state of affairs in this Colony, with our so-called irresponsible Government, and our bungling Administrations? What was our indebtedness per head of the population, including this tremendous deficit that is going to swallow us up and swamp us? They would find great difficulty to bring it up to anything like £15 per head. And yet—in what he considered an exceedingly timid spirit—they found some sections of the local Press and a great many public speakers declaring that, because our public debt amounts to some £13 or £15 per head of the population, we must not venture on any further public works, the progress of the Colony must be stopped, and we must rest content to remain as we are, and do nothing, until this paltry deficit—said to be £79,000, but it was nothing of the sort—shall have been wiped off. He deprecated any such policy. He deprecated any such timid and faint-hearted cry. At the same time he would say this—we must be content to work with the tools we have at hand. If we do that, he thought we would have no difficulty in providing the ways and means necessary to carry out this most desirable work. Nearly every elected member in that House would agree with him (having been in conference on the subject) that they could put an unanswerable argument before the Government to induce it to undertake the extension of this line direct to York, and not only that but also to extend the

means of telegraphic communication to the Nickol Bay district. They knew they could do that much. They knew for certain that they could put forward such a case as could not fail to ensure Her Majesty's assent to the Bill. They were not afraid: they were not timid, though at the same time they did not think the Colony could afford any vastly greater amount. But what they did feel was this—if they asked for more than what they thought the Colony could stand and was fairly entitled to, they might not be able to show such a good case as they would otherwise be in a position to do, so as to induce or compel the Secretary of State to sanction the loan. He did, however, feel sure, that Her Majesty's Government would be obliged to allow—or at least that they would see the wisdom of allowing—us to continue this line of railway from Guildford to York, and also to extend the telegraph line to the Nickol Bay district. But the propositions put forward by the hon. member for Toodyay did away with any immediate prospect of our attaining this object, and indeed risked the chance of our attaining it at all. In the face of this circumstance, he did trust that the resolution put forward by the hon. member would find no support, and that the hon. gentleman himself would see the wisdom of withdrawing it, and join with the remainder of his fellow-members—not in grasping at a shadow, but in endeavoring to secure the substantial benefits which were now within our reach. Hon. members would observe that the amendment submitted by the hon. member for the Swan did not pledge them to vote for a Loan Bill, unless they were satisfied that the financial scheme to which he had alluded was such as he represented it to be. The amendment merely affirmed the desirability of extending this railway eastward to York “as soon as possible,” and any hon. member supporting it would be free hereafter, if it should be found that the Colony could not afford to undertake the work, to vote against the Loan Bill, without which of course the railway could not be extended at all.

MR. SHENTON could not agree with the hon. member that if the House adopted the original resolution the fate of the Loan Bill would be in any way

jeopardised. If a difference of £26,000—to carry out a line that offered immensely greater advantages—was likely to jeopardise the Bill, he was afraid there was very little chance indeed of either proposition receiving the sanction of the Secretary of State. As, however, he understood it was the wish of several members—now that the two propositions had been placed before the Council—to adjourn the debate, he would move that Progress be reported and leave asked to sit again on Friday.

The motion was negatived.

MR. STEERE—referring to the proposed deviation of the Northam line, from Spencer's Brook to York—pointed out that the Commissioner of Railways did not pretend to give any precise or reliable information as to what would be the cost of that line; he had simply stated, roughly speaking, that probably the cost per mile would not exceed £3000. But before they could hope to obtain the sanction of the Secretary of State to the line proceeding along that route, there would have to be a detailed survey of that portion of the line—which would certainly involve considerable delay—before the sanction of the Secretary of State to our even undertaking the work could be obtained. As had already been pointed out, his amendment did not commit any member to anything beyond merely affirming the expediency, in the interests of the Colony, of extending the railway as soon as possible. He was not at present in a position to state what financial scheme might be introduced to enable them to do this; he thought it would be premature to deal with the question until the Estimates were disposed of.

MR. MARMION said this question of route had always been a vexed one, and year after year it came forward for discussion in that House—and he might say with almost the same result, the same divergence of opinion, as was manifested again on the present occasion. Two or three Sessions ago, it might be in the recollection of hon. members, a proposition was put forward in favor of a sum of money being voted for the survey of a railway to the Eastern Districts, and several amendments were proposed in the course of the debate upon that proposition, resulting in the various

proposals becoming somewhat mixed up, and, in the end, it was found that nothing at all had been carried. At the following Session, the question cropped up again, and the resolution, which he had put forward on the former occasion—namely, that a preliminary survey be made of a suitable route for the Eastern Districts railway between Guildford and York, and also of an alternative route from Guildford to a point in the neighbourhood of Northam, or equi-distant between Northam and York,—was adopted, and the surveys and plans now before the House were the outcome of that resolution. But there still appeared to be the same difference of opinion among hon. members as to the most desirable route. He thought the time had now arrived when they must make up their minds one way or the other; and, although he fully felt the responsibility of the situation, he was free to confess that, after giving the matter his careful consideration, he was disposed to vote for the direct line to York, as contemplated in the amendment. He did so under the impression that it was the line we were most likely to get without any further delay. Had we been in possession of full information with reference to the route proposed by the hon. member for Newcastle, by way of Spencer's Brook to York, it was quite possible—in fact, quite probable—that he should have voted with the hon. member, for he thought it ought to be their object to serve the greatest possible number of settlers along the route, with the view, of course, of thereby receiving the greatest amount of traffic on the line; and he considered that a question of £20,000 or £30,000 was one of very little weight if that object could be attained. It would be in the recollection of the House that, some years ago, a large sum of money was voted and expended in the survey of another line, along the valley of the Swan, by way of Bindoon, Chittaring Brook, Newcastle, Northam, and York; but the result went to show that a line along that route would be altogether beyond our means,—the estimated cost being something between £450,000 and £500,000. It was thought it would be madness for this Colony in its then position to undertake such a work, and he thought it would be very impolitic to do so now. The hon. member for Toody-

