

MR. SHENTON: We are not so particular as all that.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): Perhaps by to-morrow night hon. members will have made up their minds as to the course they intend to pursue. After Saturday, the Government cannot legally expend a penny.

THE SPEAKER pointed out that if it was proposed to give the Government a provisional vote it would be necessary to bring in a Bill, and to pass it through all its stages before the year closed. A resolution of the House would not legalise the expenditure.

The matter then dropped.

The House adjourned at ten minutes to five o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Friday, 30th December, 1887.

Quarters for Medical Officer, Wyndham—Motion for Adjournment: Returns of Aboriginal Natives—Message (No. 2): Forwarding return showing distribution of Police Force—Supply Vote on Account, for the year 1888—Tariff Bill, 1888: first reading—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUARTERS FOR MEDICAL OFFICER AT WYNDHAM.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, moved that an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that he would be pleased to place on the Estimates for 1888 a sum of money, not exceeding £50, in lieu of quarters, for the resident medical officer at Wyndham. This officer, the hon. member said, had no place to live in at the present time, and, in that respect, he was an exception to the medical officer at Derby and also at Roebourne, both of whom had quarters provided for them. When he asked the other evening whether

it was the intention of the Government to supply this officer with quarters, the reply he received was that they had no such intention. All he asked for now was a small allowance until such time as quarters were provided.

MR. McRAE formally seconded the motion.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) pointed out that the position of the medical officers at Derby and Roebourne was not exactly parallel with that of the medical officer at Wyndham. At Derby the Government Resident was the medical officer; and at Roebourne the resident medical officer was in charge of the hospital. Moreover, the present medical officer at Wyndham accepted the appointment with the full knowledge that no quarters were provided, and he received the largest salary of any medical officer outside Perth and Fremantle. He received £300 a year for duties which must necessarily be very light. A similar application was made last year on behalf of the medical officers at Northam and Vasse, but the application could not be entertained. He did not think this was the time to move for additional allowances, and, if the application were entertained, it would be a dangerous precedent.

MR. MARMION thought that, under existing circumstances, this was not the time to ask for any increases, looking at the financial position; and he hoped the hon. member would have the good sense to withdraw his motion, rather than press it and sustain a defeat. No doubt a medical officer at a place like Wyndham had special claims to consideration; but, when they were advocating retrenchment in every direction, this was hardly the time to propose any additional expenditure.

MR. A. FORREST said, if it was the wish of the House that he should withdraw the motion, he would do so.

Motion withdrawn.

RETURN OF NATIVES EMPLOYED IN PEARL FISHERY.

MR. RICHARDSON moved the adjournment of the House, for the purpose of calling attention to the return furnished by the Government the other day, at his request, showing the number of natives

employed in the pearling industry. This return only applied to the season of 1886-7, whereas he had moved for a return covering the two previous seasons as well; and, what he was anxious to ascertain was whose fault it was that the complete returns had not been furnished. He gave notice of his intention to ask for this return, last session, so as to give ample time for its preparation. The information which he sought must be at hand, at the North; and he should like to know why it had not been supplied. The return furnished, being only for one season, was useless for the purpose he had in view, which was to ascertain whether the pearling industry was declining or otherwise, so far as the employment of native divers and native labor was concerned. There was an impression abroad—it was no use denying it—that, owing to what he might call over-legislation or the imprudent way in which the law was administered, there had been of late a very serious decline in the number of natives employed, in any way, at the North. As a result, he was informed that there were more than 120 native prisoners now in the Roebourne gaol. These natives being without employment were driven to thieving and pilfering in order to satisfy the pangs of nature, and the consequence was a tremendous expense to the colony—an expense which we were ill able to bear just now. He had simply asked for this return in order that the House and the country might be able to see how serious the falling off had been in the number of natives who were employed, earning an honest living, in the service of European employers, at the North-West; but the return as furnished was useless for the purpose, and what he wished to know was whose fault it was that the complete return, which he had asked for over three months ago, had not been forthcoming.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the return which had been furnished to the hon. member was the only result of the instructions given to the officials at the North-West. The whole of the correspondence on the subject was open for the hon. member's perusal at the Colonial Secretary's Office, and the hon. member would see the difficulties surrounding the Government Resident in obtaining these

returns, which he (the Colonial Secretary) was very desirous of giving in *extenso*.

Mr. SHOLL said surely there was some record kept of these native divers—their engagements were in duplicate—and also of the boats employed. He thought it would be rather interesting at the present time to discover the practical effect of so much legislation in connection with these natives and the pearling industry. He believed it would rather open the eyes of the authorities to see the injurious effect of their action in the matter. When bills regulating the employment of these natives were before the House, there was naturally a certain amount of diffidence and reluctance on the part of members representing the North in interfering, because they might be accused of interested motives. He would point out the injury caused by over-legislation not only to the pearling industry but also to the natives themselves. The evil effects were shown by the fact that at the present there were about 120 of these natives in gaol at Roebourne, or on the works chained to barrels,—he admitted it was necessary. These were a first-class lot of natives, men who were worthy of employment in any part of the colony, and whose labor would be very valuable. No one could wonder at their being in gaol. Deprived of employment, either in the pearling industry or on the stations, these natives who had become used to regular food, being turned loose in this way, their only alternative was to starve or steal, and consequently they stole, with the result that they were imprisoned. It was not the wretched natives who were to blame, but the Government who had introduced such legislation, and the majority of the members of that House who had agreed to such legislation, and also the Home Government for insisting upon such legislation, as made the employment of these natives impossible. He thought it was a very serious question, which that House and the colony had to face, this question of the unemployed natives on the North-West coast. He was very sorry the returns asked for were not forthcoming.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said he would communicate with the Government Resident again, urging upon him the necessity of

procuring the information wished for, at the earliest date.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said that when he was at the North-West a few months ago his attention was called to this question, and he firmly believed that the whole of the public works in that part of the colony could be done, and properly done, by native labor. When at Roebourne he saw that a large number of them were in gaol, many of them, as the hon. member had said, chained to barrels—a necessary precaution, no doubt, to prevent their escape—and he could not help thinking that it was a pity the services of these men were, so to speak, wasted. The more general use of the diving dress had, no doubt, thrown a large number of them out of employment, and being thus turned loose, and having been accustomed to the white man's mutton and damper, they resorted to thieving and sheep-stealing to satisfy their cravings. He thought these natives thrown out of service might be employed upon public works, and he should be willing enough to try the experiment. If the experiment did not succeed, there would be no great loss; but he believed it would be a good thing for the colony and for the natives themselves if they were so employed, and he was at present considering a scheme by which they might be employed, to the best advantage both to themselves and the colony.

The motion for adjournment was negatived.

MESSAGE (No. 2): DISTRIBUTION OF THE POLICE FORCE.

THE SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

"In reply to Address No. 3 of the "Honorable the Legislative Council, the "Governor transmits herewith two Returns, showing the strength and distribution of the Police Force of the "colony, at the present time, and as proposed for the year 1888.

"Government House, 30th December, "1887."

SUPPLY VOTE ON ACCOUNT, 1888.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser), rising in his place, said:

Sir, before proceeding with the orders of the day, I wish to make a statement. Hon. members are aware that to-morrow closes the current year, and that unless steps are taken to provide some supplies for carrying on the public service, the administration of the Government will be rendered impracticable. The Government do not propose at the present time to move any further with regard to the Reappropriation Bill; and, premising that the new Tariff Bill will come into operation very shortly, as it is highly desirable it should, so that the mercantile community may know what the duties will be on the goods which they import, the question of re-estimating the revenue for the coming year must remain in abeyance until the results of the operation of the new tariff shall have been ascertained. Under these circumstances, the Government propose to carefully reconsider the estimates of expenditure now before the House, and it is not improbable that some revision may be effected which will meet with the general approval of hon. members. But, in the meantime, in order that we may be placed in a position to carry on the affairs of the colony, without a block, it is necessary that some provision be made for that purpose. I therefore now propose this evening, by leave of the House, to ask the House to pass a resolution to the effect that a grant of £90,825 be made on account of the public service for the first quarter of the year 1888. The details showing the departmental divisions of this amount will be laid before hon. members this evening. I may say that the amount asked for is merely a further credit for three months on precisely the same scale as we are now working under, the proposed appropriation being based upon the Estimates for the current year, with the exception of certain items other than departmental charges, with regard to which that basis has been somewhat departed from, and, as regards works and buildings, there is a reduction proposed, the amount asked for being only such as the head of the department considers will enable him to carry on for the time being. The reason, I should say, why provision is asked to be made for a period of three months is that it is anticipated that the question of con-

stitutional change, which hon. members are anxiously looking forward to, cannot, as hon. members are aware, be brought before the House for, at anyrate, another month, and, as it is understood that there is no desire on the part of hon. members to prolong the present session until that date, but rather to meet again about March, the Government now ask for these provisional supplies, which will enable them to carry on the public service on its present basis until the end of that month. The vote now asked for will in no way affect or prejudice the ordinary grants for the year, as provided for in the Estimates-in-chief, which hon. members will have an opportunity of discussing when this House meets again. In the meantime, and under the circumstances I have mentioned, I think hon. members will agree that the course now proposed to be taken by the Government is a fair and reasonable one, and one to which hon. members may not be indisposed to give their adherence. I therefore beg leave to move that the House do now resolve into a committee of the whole for the consideration of the supplies now asked for.

IN COMMITTEE:

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) moved "That a grant of £90,825 be made on account of the public service for the first quarter of the year 1888."

MR. SHENTON moved that the various items be taken *seriatim*.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) submitted that the proper course was to put the whole vote, upon which there might be a general discussion of the whole subject. These Estimates were not in the nature of Estimates-in-chief, but merely a vote on account. That was the practice of the House of Commons. Details were not inquired into on such occasions, but a lump sum granted, and the discussion was confined to this lump sum.

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES said a vote on account was a totally new procedure here, and he would leave it to hon. members to say what course they wished him to pursue—whether he should put the whole vote or take the items *seriatim*, as was their practice with the Estimates-in-chief.

MR. SHOLL: I don't know what the opinion of other members may be, but my opinion is—and I thought that was the intention—that these Estimates for next year should be considerably cut down.

MR. A. FORREST: Before the first item is put, I should like to ask who is to blame for leaving the Estimates like this until the last day of the year. We were summoned for the 15th December, —why couldn't we have been summoned earlier?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): Because the Council was prorogued to the 15th December.

MR. PARKER: At our own special request.

MR. A. FORREST: The Government now put us in this corner: the whole of the machinery of the Government will be stopped unless we vote these supplies. Of course we must necessarily pass them. We cannot stop the machinery of the Government.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said he had gone carefully into every item included in the vote on account, and, with two exceptions, they were exactly, down to the fraction of a pound, one-fourth of the votes for the current year. The exceptions were the vote for immigration, in respect of which, as the committee was aware, certain liabilities had been incurred, and the vote for works and buildings, which was actually less than one-fourth of the vote for the current year. The committee must not be under the impression that if they passed this vote on account the House would be committed to any Estimates that might hereafter be brought in for the coming year. This was simply to enable the Government to carry on the business of the country for the next three months. Members were not committing themselves to the Estimates for the whole year, but to a lump sum; and that was the advantage of voting a lump sum, and he thought it was treating the House as fairly as it could be treated. There was only one question to put, and the discussion upon that question should be general.