yay, when speaking of the advantages of the line proposed by him, forgot that the same advantages would, to a great extent, accrue if the line went in the direction indicated in the amendment. The same sources of traffic would be available as regards timber, stone, and firewood, with the additional advantage of going direct to York, and securing what he might call the vast traffic which now passed up and down between Fremantle, Perth, and that district. The hon. member also probably overlooked the fact that the passenger traffic—which would be a great desideratum—would be utterly lost if they were to stop half way, as suggested by the hon. member as a sort of secondary proposition. It was hardly likely people would drive some twenty or thirty miles by road, and then leave their "traps," and do the remainder of the distance by rail. This was a point which seemed to have escaped the hon. member altogether. There could be no doubt—except in the mind of one hon. gentleman—as to the desirability and the expediency of continuing this railway from Guildford Eastward. In fact, they had now arrived at that stage in the consideration of this question that it was no use hesitating any longer, and to act as so many cowards. They must look the whole subject boldly in the face, and grapple with it bravely, casting aside all apprehensions as to involving ourselves in imaginary difficulties, and striking out for ourselves a bold and vigorous policy. He hoped hon. members would show that they were not fearful of the consequences of adopting such a line of policy—that they had full faith in the future of the Colony, and that, by agreeing to the proposal to extend this railway, they would bring within the reach of settlers of the country the means of giving that wholesome stimulus to the cultivation of the soil, and to the development of trade and commerce, which alone was wanting to enable this Colony to take its proper place side by side with its sisters. He did hope there would be no uncompromising divergence of opinion as to this vexed question of route. He did hope the fate of the measure was not going to be jeopardised by divided counsels and disunited action. He did trust the amendment of the hon. member for Swan would be carried

unanimously, or, if not unanimously, by such an overwhelming majority that the hands of the Government would be strengthened in the matter, and that the Secretary of State should see that, sooner than risk the prospect by any further delay or any further opposition, the members of that House, sinking all individual differences of opinion, were prepared to work together with unity of purpose for the common weal. Some hon. members had suggested that other portions of the Colony, as well as the Eastern Districts, were entitled to consideration at the hands of the House, and especially that the advantages of telegraphic communication should be extended to the settlers of the North-West district. In that proposal, he should heartily go with them, to the fullest extent, in order to supply the only link now wanting to place all the settled districts of the Colony in telegraphic communication. And although this undertaking could not, possibly, be looked upon as a directly reproductive work, still at the same time it was an undertaking that had become an absolute necessity. The North District was increasing in importance every year, both as regards settlement and trade; and in view of the still further impetus that must be given to the district by the recent discovery of new country, he thought the time had arrived when they should no longer delay in adopting every possible means of bringing the district into closer communication with the other portions of the Colony whose interests were identical with those of the North-West.

THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. G. W. Leake) thought it was quite immaterial to which proposition—whether to that of the hon. member for Toodyay or to that of the hon. member for Swan—the Council assented, for, after all, he thought they would be merely assenting to a proposition that was not likely to be carried out into fruition. The exuberant fancies of both hon. members would possibly be toned down when the Estimates came to be discussed. He could well recollect how, years ago, a gentleman who was then well known in colonial society (but who unfortunately had since died) whenever he found himself, as he frequently did, on the verge of insolvency, indulged

in singularly extravagant fancies. Whenever he was on the eve of a financial crisis, he gave a ball. He thought that was our position at the present time. If not actually on the verge of insolvency, we were in the midst of serious financial difficulties, yet were now engaged in discussing an altogether fanciful project which we could ill afford to carry out, but which, if within our means, no one doubted would prove pre-eminently beneficial, whether the line went to Northam or to York. Beyond those places there doubtless were vast tracts of land which might be rendered available for settlement; and all that was required to accomplish that end was a reasonable means of communication between the interior and the centres of population. He did not suppose anybody was anxious that the distance should be traversed within an hour, or even two, but everyone was desirous that the settlers should have accorded to them some reasonable means of bringing their produce down to the coast. That had been the policy pursued by their South Australian neighbors—not to construct their railways between the centres of population, but to lead them away from the coast in the direction of the interior; and that simply with the view of promoting settlement. No railway that we could construct in this Colony would for some years to come be a directly reproductive undertaking; but indirectly it would, by extending settlement and stimulating the cultivation of the soil. But there was no use in discussing these advantages, until we knew what money there would be in the public chest available for securing them. Really it appeared to him that, for all practical purposes, we might consider ourselves in cloud-land. And when they voted for these schemes—both admirable in themselves—they would be merely affirming a proposition which no doubt was pre-eminently beneficial, but which could only be realised when they found there was any money available for carrying it out.

MR. BURT said that lest it should be thought he was rowing in the same boat as his hon. friend on the right (Mr. Venn), he felt bound to say a few words in support of the proposition before the Committee. He thought the heart of every

man "over the hills" would rejoice and be glad when he heard or read of that evening's discussion. For years past, the settlers in those districts had been crying out for greater facilities to enable them to bring down their produce; and we were told that without some improved means of communication it was utterly impossible for them to compete successfully with the foreign grower. He thought that was a mere truism. And if the House provided them with that improved means of communication, it would supply what indeed had been a long-felt want. But the first step towards attaining this end was a somewhat prosaic one. Yet it must not be shirked on that account. He need hardly point out that, before they could hope to induce the Home Government to assent to our constructing this railway, we must be prepared with reliable statistics to show the Secretary of State that there is good reason to think that the line, when constructed, will pay. We were not in the same independent position as the other colonies, and therefore could not emulate them in the adoption of that adventurous and spirited policy which had made them what they are. It was all very well to talk about our adopting a "bold and vigorous policy;" but the fact of the matter was—we were not allowed to be in any way bold. In other countries, under a different form of Government, where the land was in reality (and not merely in name) the people's property, to do with it as they deemed best, it was the policy of those who administered the affairs of the country to open up agricultural areas for settlement, by means of railways, in all directions, trusting for a due return in course of time—in which anticipation they were seldom disappointed. But here we were not allowed to adopt this speculative line of policy. We were not allowed to be bold,—but meek and mild, lest we offend Downing Street. He would therefore draw the attention of the House, and more especially the Government, to the necessity for approaching Downing Street armed at all points with such statistical information as must convince them that our project is a sound one, and that there is a prospect of this railway proving a paying concern—or at any rate that we would be likely to get some return for our money. He knew—the House knew—from experience, the great difficulty of obtaining the assent of the Home authorities to a project of this kind unless we thus fortified ourselves with statistics. He therefore trusted that no time would be lost in preparing such detailed estimates, plans, and statistics as we know the Secretary of State must have before he looks at a Loan Bill at all. As to the question of our ability or inability to afford this undertaking, all he could say was, we had been here long enough now, and we had better throw up the whole concern if we were not now in a position to do the only thing open to us in order to enable the Colony to go ahead. It was patent that to continue the system that had obtained ever since the Colony was founded, half a century ago, was no longer feasible. If we could not now afford to build a railway as far as York, we ought to be able. And if such a line would not pay when it was built, all he could say was—it ought to pay. If it did not, the sooner the better we all cleared out of the blessed country. Those were his sentiments. Of course it would pay; and he did not say so without reason. If hon. members would turn to the "Votes and Proceedings" of that House for some years past, they would find estimate after estimate furnished time out of number by the Government and by Select Committees of the House showing that the line would pay. The estimated traffic on the line between Fremantle and Guildford alone showed a net profit on the concern of about £12,000 a year. He did not quite agree with that, as the cost of the line would be considerably more than was anticipated when that calculation was made. But still there was a considerable margin for profit. And so it would be with the extension line. It was a very easy matter to calculate the traffic that might be expected on such a line: and as they had now before them the estimated cost of the work, it was only a mere matter of account as to whether the line would probably pay or not. He himself thought it would pay. With regard to the two routes put forward, he could not go with the hon. member for Toodyay for three or four reasons. In the first place, his line was longer