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES pointed out that the Government here had not come down asking for a lump sum, but for supplies for a quarter

of the year—a more serious transaction than grants on account, as a rule, involved. Elsewhere, when for some reason or other the consideration of the Estimates had to be delayed beyond the time when supplies were usually granted, the Government, as a rule, brought in a motion resolving that a lump sum be granted on account. Details were not inquired into, Parliament—a majority of whose members having confidence in the Ministry in power—simply placing at the disposal of the Treasurer such amounts as he might state were necessary for disbursement before the regular votes were taken. Here, however, the Government asked the House to grant them three months' supplies, on a certain basis—an unprecedented course, so far as that House was concerned. If the committee desired to have the debate upon the general principle, without inquiring into details, of course it was competent for hon. members to do so.

MR. A. FORREST again asked who was to blame for the Estimates being left until the last day of the year without being passed? That House was not to blame. Why were they not summoned earlier? The Government had now put them in this fix that, unless they voted these supplies, the whole of the machinery of the Government would stop, and of course they must pass them. He understood this was done in order that some hon. members might go to Sydney, to attend the Centenary celebrations, and that the House would be prorogued and meet again about the 1st of April. He had no objection to pass three months' supplies if hon. members wanted to go away, but he thought it would be better if they all remained at their posts, and got on with the business of the country. He had hoped that before they separated they would have been able to prepare for another loan for public works, so as to find employment for people who were leaving the colony as fast as they could. Hon. members, he was afraid, did not realise the amount of depression amongst the laboring classes. If they did they would be more anxious to take some steps to relieve it.

MR. SHENTON said he had no objection to the supplies asked for being granted, on the distinct understanding that during these three months no new

appointments shall be made, nor any increase of salary granted until the Estimates-in-chief came before the House.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): Quite so. The Government simply ask for a further three months, credit upon the basis of the Estimates for the current year. It does not bind members in any way as regards the Estimates for the coming year.

MR. MARMION said the Government of course would take care that the votes now asked for were in no way exceeded, otherwise they would deserve the severest censure of that House, and, what was more, they would get it.

MR. A. FORREST: They don't care for that.

MR. PARKER said the course which the Government now asked them to adopt was a most extraordinary one, and one which was only justified by reason of the existence of some extraordinary circumstances. The hon. member for Kimberley had asked, who was to blame because the House had not been called together earlier than the 15th of December. He would remind the hon. member that the 15th of December was the time chosen by members themselves for reassembling. The Governor consulted their convenience in the matter, the original intention having been to summon them a month before that date, which some hon. members, and especially country members, considered would be an inconvenient time. Therefore, they could hardly blame the Government because they did not meet until the middle of December. [MR. HENSMAN and MR. FORREST denied having been consulted in the matter]. When they did meet, the Government came down with certain financial proposals for adjusting the revenue and expenditure. They proposed that this should be done by the reappropriation of certain loan moneys, with the view of meeting ordinary expenditure. That proposal the House indignantly refused to adopt. It also refused to revise their Estimates, or to appoint a select committee for that purpose, hon. members very properly, as he thought, refusing to take upon themselves the odium of reducing the annual votes, contending that it was the duty of the Government to adjust their expenditure with their available funds. Of course if the Government was responsible

to the House for its actions it would immediately have had to retire, when it found that the House refused to accept their Estimates or their financial proposals; but, fortunately, he thought, for all parties, the Government here, as yet, were not in that position. They must stick to their guns, and endeavor to meet the wishes of the House in some other way. Therefore they now came down with other proposals, and asked for this vote on account. He did not know that, under the circumstances, the House would be doing wrong in granting them these provisional supplies. The hon. member for Kimberley seemed to be under the impression that this was done in order to enable hon. members to go to Sydney. For his own part, he (Mr. Parker) was quite prepared to sit there as long as any other member; but he failed to see what was to be gained by it. They had been assured by the Government that immediately the Secretary of State's despatch was received, relating to Responsible Government, it would be published in the *Gazette*, for general information; and, it appeared to him, it would be a good thing for all parties that the country and the Press should have an opportunity of considering and discussing the subject, in the light of that despatch, before the House came to deal with it. Surely it would be a good thing to have the matter ventilated and discussed in the columns of the public Press, and have an expression of public opinion on the part of those who were most interested and concerned in the matter—the people of the colony. Although some of them had been sent there pledged to the cause of Responsible Government, they had no mandate or instructions from their constituents as to the precise form of the constitution which they desired,—whether, for instance, they should have one chamber or two. In fact, members at present, so far as he was aware, were absolutely unpledged as to any of the details of that constitution which the colony was desirous of obtaining. There was another point. It struck him that the Secretary of State's despatch would principally turn—and no doubt it would be one of the most important subjects they would have to consider—upon questions affecting the Northern districts of the colony;

and, surely, before they discussed it in that House, it was only fair and reasonable that the people of the North, who would be largely affected by the action of the House in the matter, should have a chance of discussing the subject, and of directing their representatives as to the course which they wished them to pursue. Therefore he could see no good likely to arise from their sitting there, waiting until this despatch was received; nor could he see that any harm was likely to arise, but on the contrary a great deal of good, from the publication of the despatch, prior to that House taking any action upon it. It might be said that they might meet again in February, but they knew the Government would have to frame their bill in accordance with the instructions they received from home, and they could not be expected to frame an important measure like this in the course of a few days, or even a few weeks. The despatch would not reach them until towards the end of next month (January), and they could not be expected to have their bill ready until about the middle of February. Hon. members were aware that the weather at that time of the year was not at all conducive to the transaction of much business, and he could not see, himself, that the country would be in any way prejudiced by deferring the consideration of this very important question until about the middle of March, when, if they only granted three months' supplies, they would be bound to meet again. Under these circumstances, he did not propose to offer any active opposition to the proposals of the Government.

MR. RICHARDSON said it appeared to him that the policy, or the steps proposed to be taken by the Government, had been necessitated in a great measure by the action of that House; and their present position was greatly due to a desire on their part to meet the expressed wish of the members of that House—more individually, perhaps, than collectively. Therefore, he thought, having endeavored in the best spirit to meet the wishes of hon. members, it would not look very well now for that House to turn round and refuse to vote these supplies. He did not see that the voting of them could do any harm, seeing that they were

based upon amounts which the House had already agreed to for the current year. The expenditure of the colony could not well decrease as the colony expanded and developed; and if the vote for the next three months was not to exceed one-fourth of the whole vote for the present year, he did not see that any serious harm could happen to the finances of the colony. The Council was to meet again about the middle of March, to discuss that very vital despatch which they expected to have before the country towards the end of January. He did not think they could reasonably expect to be called together to discuss that despatch before the residents of the Northern districts of the colony—who would probably be seriously affected by it—had an opportunity of expressing some opinion upon it. He thought it would be treating them with very scant courtesy indeed if that House were to proceed to deal with a bill framed upon that despatch without first finding out something about the views of the country. For these and many other reasons he thought it was only reasonable that this most important question should be postponed until the meeting of that Council some time in March. The great trouble with the hon. member for Kimberley appeared to be because we could not have a Loan Bill, to enable us to tide over a period of depression. For his own part, he thought it was only a temporary depression, and that it was not very deep. As to those people who would not stop in the colony because there was no expenditure going on upon public works, all he could say was: if we could only expect to retain people in the colony by the expenditure of loan money, the country must be in a worse state than they believed it to be in. With regard to the colony's assets and resources, he believed they were, potentially, very large. But the assets and wealth of a colony depended upon the population to develop them, and, in his opinion, any further large loans would be a heavy tax upon the community until we have more population to bear the burden with us. Those who had faith in the colony would not leave it, because of a period of temporary depression, and, as to those who would only stop here so long as there was loan money to spend,

he thought the colony was just as well without them.

MR. HENSMAN said they had been asked that evening—practically the last night but one of the year—for leave to introduce a motion involving the granting of supplies amounting to over £90,000; and, since they had entered the House that evening, they had had a paper handed round giving them for the first time the particulars of the vote asked for. Hon. members around him were, apparently, satisfied, and he noticed that their remarks were received with great satisfaction by the learned Attorney General. Therefore he was well aware that in the few remarks which he was about to make he was not speaking the views of the bulk of the members on his side of the House. He would ask, first of all, as his hon. friend on the left had already asked, whose fault it was that they were placed in this extraordinary position, on the last working legislative night of the year,—a position unprecedented in the history of the colony—with a sort of *ad misericordiam* appeal made to them by the Government to vote £90,000 to enable them to carry on the business of the country for the next three months? Whose fault was it? He was not going to argue with any hon. member as to his personal recollection, with regard to having been consulted as to the most convenient time for the House to reassemble after the prorogation; but he would ask whether any member of that House was ever consulted as to that sudden prorogation, in July last? The members of that House were no parties to that prorogation. The members of that House were no parties to the sudden announcement that they were to be prorogued until the end of the year, before the Estimates came on. No member could say that that House consented to being suddenly prorogued to the middle of December. He was not going to discuss it now, but perhaps at some future time the country might ask why it was prorogued. Whatever arrangement may have been made as to the convenience of members with regard to the date of their reassembling, he would take no responsibility himself as to the Estimates not having been gone into last session. It had been stated that evening by the leader of the Gov-

ernment that no further movement would be made with the Reappropriation Bill. Could they have a more lamentable admission of—

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): I said that at the present time the Government had no intention of taking any further action; I did not say that no further movement would be made.

MR. HENSMAN asked, if it was not to be pursued, why was it brought in? And, having been brought in, why was it not proceeded with? Was it because something had happened to affect it, further than the strong expression of opinion in that House that it was a bad bill, and a bill which, if assented to, the colony would not be keeping good faith with those who had lent it the money. They were asked now to vote £90,000 for the next quarter, and they were told it did not follow it would all be spent. Was that the way in which members representing the people would vote their money? Putting it in the power of the Government to spend it, and trusting to the Government not to spend it, and saying that if the Government did anything wrong they would have a vote of censure. What effect would it have? Could a stronger vote of censure be passed, or be passed in any stronger terms which the ingenuity of man could invent, than that they were now at the end of the year asking for a vote for the next quarter, on this extraordinary occasion? The Attorney General said it did not commit the House for the rest of the year. Perhaps not. But it committed them to the first quarter, at a time when it was admitted there was necessity for great retrenchment. They were told that they were now to adjourn—he knew that no words of his would affect the intention of the Government bench and of members on this side of the House—they were told that the House was about to adjourn, one hon. member said until the 1st April—a most suitable and appropriate day for that Council to meet again, after being put in this position, and apparently being quite ready to assent to the friendly proposition of the Government. But supposing it was not to the 1st April but to the middle of March, why did not the House go on now with its business? They had

the Estimates before them for the next year, what was there to prevent that House going on with them in the ordinary way, and deal with them as a whole, and, if necessary, vote a proportionate part of the sum which the House might eventually decide upon? Were they to abnegate their functions, during the first quarter of the year, and take the expenditure of the current year as their guide, without doing their plain duty of revising the Estimates proper, and going through every department? They were asked to vote a certain sum—for that, so far as he could make out, seemed to be the proposition—for the exigencies of the service, on the basis of another year's expenditure, without attempting to reduce that expenditure in any way, leaving it absolutely in the power of the Government to do what they pleased with the money. With the best Government in the world, under representative institutions, would the representatives of the people give up to them a quarter's income, and say to them, "We trust to your honor, to your wisdom, and your own common sense to spend it properly?" Not likely. If so, with the best Government in the world, what were they to say to the present Government, who, on the last day of the year, asked the House to vote them supplies for the next quarter, without giving them any particulars as to how they proposed to expend the money, beyond a bare statement contained on half a sheet of paper, placed in their hands for the first time that evening? He thought there was another reason why they ought to go on with the business, and that was this—they were expecting an important despatch from the Secretary of State, on the question of Responsible Government, somewhere about the middle or towards the end of next month. It had been urged that it was for the country and the Press to discuss that despatch in the first instance. Then what were they there for? What were they sent there for, but as the representatives of the people to discuss these matters. Was this important despatch, which they were so anxiously waiting for, and which they had telegraphed for—was this despatch then to be first discussed in leading articles, or by correspondents who chose to write to the papers, or was it to be discussed by the