than the other one; in the second place, it would be more expensive—not a great deal certainly, still it would be considerably in excess of the rival route; and in the third place, it would not, he was informed, pass through such an extent of good country as a line carried from York to Newcastle. Another serious objection to the route advocated by the hon. member for Toodyay was this—whereas the line proposed in the amendment had already been surveyed, and the plans, he believed, were all ready to be sent home—a section of the line recommended by the hon. member for Toodyay would have to be surveyed, and was otherwise in no way as forward as this other line. He hoped that the House would not by its action that evening necessitate sending the two routes Home to the Secretary of State for that gentleman's decision; for the probability was, it would lead to confusion, and to the recommendation of the least advantageous route,—as had been done with regard to the Northern route on the first section of the railway. Moreover, it would look as if the colonists did not know which was the better line of the two. And how could they expect outsiders to decide for them? He thought it would very much strengthen the hands of the Government, if the House were unanimous in adopting either one line or the other; and he thought the hon. member for Toodyay, seeing that the weight of opinion appeared to be in favor of the other route, might be persuaded to withdraw his resolution, in order to secure that concurrence of opinion which would probably produce a greater impression upon the Secretary of State than they might think. So far as the financial question was concerned that was not now before the House; and when the Government came to be informed of the scheme by means of which it was proposed to provide the necessary ways and means to pay the interest on the loan, he thought the Government would be perfectly satisfied that the House was quite justified in recommending this undertaking, notwithstanding that much-abused deficit; and not only satisfied but very much gratified to hear, from that side of the House, a scheme propounded for relieving them of their financial embarrassments,

and at the same time enable them to undertake this very desirable work.

MR. BURGESS expressed a hope that the House would unanimously adopt the amendment, and not jeopardise the whole thing by causing delay and difficulties. Our credit was now good, the line was much wanted, and we could not do better than accept what we could get.

The amendment was then put, and adopted without opposition, amid much cheering.

THE AUDIT BILL.

The Order of the Day for the further consideration of this Bill in Committee being read, Mr. Steere, moved, That the Speaker do now leave the Chair.

Agreed to.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1.—“The Auditor General for “the time being shall hold his office “during good behaviour, and shall not “be removed therefrom unless upon the “address of the Legislative Council:”

MR. SHENTON moved that this clause be struck out. He did so on the grounds urged against it by three of the members (Messrs. Randell, Stone, and Marmion) of the Select Committee to whom the Bill had been referred [*Vide* page 168, *ante*.] Such a provision would not, in his opinion, be workable under our present constitution. It sought to deprive the Governor of powers which were vested in him under our existing form of Government, and to that extent was an interference with His Excellency's prerogative. He did not think there was any ground for supposing that any Governor would act in an arbitrary manner towards an Auditor by dismissing him without cause; and, if he did, he did not think the Secretary of State would support his action. The only case in this Colony in which the Governor had suspended or dismissed a public officer occupying a responsible position was one that occurred a good many years ago; and the matter had of course to be referred to the Secretary of State, who, before the notification of the officer's suspension had reached him officially, issued instructions for his immediate re-instatement. He thought it was quite

an erroneous idea to suppose that the Auditor would not be sufficiently independent without a clause of this nature. Mr. Knight, the late Auditor General, when examined before the Select Committee on the present Bill, said he was only once interfered with in the discharge of his duties during his tenure of office, extending over a great many years; and he then resisted the pressure, feeling confident of the Governor's support. As to the evidence given by the present Auditor General he thought it was anything but satisfactory. That officer said he was once interfered with by the Colonial Secretary, but instead of resisting this interference and appealing to the Governor, he said he did not think it necessary to do so, because he thought the Colonial Secretary was the mouthpiece of the Governor. He (Mr. Shenton) thought a great many of the complaints which had recently been made about the inefficiency of our audit system was due rather to the officer in charge of the department than to the system of audit. No doubt there was room for improvement in that system, so as to ensure the Public Accounts being kept more intelligibly; and he believed the clauses in the present Bill would accomplish that, without having recourse to any unconstitutional proceeding such as was contemplated in the first and second clauses, which he believed would place the whole Bill in jeopardy of being vetoed by the Secretary of State, if not by the Governor.

MR. STEERE said he would have preferred if the hon. member who had just spoken had given his own reasons for opposing the introduction of this clause, instead of saying that he did so for the reasons given by the three members of the Select Committee. It so happened that those three gentlemen had given three different and distinct reasons for objecting to the clause. One said he thought it was contrary to the provisions of the Colonial Office Regulations. Another said he considered the Auditor General, under the existing system, was quite sufficiently independent without the safeguards contained in these two clauses. And the third, the hon. member for Fremantle, said his objection to them was because he thought their introduction into the Bill might jeopardise the measure being

assented to at all. He (Mr. Steere) did not know which of these three reasons had actuated the hon. member for Toodyay in his opposition to the clause. [MR. SHENTON: All of them.] In that case, he did not think the hon. member was very logical. The hon. member also referred to the evidence given by Mr. Knight, the late Auditor General, and appended to the report of the Select Committee. Now the late Auditor General was a gentleman whose opinion everybody respected, and what did he say? He considered it indispensable that the Auditor should be made responsible to the Legislative Council, and concluded his evidence by saying, "I look upon an "Audit Act as one of the most important "measures which the Legislature could "carry out." And yet the hon. member said there was no necessity for such a measure. When the debate on the second reading of the Bill took place, great stress had been placed by its opponents upon the allegation that the Bill was unconstitutional; but he did not think they would hear much of that argument in Committee. He thought they had dropped it, and very properly too. The position they took up now was, that the provisions contained in the first and second clauses were contrary to the Colonial Office Regulations. But those regulations were not like the laws of the Medes and the Persians—unchangeable and irrevocable. They could be revoked or amended by a mere scratch of the Secretary of State's pen. They had not the force of a Legislative enactment; and he was sure the Secretary of State would not refuse his assent to the Bill simply because it was not altogether in consonance with the Colonial Office Regulations. He himself contended that these clauses were not contrary to those regulations. What did the regulations referred to say with respect to the tenure of the appointment of public offices? The 64th clause said: "In other colonies"—that was to say, in colonies not possessing Responsible Government—"public offices are "generally granted in the name of Her "Majesty, and holding during Her "Majesty's pleasure. In some cases, "however, it is specially provided by law "that they shall be granted by the Governor, or by the Governor in Council,

"or by some judicial authority, and, in some few cases, they are holden during 'good behaviour.'" The other day they were told by the leader of the Government that he considered the Bill an insult to the Governor—that it interfered with His Excellency's prerogative and his functions—that it was unconstitutional—and so forth. How could it possibly be so when, according to the Colonial Office Regulations, there were public officers holding their appointments on exactly the same tenure? The hon. member, Mr. Stone, the other day, had challenged him to mention a precedent for the proposal to render the Auditor responsible to the Legislature, in a Colony not possessing Responsible Government. He had not considered it necessary then to have come fortified with precedents in support of the Bill. Did the hon. member suppose the Imperial Parliament never legislated unless there was a precedent for its guidance? He did not think there would be much legislation of any practical value to the country, if it never ventured to pass a measure with respect to which Ministers could not point to a precedent. But as to a precedent for the course proposed to be adopted in the present Bill—although he had not been prepared with a precedent when he was challenged the other day to mention one—he had since then happened to meet with a precedent. Not later than the 6th July last, Mr. Errington, a member of the House of Commons, asked the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, "Whether the '75th rule of the Colonial Office Regulations, relative to the tenure of public officers, applied to, and was enforced 'in, all the judicial and fiscal appointments in the island of Barbadoes.'" Sir Charles Dilke, in reply, said "the case 'of Barbadoes, which was a very exceptional one, was covered by the words 'generally speaking' in the regulation referred to, but he might mention that 'the chief fiscal officer in that island—' although the appointment is confirmed 'by the Governor—is appointed annually by the Assembly.'" Here, then, was an instance in which a fiscal officer was actually appointed by the Legislative Assembly; and yet we are told that, by providing that the Auditor General shall not be removed from office unless upon

the address of the Legislative Council here, we were offering an insult to the Governor, and that such a proposal was unconstitutional. If the enactment under which this provision was made in Barbadoes had been assented to by the Secretary of State, why should there be any objection to an analogous provision being made in this Bill? Barbadoes was not a colony possessing Responsible Government, any more than ours. He admitted it was an "exceptional case," but so was ours. And there was no doubt whatever in his mind—he never had any serious doubt, and he had even less of it now—as to the Secretary of State refusing his assent to this Bill on the ground that it was unconstitutional. As he had said before, he considered these clauses necessary in order to place the Auditor in a thoroughly independent position, and to make him in a measure responsible to the Legislature. They did not intend to go to the length which they did at Barbadoes; they did not seek to have the power to appoint or dismiss the Auditor, but simply that, before he should be removed from office, an opportunity should be afforded the Legislature to consider his case, and—if it was deemed necessary—to address the Governor on the subject. He thought, if this privilege—and an even greater privilege—had been accorded to one Colony possessing representative institutions like our own, there was no reason why at any rate we should not ask for the same privilege to be granted to the Legislative Council of this Colony.

MR. MARMION: May I ask the honorable member why is it that the chamber to which this privilege has been conceded at Barbadoes is styled the Legislative Assembly?

MR. STEERE: Because there are two Houses there—a Council and an Assembly. But they have not got Responsible Government.

THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. G. W. Leake) said he would venture to oppose both the first and the second clauses of the Bill. He would oppose them upon two grounds—because they proposed to introduce a new principle, and because they proposed to create a new class of officer. One of the disadvantages of personalities in debate

was that it led men's minds from the real point at issue. And when they had the name of Mr. Knight introduced into this discussion, they naturally looked at the matter under consideration from Mr. Knight's point of view. Mr. Knight was what they might call a strong-back Auditor—an uncompromising officer, who performed his duty rigidly and thoroughly; and, when some wicked man in the shape of a Colonial Secretary sought to seduce him from the paths of rectitude, he declined to listen. He stood his ground inflexibly, and came out of the struggle virtuous and triumphant. But Mr. Knight looked at the question now from a retired Auditor's point of view. There were grievances to be remedied in connection with his late department, and it would be an unmixed blessing if we could only get an Act of Parliament to redress them. There was, clearly, something rotten in the state of Denmark, and—there was nothing like leather. If they could only get an Audit Act, and a rigid and inexorable Auditor behind it, things might go on as well as ever they did. That was the substance of Mr. Knight's evidence. As to the phantasm raised by the hon. member for the Swan—the chief fiscal officer in Barbadoes—that had already been dispelled by the simple question of the hon. member for Fremantle. There were two Legislative Chambers in Barbadoes—there was one here. If an Auditor, be he who he may, chose to resent an invasion of his office, on the part of any wicked functionary holding the office of Colonial Secretary, and that functionary thought proper to wreak his petty revenge upon the unhappy Auditor—what, after all, could he do? He could not dismiss him summarily. Being an officer in receipt of emoluments exceeding £100 a year, the offence with which he was charged would have to be communicated to him in writing, with the grounds on which it rested, and it would be competent for him to address the Governor, or even the Secretary of State, and show cause why he should not be dismissed at all. He might rely at least that, when addressing the Colonial Office, he was addressing gentlemen, that he was addressing those who would never sanction an injury or an act of oppression being done to any public servant. It