representatives of the people in Council assembled. The Governor had told them that a dissolution would take place after the first consideration of the bill, and the opinion of the country taken, when the country would be ripe for its consideration. What had occurred that it should go to the country first, then to that House, and afterwards to the country again, and then to the next House. He saw nothing to necessitate all this delay. There was yet another reason why that House should be sitting when that despatch arrived. Strong comments had been made in the House, and elsewhere, because the Governor did not announce in his speech at the Town Hall the receipt of that second telegram of which they had heard so much, and the only excuse put forth in defence of the course pursued was that it was a message having reference to legislation, and that, therefore, it was only right it should have been kept for that Council and not given to the public. The message they were now about to receive was a reply to a telegram sent at the request of that House, who were urgent to get an answer without delay, so that they might ascertain the views of the Secretary of State on the subject. What a strange thing it would be, what a strange commentary it would be upon their action, if when that despatch arrived—and they were told it was on the road—the members of that House should have dispersed, some to their business, and others off to the other colonies on their pleasure. He thought it was not fair to the country, nor the Legislative Council, nor was it complimentary to the Secretary of State that, when that House sent a telegram through the Governor to the Secretary of State urgently requesting him to forward a certain despatch, and that, when that despatch arrived, they should not be in session to receive it. In the present instance, too, they proposed to adjourn of their own free will and pleasure; they were not prorogued by a superior authority, as they were in July. He knew not the views of many members on this point: he had stated his own views, and there he was content to leave it. Something had been said about the "exigencies of the service," he did not see that the exigencies of the service would be affected if that House were to sit until the middle of

next month. If there were any members who desired to go away, on business or pleasure, let them go if they thought fit. How many of them there were he did not know; the Governor had informed them that he was going himself, and that he would be glad if some of them would accompany him. Let those who desired to do so, go. No one wanted to prevent them. But should that House not be in session to receive this important despatch, which they were all, as he thought, so eager to hear? Prompt action, possibly, might be required on the part of that House. Supposing the despatch should be entirely favorable, in accord with the views of the majority of the House, and in accord with the views which the Governor had sent to the Secretary of State and upon which they had been told a bill had been drafted, what would there be to prevent that bill being instantly introduced? A few hours would be sufficient to have it put into shape, if the Secretary of State assented to the views set forth in the Governor's despatch, for they had been informed that a draft bill was being prepared months ago. The bill might be discussed, and the matter would go to the country, a new Council elected, which might meet in June, and the bill sent home to be placed before the House of Commons at its session next year (1888). On the other hand, supposing the despatch contained matters which the majority of them considered unfavorable to their views, should that Council not be sitting, there and then, in order to decide what steps it would adopt, or what communication it might wish to transmit to the Secretary of State on the subject, in order that no delay might take place. But if that House was going to adjourn until the middle of March, or April Fool's Day, he thought they would be doing—although he observed that a majority of members intended to do so; but he was only speaking his own views—he thought they would be doing a very wrong and improper thing. They were further told that February was a month in which it was not so comfortable to transact the business of the colony in that House, the weather was so hot; and that it would be cooler and more comfortable later in the season. That was a remark that came from an hon. member

who sat there as the leader of the Opposition—he would say nothing on that point. Were they not sitting there now at a hot part of the year. They had not been prorogued at their own request, or with their own consent, when they were sitting during a cooler season of the year. They knew nothing about it, or what the reason was—no one had condescended to give them a reason. The House was prorogued until the hot part of the year, whether it suited the convenience of hon. members or not; and they were now told it would be more comfortable and cooler later on. He felt depressed, he felt shocked, that that Assembly, which he thought would have pursued this matter with vigor and with determination should think that now matters should have been so arranged that the House should adjourn, of its own free will, at this important crisis in the history of the colony, and that members should wish to go away to Sydney, or elsewhere, when they were now in session, and many members had come, at great inconvenience, from distant parts of the territory, to do their work. He felt, as he had already said, depressed that the present state of things should have come about. He had raised his voice against it; he was aware it would produce no effect. He was aware there was accord between the benches on the opposite and on this side of the House, with regard to this question of adjournment, and with regard to the passing of these supplies. He had risen to protest against it, because he thought the House, in the course it was now adopting, was not taking a course which was for the good of the people of the colony.

MR. KEANE said it seemed to him to be a clear case of "Hobson's choice" with them, as regards this vote on account. They must either go through the Estimates-in-chief or grant these provisional supplies, and he thought they ought to decide at once which course they intended to pursue.

MR. MORRISON said he regarded the vote on account asked for, simply as an extension of credit for three months. He did not think it was fair to try to insinuate that the Government had themselves got themselves into this position. The Estimates had been laid before the

House days ago, as soon as the session opened, but the new tariff necessitated the postponement of their consideration. If he had his own way, he should feel inclined to throw the whole onus of spending this money upon the applicant, granting each department the vote in full, and, when the three months was up, having treated him in a fair way, they might find that possibly one or two items might be reduced. He thought it was much better under a constitution like this to show one's trust in the Government of the country, on the thorough understanding that the whole thing should be carried out faithfully and properly.

In reply to the CHAIRMAN, several hon. members expressed a wish that the items of the Vote on Account should be taken *seriatim*.

Item 1, *Governor's Establishment*, £169:
Agreed to.

Item 2, *Legislative Council*, £282:
Agreed to.