was not even suggested that an injury or act of oppression had been committed here. Nor was there any prospect, he thought, of any Auditor General who discharged his duties honestly and fearlessly ever being dismissed from his post by any Governor, and that dismissal sanctioned by the Secretary of State. Hon. members might rely upon that. It was merely because the Bill proposed to introduce a new officer, and to introduce a novel principle of audit, without any corresponding benefit or advantages, that he gave his vote in favor of the proposition of the hon. member for Toodyay.

MR. STONE said the Governor who had always been held up in that House as a pattern of what a constitutional Governor ought to be (Mr. Weld), when opening the first Session under our present Constitution, said that the success of it would mainly depend upon the wisdom, moderation, and patriotism of the members of the Legislature. He (Mr. Stone) hoped that the hon. members of the present Council, in approaching the consideration of this question, were going to show that spirit of moderation, wisdom, and patriotism which was so necessary in the impartial discussion of a question of this importance. He had taken a very strong stand against these clauses in Select Committee, and he had done so upon the grounds which he had stated in his minute appended to the report of that Committee. The hon. member for the Swan had referred to the 64th regulation of the Colonial Office, in support of the position with reference to public officers, in some few cases, holding their appointment simply during good behaviour. But if the hon. member would refer to the cases in which this principle had been applied, he would find that the appointment of such officers rested with the Governor in Council or some judicial authority, and that their dismissal rested entirely with the Imperial Government and not with the Legislature. He could quote an instance in our own Colony where the House had vested in the Governor the appointment of a head of a department (the Commissioner of Titles), but the power of dismissal still rested with the Secretary of State. He had already said he saw no necessity for this clause, as

the Auditor, in his opinion, was sufficiently protected under the existing regulations, which provided that, in all cases in which an officer's emoluments exceed £100 a year, such officer could not be suspended unless the offence with which he was charged, and the ground upon which that charge rested, were communicated to him in writing, and until he had an opportunity of answering the charge, also in writing. The regulations distinctly enjoined that no suspension from office, or stoppage of salary, must take place unless such defence has been received and considered by the Executive Council, in the first instance; and, if the final decision of the Executive should be for his suspension, the minutes of the Council and all other material documents relating to the inquiry had to be sent home, in order that the Secretary of State may confirm or disallow the same. Surely this was ample protection to any public officer. He was afraid that those hon. members who were wedded to the present Bill, were wedded to it because they had copied it from a Bill in force in another Colony,—forgetting that that Colony possessed a Constitution different to ours; and they did not now like to back out of the position they had taken up with reference to the principle involved in these two clauses. He knew some of them did not really think that those clauses were absolutely necessary. And, although it did not appear in the report of the Select Committee, he must here allude to what took place in that Committee, in support of what he had just stated. An amendment was suggested in Committee by the hon. member for the Swan himself, that this first clause should be struck out and another substituted in its place, to the effect that the Secretary of State in the event of the suspension of the Auditor should stay his hand, and not confirm the suspension, until the Legislative Council had had an opportunity of addressing him upon the subject. It was not proposed in any way to take away the right of suspension, but that the Secretary of State should not confirm it until that House had an opportunity of addressing him on the matter. He (Mr. Stone) felt that he could not support such a compromise, and it was really at the request of the hon. member for

Murray and Williams that the original clause was allowed to stand in the Bill. The mover of the Bill himself was quite prepared to accept the compromise—indeed, had put it forward. He mentioned this, to show that even the firmest supporters of the Bill were not particularly wedded to the clause now before the Committee, and that they did not consider it absolutely necessary. But, having now taken their stand upon it, they did not like to give way. Some stress had been laid upon the evidence given by the witnesses examined before the Select Committee, but he did not think hon. members should allow themselves to be carried away by that evidence, simply because the late Auditor General expressed an opinion that he did not think the Auditor is now in a sufficiently independent position. That was a mere matter of individual opinion. The same gentleman in his evidence said he once resisted pressure being brought to bear upon him (by a former Colonial Secretary) to alter his books, but that he resisted at considerable risk to himself. When, however, the question was put to him in Committee, "What risk did you conceive you were running?"—he could not explain. In fact, it was impossible for him to show that he ran any risk, for he (Mr. Stone) could not conceive how any public officer could be more strongly entrenched in his position than he was under the existing regulations. Under Responsible Government, public officers holding their appointments "during good behaviour" would hold them upon a very precarious tenure indeed; for the good behaviour in that case would simply mean that an officer held his appointment during the pleasure of the Ministry, and he would run the risk of being summarily dismissed at any moment. Under those circumstances, no doubt it was necessary that an Auditor should be protected by a legislative enactment, in order to ensure an independent audit; but under our Constitution it was quite another thing. Public officers here did not hold their offices during the mere pleasure or whim of a Ministry that might be in to-day and out to-morrow. Therefore there was not the same necessity for a Bill of this character. With reference to the case of Barbadoes, referred to by the hon. mem-

ber for Swan, he did not exactly know what office the gentleman referred to held. It could not be that of Auditor General, for he noticed, on reference to the Colonial Office List, that the gentleman holding that appointment had been in office since 1863, and the Colonial Treasurer since 1860. He therefore failed to see what office was meant by that of chief fiscal officer; no such appointment appeared in the Colonial Office List. Moreover, in that Colony, the Constitution was not the same as ours, for there they had two Houses, a Legislative Council and House of Assembly, and the members of the Council, in addition to their legislative functions, also exercised the functions of an Executive or Privy Council.