Item 3, *Colonial Secretary's Department*, £441:

MR. MARMION moved that the item be reduced by the sum of £18 15s. He observed that the amount asked for was one-fourth of the vote on the Estimates for 1888, and not one-fourth of the vote for the current year. He noticed that the Assistant Colonial Secretary, who was only drawing £450 this year, was down for £500 next year.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): I have already assured hon. members that there is no intention to give any increase of salary to any officer of this or any other department during the first quarter of the year. The Assistant Colonial Secretary will only draw £450.

MR. MARMION withdrew his motion.

Item 4, *Treasury*, £335:

Agreed to.

Item 5, *Audit Department*, £335:

Agreed to.

Item 6, *Surveys*, £4,804:

MR. SHOLL said he noticed from the Estimates-in-chief that it was proposed to have some fresh appointments in this department; and he, for one, intended hereafter, when the time came, most strongly to oppose it. He did not know whether the department was overmanned or not, but he knew this: that the way

in which certain officers of the department wasted the time of the country, in going to their offices at all hours of the day, returning from lunch as late as 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and, as soon as the clock struck four, their hats were taken off the peg, and they cleared off. He took this opportunity of entering his strong protest against—he was going to say the head of the department, but he was away—against whoever was responsible for seeing to the proper performance of their duties by these officers; and when the time came for dealing with the department generally, he should raise his voice against any proposal to increase the staff.

Mr. MARMION said he noticed there was a large amount on the Estimates for surveys in the Central Districts. Looking at the large quantity of land locked up from selection in this part of the colony, it appeared to him this large amount would not be required. He should like to know whether anything like this had been actually expended this year. They ought to be guided by what had really been expended, and not by what had been voted. He would move that the vote be reduced by £804, bringing it down to £4,000, which he thought ought to be quite sufficient for the next three months.

Mr. KEANE said he should second that. He thought the sum asked for was too high, under the circumstances, and he noticed that it was calculated on the basis of next year's vote, instead of (as they were told) on this year's vote.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said he did not know whether there ought to be a reduction or not in this particular vote, for the reason named; but he would again point out that hon. members were not committing themselves to the Estimates for the year. All these items were subject to possible reduction when the Estimates were brought in. No diminution of these votes could affect the vote for the year. Therefore it was that he submitted it was unnecessary to go minutely into these items, as they did not at all commit the House to the annual Estimates, nor commit the Government to spending the money. It appeared to him to be simply waste of time to go on discussing all these petty details on the present occasion.

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES: The course I have taken is in

accordance with the wish of the committee. If the Government bench think I have acted improperly, they can move me out of the chair.

Mr. A. FORREST said he quite agreed with the hon. member for Fremantle with reference to surveys in the Central Districts. He thought that £7,000 was an enormous sum to ask for these surveys next year, in view of the very large area of land locked up for railway purposes. He thought the amount might well be reduced to £5,000, or £1,000 for each district. As to the remarks of the hon. member for Carnarvon about watching public officers going and coming to their work, he thought it was beneath a member of that House to do such a thing, for it was to be supposed that the head of the department looked after his men, and saw that they did not waste their time nor the time of the country. If they could not trust the head of a department to do that, they ought to get rid of him.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said, with regard to the proposal to reduce this vote, he rose with a considerable feeling of independence to speak on the subject, as he was not in the House when the present Land Regulations were passed. He did not believe in them himself; he believed they were worse than those that preceded them. But they had not yet had a fair trial, for this reason: provision was made in them for setting apart certain lands as agricultural areas, which necessitated survey before selection. Therefore a larger vote than usual would be required for surveys. As he had already said, he did not approve of the regulations himself, but he should be sorry to hamper or fetter them in their operation in any way. It was necessary, he understood from the acting head of the department, that a large sum should be expended during next year in surveying these areas, in order that the regulations affecting them may be brought into operation. Therefore in the interests of the Surveyor General, who would be amongst them shortly, he must deprecate the proposed reduction. Although he did not believe, himself, they would work, he thought they ought to have every fair play.

Mr. RICHARDSON pointed out that

there was some danger in reducing this departmental vote, as the reduction might be made in the expenditure upon surveys, and not in the clerical staff; and he need hardly point out that to curtail surveys was to curtail settlement. If they could ensure that the vote for surveys would be left intact, he would side with the proposed reduction.

MR. MARMION said the responsibility would rest upon the Government and not upon that House as to how the proposed reduction should be effected, so as to injure in the least possible degree the public service.

The motion to reduce the vote by £804 was agreed to.

Item 7, *Customs Department*, £2,024:

Agreed to.

Item 8, *Works and Railways Department*, £15,196:

MR. PARKER said he could not help thinking there was room for a great deal of reduction in this department, and, if the Commissioner would take the matter in hand, he might bring forward estimates considerably reduced when the House next met. We had a great many officials apparently concerned in the working of our railways—he did not know whether they were all required; and he would ask the Commissioner whether it would not be possible to reduce their number. Several of them were drawing large salaries, and it did strike him as somewhat strange that so many highly-paid officials should be required to look after our few railways. The General Manager was also intended to be the Maintenance Engineer; still at York they had a Resident Engineer and also in other parts of the colony, and he should like to know whether all these officials were really necessary, looking at the comparatively small amount of traffic there was on our railways as yet. There were no public works of any magnitude going on to necessitate the services of so many highly-paid officials in connection with the department. It seemed to him strange again that it should be necessary to have two accountants attached to the department, each with his assistant or clerk. Could the Commissioner not do with one? It appeared to him there were other reductions which might be made in this department, which was growing into a portentous size, and he

hoped other hon. members besides himself would not hesitate to give expression to their opinions on the subject, with the view of inducing the Commissioner to take into consideration whether he could not effect a reduction. The department was really expanding into something enormous, and if it went on at this rate, with no corresponding increase of traffic, it would soon ruin the colony. He would appeal to the Commissioner whether he could not, within the next few months, make a considerable reduction.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said of course this was no new thing, this was not the first time he had heard similar remarks made in that House. It was all very well to talk about the cost of working our railways. The proof of the pudding was in the eating, and he would say, without fear of contradiction, that the Government railways in Western Australia were worked with a comparatively much smaller staff, and worked at half the expense of railways in the other colonies. Mile per mile he knew of no railways in the world worked with so small a staff as the railways of this colony. The hon. member objected to what he called the large staff of highly-paid officials, and he referred to the General Manager and Maintenance Engineer, and the Resident Engineers. The General Manager, Mr. Mason, was also engaged as Maintenance Engineer, but had nothing to do with construction; whereas the Resident Engineer, Mr. Parry, was solely engaged for construction purposes, and paid out of loan money. The only other Resident Engineer was at the North, and he also was paid out of loan. The railways made had been creditably and economically done, simply because these Resident Engineers were appointed and paid as they had been. It was never intended that the one engineer, the Maintenance Engineer, should do the work these officers were doing, and travel about like a bagman. As to the two accountants, one of them had to do with public works constructed out of loan, and was under the Engineer-in-Chief; the other accountant had nothing to do with the railways open for traffic. But he could assure the committee that he and his staff were so fully occupied that it would be impossible for him to do with less. If

the hon. member would do him the honor of visiting his office, he should be glad to show him what they all had to do, and he was sure the hon. member would agree with him that they had as much as they possibly could do. As to reducing the expenditure, he had no doubt he could reduce the expenditure, but it must be either by running a less number of trains or impairing the efficiency of the service. "A penny wise and pound foolish" policy in working our railways might lead to expense which would cost the colony in one short five minutes more that could be effected by all the reductions and retrenchment that could be effected in years.

MR. A. FORREST said of course members could not criticise these Estimates without being more or less personal. It was known, as everything else was in a small place like this, that the present accountant was an officer who had simply been a clerk all his life. It required a man who had been trained to the work to properly discharge the duties of an accountant, especially in such an intricate department as this.

MR. MARMION said the department was certainly assuming gigantic proportions, and the expenditure was really startling to the uninitiated. In this respect the head of the department of course had a great advantage over members of the House, who were non-professional men, and they felt rather a dread of being (vulgarly speaking) sat upon by the hon. gentleman. But that was not going to deter him from saying what he wished to say, and that was this—he hoped the Commissioner would endeavor to make such reductions as could be done without injury to the public service, or with as little injury as could possibly be done. He felt sure that if the hon. gentleman could not see in detail where reductions might be made, that House would be inclined to move a reduction in the lump sum voted, and let him do the best he can with it. No doubt this was an important department, requiring great care in its management and working; at the same time, it was plain to any observant man that there were economies that might be practised, and reductions that might be made, and increases that need not be recommended. Neither he nor any other member of that House was

desirous that these reductions should be made at the expense of the travelling public, nor was there any desire to adopt a cheese-paring policy. Their only object was to have the department, which, as he had already said, was growing into enormous dimensions, worked with economy. He had no doubt that the hon. gentleman at the head of the department, when he saw the determination which existed on this side of the House to effect that economy, would set to work with that zeal which he had always displayed in the public service, and be in a position to show them when they met again how these reductions might be effected, without endangering the safety of the public or impairing the efficiency of the department.

MR. SHENTON was sure it was not the wish of any member to interfere with this vote in a way to endanger the lives or limbs of the travelling public; but he thought, when they found that a sum of £1,600 had to be transferred from loan account to general revenue in order to meet the salaries of officers, it did call for some comment and inquiry on their part. As to the cost of working our railways compared with the cost elsewhere, anyone who had travelled in the other colonies must admit that the traffic on our lines was nothing to be compared with the traffic on the railways there.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright): That has nothing to do with it. It is taken per train mile.

MR. SHENTON, continuing, said our receipts were nothing in comparison with the receipts on those lines. The members of that House simply desired to make suggestions.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright): I am sorry it is impossible for me to receive them.

MR. SHENTON said they knew very well there would be no loan for public works raised next year and no further railways constructed; therefore there would be no necessity to keep up a staff of Resident Engineers for the work of supervision. He was sure that if the head of the department, with his known professional skill, and his able Traffic Manager at Perth, would render their

assistance, reductions could be effected without in any way injuring the service. He thought himself that if the post of General Manager were done away with, things would work more smoothly than they did with that officer coming between the head of the department and the Traffic Manager. If the office were abolished the General Manager might be appointed Inspecting Engineer over all our railways, and the work of the department he was sure would be carried on more smoothly. As to the accountant referred to, the intention of the House was that he should be a professional accountant; instead of that they found another clerk transferred to this important office. [The COMMISSIONER: Temporarily.] He thought it required a trained accountant, or some one possessing professional knowledge, for such a position. He thought the head of the department should have more power than he now had of transferring officers, and of engaging those who had been trained for the particular work required. From what he knew of the Commissioner he was sure he would do all he could to meet the wishes of hon. members, and work the department as economically as he could.

MR. KEANE said it was not his intention to say anything on behalf of the Commissioner, who, he was sure, was quite capable of taking care of himself. But hon. members should bear in mind that his position was rather a peculiar one; he had not the power of dismissing many of these officers, and he thought if that House were to place in his hands, as Commissioner of Railways, the entire charge and control of these railways, including the appointment and dismissal of all officers, and give him a certain amount of money to work them, the present Commissioner was the right man in the right place. As to the expense of working our railways, it must be borne in mind that the way to estimate the cost was not by taking the traffic on half a dozen miles, but to take the whole length. We had miles of railway yielding he might say nothing, while other sections were paying "hand over fist." What they had to do was to take the train mileage, and, if they did that, he defied anyone to find railways worked cheaper than they were in this colony.