MR. STEERE said he must protest against hon. members supporting their arguments in that House by quoting discussions that had taken place in Select Committee. He had never heard of such a thing before, and if countenanced, it could not fail to impair if not destroy the usefulness of such Committees, if confidence was to be violated in that manner. He did not object to it in this instance merely on the ground that it might be considered as telling against himself, with regard to the position he had taken up with respect to this particular clause; but he thought it was a very dangerous precedent to establish, and he hoped he should never again hear a member of a Select Committee supporting his arguments in his place in the House by referring to the confidential conversations that occurred in Select Committee. As a matter of fact, there was very little difference between the clause which he had proposed to substitute and the original clause; it was put forward simply as a compromise, and when not accepted as such, it was withdrawn, and the original clause adhered to.

MR. STONE said he had not referred to any conversation that had taken place in Select Committee, but to a distinct proposition put forward, and subsequently withdrawn; and he thought it was perfectly competent for any member of a Select Committee to do that, without violating any confidence.

MR. VENN said an Audit Bill, pure and simple, was a measure which he had,

from the very moment the question was first mooted, decided to vote for. But, after carefully considering the present Bill, he came to the conclusion that the two first clauses were very objectionable clauses,—objectionable under our present Constitution. Nor were they necessary, in his opinion, for the protection of the Auditor, who was already surrounded by sufficient safeguards, for all practical purposes. As there appeared to be every probability that, if these clauses were retained in the Bill, it would jeopardise the whole measure, and as he was very anxious that an Audit Act, pure and simple, should be passed, he felt bound to support the motion to strike out the clauses.

MR. MARMION said, in his opinion, this was the most important clause of the Bill, and it ought to receive the most careful attention. Every member should be prepared to give some reason for the line of action which he intended pursuing with reference to it, and he therefore felt it his duty to explain the reason which had actuated him in opposing the clause when in Select Committee, and which still actuated him in supporting the amendment now before the House. He was opposed to the retention of this and the next clause, because—though he concurred in the desirability (if it were possible under our present constitution) of rendering the Auditor perfectly independent, and only liable to dismissal with the sanction of the Legislative Council, he considered that—as such a provision was apparently entirely at variance with the spirit of the Colonial Office Regulations applicable to colonies under the Constitution we are now working—the retention of these clauses in their present shape would hazard the loss of the Bill. That Bill, if these clauses were struck out, would, with some slight amendment, effect the one great object of the measure, viz., necessitate the keeping of the accounts of the Colony in a clear and intelligible manner, and thus render it an easy matter to ascertain its financial condition at any time. Those, briefly, were his reasons for opposing the clause now before the Committee. As had been pointed out, in the course of the debate on the second reading of the Bill, the mere fact of making the Auditor responsible to the Legislature would not

prevent an excess of expenditure over and above the votes of the House; as the Governor would still be empowered—that was contemplated in the Bill itself—to authorise any expenditure of public money for purposes not recognised or provided for by the Legislature, in cases of emergency. The principal reason urged in favor of the clause appeared to be the fact that on a certain occasion the Auditor General had been what was generally called “tampered with,” by an officer holding a superior position in the Public Service, or, in other words, an effort had been made to induce the Auditor to do what he conceived to be improper and incorrect. Now what did all that amount to? During the ten years we have possessed the present Constitution, only two solitary instances of any attempt to influence the Auditor in any way, in the discharge of his duty, had been brought under their notice; and if hon. members were to scrutinise these instances closely, and sift them to the bottom, possibly they would find that the first case referred to was as great a myth as the latter one had turned out to be. As to the latter—that referred to by the present Auditor General, who, in his evidence before the Select Committee, said he had been interfered with by the present Colonial Secretary to the extent of having had to make an alteration in the classification of certain Heads of Service; as to this allegation, he thought it was only due to the Colonial Secretary to say that the explanation given by him of that occurrence was perfectly satisfactory to the Select Committee. It appeared that on the occasion referred to the Colonial Secretary merely expressed an opinion as to the classification of certain items, and that opinion had been carried into effect by the Auditor. And so far from any endeavour having been made to mislead that House, it was found that the item in question had been placed under its proper head of service, under the general head of “Miscellaneous.” The Auditor General himself acknowledged that, if he felt himself aggrieved, or had any cause for complaint, it was competent for him to refer the matter to the Governor, but that he had not deemed it necessary to do so. He hoped hon. members would pause before they passed this section, which he firmly

believed, if it became part of the Bill, would result in our having no Bill at all, for there was every probability that if the Governor himself did not veto it, the Secretary of State would be almost sure to do so, simply in consequence of the insertion of this clause, which after all might be very well dispensed with. It was admitted that, for all practical purposes, the Bill would act quite as beneficially without these two clauses; and he now finally and earnestly appealed to the good sense and judgment of the House, he appealed to hon. members’ patriotism, not to jeopardise what would otherwise prove a most beneficial measure, by insisting upon the introduction of a clause that would be almost certain to cause Her Majesty to disallow the Bill.

MR. STEERE referring to what had fallen from the hon. member who had just sat down—as to the allegation with reference to the Auditor General having been “tampered with” (to use the hon. member’s own words) being a “myth”—said, it was no myth at all. That officer was directed by the then Colonial Secretary to alter a certain item in his books, and because he declined to do so, and resisted the interference of the Colonial Secretary, the consequence was he was virtually driven from his office, which (to use a colloquial expression) was made “too hot” for him. He (Mr. Steere) thought it was very necessary, under these circumstances, that the Auditor General should feel that he was protected by enactment, and that he should feel himself perfectly independent of the Colonial Secretary or any one else, so long as he honestly and conscientiously discharged his duties.

MR. MARMION said no such evidence as to the circumstance connected with the occurrence referred to had come before the Select Committee, when Mr. Knight was under examination; and he did not think the hon. member was any more justified in referring to a private conversation which he may have had with the late Auditor than was the hon. gentleman (Mr. Stone) whom he had twitted with being out of order in referring to a conversation that had taken place in Select Committee.

MR. STEERE said the two cases were altogether different. He had merely

mentioned what had come to his ears outside the Committee room, and not a conversation that had taken place in Committee.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. T. Goldsworthy) thought, as the matter had been commented upon in the course of the debate, it was only due to himself that he should explain the circumstances (referred to in the evidence of the present Auditor General) connected with the classification of a certain item of account. With regard to that evidence, he felt bound to say that it was very disingenuous—not to use a more contemptible expression with respect to a brother officer. That gentleman had not stated to the Committee that he had on several other occasions come to him for advice as to what heads certain items should be classified under, and that on this particular occasion the Auditor and himself had differed in opinion as to the proper head to place the item in question and that he (the Colonial Secretary) had suggested that he (the Auditor General) was entirely wrong in placing it under the head of "Office and Petty Expenses" and that the right place for it was under its proper head under "Miscellaneous." The item in question consisted of a certain charge for extra clerical assistance in the Colonial Secretary's Department—possibly in connection with the preparation of some returns asked for by that House—and which surely ought not to be placed among the ordinary expenditure of the department. He still maintained that in placing the item under the head of "Miscellaneous" he was quite right. It was quite competent for the Auditor, if he really thought there was anything improper about it, to have referred the matter to His Excellency; but he did not think it worth while doing so. In his evidence, he said he made the alteration "under protest." What that protest was, he (the Colonial Secretary) certainly had no idea, and he thought it was a great pity the evidence of the witnesses had not been given at greater length, or more fully. For any one to say, or cause it to be inferred, that he had attempted to tamper with the Auditor would be causing a very wrong and improper impression. He could only add that he had often assisted the Auditor, and by doing so saved him

from placing incorrect returns before the House. With reference to the clause in the Bill now before the Committee, he could only say that he adhered to every word he had said on the occasion of the second reading, as to its being an unwarrantable attempt to trench upon the prerogative of the Governor.

MR. BROWN craved the indulgence of the House while he replied to some remarks that had fallen from the hon. gentleman, the leader of the Government. The hon. gentleman seemed to be under the impression that the Auditor General behaved in what he called a "disingenuous" manner, when giving his evidence before the Select Committee, in not stating that he had occasion frequently to go to the hon. gentleman for advice as to the classification of accounts. The hon. gentleman surely had not read the Auditor's own evidence, otherwise he would never have made such a remark. Mr. Courthope, in his statement before the Committee, said plainly, "he had found it necessary on several occasions to ask the opinion of the Colonial Secretary as to the classification of accounts."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. T. Goldsworthy): Will the hon. member read a little further?

MR. BROWN said he was perfectly willing to do so. What the Auditor added was: "If I had been in a perfectly independent position, I should never have referred any matter to the Colonial Secretary for his opinion as to the classification of accounts." And that was exactly what the majority of the Select Committee wished to bring about,—that it should not be the province of those persons who had the power to spend the public funds, to decide under what heads those sums shall be classified. What they desired was, that the Auditor General, and he alone, should be held responsible for keeping and classifying the accounts, and that while doing so he should be perfectly independent of the Colonial Secretary, and have no occasion to go to him for instructions. He failed to see in what way Mr. Courthope had acted "disingenuously" at all. He had acknowledged that he often had occasion to go to the hon. gentleman for advice, and he never led the Committee to infer

that his advice was not good advice, or proper advice. The hon. gentleman said it was a pity that the answers given by the witnesses examined before the Select Committee did not appear in full in the report; but the hon. gentleman should bear in mind that Select Committees here had not the advantages which Select Committees and Commissions had in other parts of the world,—the services of a shorthand writer, which enabled them to give much fuller reports than could be expected from a Select Committee of this House. The Committee had done their best to give a fair and impartial resumé of the evidence given, and he failed to see what more could have been expected of them under the circumstances. With regard to the clause now before the House, and the contention that it introduced an unconstitutional principle, he could only say that he would be the last man in the Colony to give his adhesion to a clause if he thought it was unconstitutional. He trusted he was patriotic enough for that. But he did not think it was unconstitutional; and he was perfectly willing to allow that question to be settled by the Secretary of State himself. He would say this of the clause and of the Bill generally—it was a measure that, in operation, would prove as beneficial to the Government as it would to the public. And in the interests of the Government, as well as in the interests of the people of the Colony, he asked the House to give its assent to it. He was not one of those who considered the Government had recklessly squandered the public funds, without thought or care, as they were told by some people: on the contrary, he believed that the Government were as anxious to spend the public money to the best advantage as that House was. And if this clause were passed, the result would be that some of the responsibility involved in the expenditure of that money would be shifted on to the shoulders of the members of that House; and in doing that, would they not be taking away a great deal of that undeserved odium which now attached to the Government in connection with these matters. Surely, that was a legitimate object to aim at. Surely, that was an object which the Government themselves, one would think, would readily assist in

carrying out. Why, then, not support this clause? Allusion had been made by the hon. member, Mr. Stone, to the words uttered by Governor Weld—one of the best Governors that ever administered the affairs of this Colony or the affairs of any other Colony—on the occasion of inaugurating the first Session under our present constitution. Those words were, that the success of the constitution depended upon the wisdom, the moderation, and the patriotism of the members of that House. He, for one, loyally accepted that dictum. He hoped that he showed his “wisdom” in supporting this clause. He hoped he showed his “moderation” in not asking that the appointment or the dismissal of the Auditor should be left to that Council, and in not seeking to interfere in any way with the functions of the prerogative of the Crown’s representative. And he hoped he showed his “patriotism” by being guided in his actions, in this as in all other matters, towards the Government and towards the country, by an honest conviction that what he did was that which was most beneficial for the interests of the whole community.

MR. RANDELL, referring to the evidence which had been given before the Select Committee, said he thought he might, in very few words, dismiss the evidence of the present Auditor General, inasmuch as that officer placed so little value upon his independence that he would not take the trouble of referring any attempted invasion of his functions to His Excellency the Governor. What the Auditor General said in his evidence with reference to the interference of the Colonial Secretary had been very satisfactorily explained away by the Colonial Secretary himself. Mr. Courthope in his evidence said he made the alteration which the Colonial Secretary asked him to make, under a “protest.” But so little did the Auditor appear to value his protest that he never entered it, or referred to it, in the comparative statement which he annually presented to that House. And when a public officer valued his independence so little as that, he thought the House might dismiss his evidence for what it was worth, and without going into the merits of the case at all. As to the evidence of the late Auditor General, that gentleman simply

said that in his opinion an Audit Act would be a desirable acquisition in some respects; but he did not go so far as to say that it was an indispensable measure,—though, in all he said, there was clear evidence to show how strongly he felt on the subject. And, as a rule, when people felt very strongly on any subject, their views were more or less tinged with bias. Against the evidence of the two Auditors—who might be regarded as interested witnesses—they had the testimony of the Colonial Treasurer, and of the Colonial Secretary—both very briefly summarised, as it happened. Though the former gentleman gave the Select Committee a great deal of valuable information, and was under examination for a couple of hours, his evidence was dismissed in half a dozen lines. And there was one very important omission in that. In reply to a question put to him by one of the members of the Select Committee, Mr. Lefroy stated most emphatically that he considered the Auditor General, under the present system, perfectly independent—that he had not the slightest cause to fear any unpleasant consequences so long as he did his duty (although he might differ in opinion from his superior officers), as he was amply protected by the Colonial Office Regulations. He did not think even the promoters of the Bill anticipated that it would obviate the introduction in that House of any more Excess Bills. Nor indeed could he see what was likely to result from the Bill in any way, except the creation and the fostering of a feeling of distrust between the Governor and the Legislature,—undesirable at any time, and especially so at the present juncture of affairs.

SIR LUKE LEAKE said that, as a rule, he refrained, and he thought wisely refrained—regard being had to the position which he held in the House—from taking any prominent part in the discussion of public questions. But, on the question now before the Committee, he intended to vote. Before doing so, he felt it his duty to give his reasons for supporting the clause under consideration. He thought that, in a Colony like this, the Auditor General could not possibly be too independent. A very general opinion prevailed—and he did not hesitate to endorse that opinion—

that for some years past there had been a very extravagant expenditure of the public money; and if that House could do anything whatever, within constitutional limits, to prevent that extravagance, they were bound, in the discharge of the duty they owed to those whom they represented, to do all within their power to check it. As a general rule, he avoided expressing any opinion upon political questions in that House, but he considered it would be cowardly on his part were he to refrain from expressing an opinion on this subject. He was prepared to vote for the clause before the Committee. When he said that, he need not add that in his opinion there was nothing unconstitutional about it. If there had been—if he regarded it in any way as an attempt to interfere with the prerogative of the Crown—he would be among the very first to oppose it, and to the very utmost. He flattered himself that, if he was anything, he was loyal. He did not know whether the Governor himself was opposed to the Bill or not—possibly His Excellency would be glad to be relieved of the responsibility which the Bill would take off his shoulders; but what he hoped His Excellency would do—if he considered the measure in any way trenching upon his prerogative, or that it was not in harmony with the principle of the Constitution—was, that he would remit it for the consideration of the Secretary of State, who must be as well aware as we are that we have fair grounds for finding fault with the extravagant manner in which our money has been spent during the last few years. And he did hope, if this were done,—if the Bill went home—that the Colonial Office would say that the members of that House had only done their duty towards the people whom they represented, and even their duty to the Crown in trying to check that extravagance. If the Bill was unconstitutional, the Secretary of State would take good care that he would not advise Her Majesty to assent to it. And if such should be the result, the representatives of the people in that House would at any rate have the satisfaction of knowing that they had done their duty, and that it was not their fault if an improved system of checking the public expenditure did not come into operation.

Question—That clause 1 stand part of the Bill—put.

Committee divided.

Ayes 10

Noes 10

AYES.

Mr. Brown
Mr. Burt
Mr. Carey
Mr. Crowther
Mr. Grant
Mr. Hamersley
Mr. Higham
Sir L. S. Leake
Mr. Steere
Mr. S. H. Parker (Teller.)

NOES.

The Hon. R. T. Golds-
worthy
The Hon. G. W. Leake
The Hon. M. Fraser
Mr. Burgess
Mr. Marmion
Mr. S. S. Parker
Mr. Randall
Mr. Shenton
Mr. Venn
Mr. Stone (Teller.)

There being an equal number of votes, the Chairman gave his casting vote with the Ayes.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 4 agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 31 read with the amendments proposed by the Select Committee and agreed to.

Schedules 1, 2, and 3 read with the amendments proposed by the Select Committee and agreed to.

Preamble and Title agreed to, and Bill reported.

The House adjourned at eleven o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Thursday, 26th August, 1880.

Inspectors of Sheep: Disposal of Penalties—Estimates: in committee—Message (No. 13)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at noon.

PRAYERS.

INSPECTORS OF SHEEP: DISPOSAL OF PENALTIES.

MR. BURT, in accordance with notice, asked the Honorable the Colonial Secretary, "Whether or not the Inspectors

"first appointed under the Scab-in-Sheep Ordinance, 1866, were given to understand by the Government that the penalties, or any part thereof, recovered under the said Act on the information of the Inspectors, were to be paid to them; and whether such penalties or any part thereof have or has been hitherto paid to the Inspectors; and if so, is any alteration in this course contemplated by the Government."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. T. Goldsworthy) said he was not then prepared with a reply. (*Vide p. 248.*)

ESTIMATES.

The House then went into Committee of Supply for the consideration of the Estimates.

IN COMMITTEE.

Governor's Establishment, Item £487 9s. 2d.:

MR. STEERE: Before passing on to the consideration of the Estimates, I should like to say a few words in reply to what fell from the Colonial Secretary when making his financial statement, and more particularly with reference to the answer given by the hon. gentleman to the question put to him with reference to the estimated revenue, by the hon. member for Geraldton. The hon. gentleman's reply was, that he could only refer the House for information on that subject to the Governor's Speech at the opening of the Council. He was not able to furnish any particulars as to how the amount of revenue estimated for the year had been arrived at, or how it was expected to realise the anticipations which the Government had formed with respect to it. I think the hon. gentleman will find it necessary for him to supply the House with some additional information on these points before the Appropriation Act is passed. I hope hon. members this Session are not going to initiate a new system of dealing with the estimates of revenue, and be content to put up with such explanation as was afforded in the speech with which His Excellency inaugurated the Session. Surely the House is entitled to some further information beyond the mere assumption that the revenue for the year is likely to reach a certain lump sum. I hope the Committee