If our railways were placed entirely in the hands of the Commissioner, he (Mr. Keane) himself could point out many officers who could be done away with. But at present the Commissioner could not dismiss them without reference to a higher power, who perhaps would not be disposed to sanction the dismissal. In this way the hands of the Commissioner himself were tied, and they must not expect too much from him. It appeared to him they ought not to cut down this vote unless they were prepared to give the Commissioner these additional powers. From what he had seen of railways elsewhere, he thought the railways here were conducted as well as it was possible for any railways to be conducted. It was for that House and not for the Commissioner, with his present limited powers, to decide whether certain officers should go or not. He would say again, he believed it would be a great advantage and a great saving to the country if the railways were placed solely and entirely in the hands of the Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said it was quite refreshing to receive such words of praise, coming after the words of another kind that had fallen from previous speakers. He was always ready to receive suggestions, so long as they were practical suggestions; but he was afraid some of the suggestions made that evening were impracticable. If the hon. member for Perth or the hon. member for Fremantle would point out to him where reductions could be made, without at the same time reducing the efficiency of the department and the convenience of the public, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to carry out such reductions. It appeared to him that the mere fact of cutting down expenditure must involve the cutting down of the number of trains run, and reducing the present efficiency of the service. Of course it was possible to cut down the expenditure to a minimum. They might reduce the number of engines running to one, and have only one train a week—which would be an excellent block system. Or they might be reduced to one train a year, in which the Commissioner himself should ride. Any sensible practical suggestion he would be glad to listen to, but he must

not be expected to do impossibilities. He would draw the attention of the committee to the fact that the amount here asked for was only on the basis of the vote for the current year, although in addition to the lines now provided for they would have to work the Bunbury line; there was also the Cossack and Roebourne tramway; and the Telephone Department.

The vote was agreed to, intact.

Item 9, *Postal and Telegraph*, £10,551:

MR. PARKER called attention to the item "Gratuity to Commissioner of Police, £50." When the House voted this, some years ago, it was in consideration of the Superintendent of Police having to look after the Royal Mail services, but it was never intended that it should be continued. At that time the Superintendent received a much less salary than the Commissioner received at the present time; and he thought, considering the circumstances of the colony, they might well strike out this amount next year. He hoped, at any rate, it would not be spent until the House met again. He noticed that the Postmaster General's estimate for his department next year was £40,465, as compared with £42,201 for the present year. The vote now asked for was based upon the larger amount, and he thought it would bear some reduction. He would move that it be reduced by £551.

Motion agreed to.

Item 10, *Land Titles Department*, £325; Item 11, *Medical Department*, £3,197:

Agreed to.

Item 12, *Harbor and Light Department*, £1,909:

MR. MARMION said the vote asked for this department next year was over £500 less than this year, and he thought this provisional vote might be cut down accordingly. He would move that the item be reduced by £129.

Passed.

Item 13, *Administration of Justice*, £4,032:

Agreed to.

Item 14, *Police Department*, £11,752:

MR. PARKER said he rose to propose a reduction in this vote, for this reason: he thought if the Commissioner of Police took the matter in hand there could be a considerable saving made in the cost of

working this department. When he noticed, from the return which had just been laid on the table, that out of 186 constables employed throughout the whole colony, from Wyndham to Eucla, no less than 58 were stationed in the two central towns—38 at Perth and 20 at Fremantle—he thought the proportion was outrageous; and he could not but think that one half that number would be ample. He thought it was only reasonable that the outlying districts should have as much police protection as the colony could afford, but why they should require all this number in Perth and Fremantle he could not imagine. It could not be for the prevention or detection of crime, for we were a peaceable law-abiding community; and, if the Government would only look after their gaols and their inmates a little more strictly, there would hardly be any necessity for policemen at all. One scarcely ever heard of any serious crime. [The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That shows the efficiency of the police.] People in Perth could go to rest with their doors and windows opened, without fear of molestation; and what was the use of this whole army of constables? Judging by the police reports the only offences committed were confined to drunken cases and squabbles, in which the same characters appeared over and over again, a few old men and old women. Why should we want 38 full-blown policemen to look after these wretched old drunkards? He thought it was a libel upon his constituents; and, on that account, and in the hope that the Commissioner would take this matter in hand, and make considerable reductions, he would move that the present vote be reduced by £1,752, which would give him £10,000 for the next quarter, or at the rate of £40,000 a year. He thought £1 per head of the population of the colony was quite ample; and, if the department could not be carried on at that, the Commissioner of Police was not the man he took him to be.

MR. SCOTT said he quite agreed with his hon. colleague in this matter. He thought the Police Department did require some pruning. It appeared to him it was a department with regard to which they might fairly vote a certain lump sum, and leave it to the head of the

department to do the best he could with it. He thought that would be better than for that House to interfere with the internal administration of the department.

MR. RICHARDSON expressed a hope that it would be intimated pretty plainly to the Commissioner that any reduction effected in the staff was to be made in the central towns, and not in the outlying districts, otherwise they might have this pruning business conducted in a way which would not at all meet with the approval of the House.

The motion to reduce the vote to £10,000 was agreed to.

Item 15, *Gaols*, £3,818 :

MR. VENN moved that the item be reduced by £155, so as to bring the amount down to one-fourth of the vote for 1888.

MR. MARMION understood it was proposed to reduce the expenditure, by amalgamating the two prisons?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): After the 1st April. The hon. member may rest assured that no expenditure will be incurred that is not absolutely necessary, in the meantime.

The vote was reduced as proposed.

Item 16, *Rottnest Native Prison*, £1,026:

MR. MARMION moved that this item be reduced by £183.

MR. KEANE supported the reduction, and said he would be glad to see the vote struck out altogether. This native prison cost the country over £4,000 a year, and all they got from it last year was about £600. It would be far better if the whole establishment were broken up, and the native prisoners employed in their own districts at some useful work. They did nothing at Rottnest, apparently, but eat and drink—the majority of them.

The vote was reduced as moved.

Item 17, *Printing Department*, £1,050 :

MR. MARMION moved that the vote be reduced by £110, so as to bring it down to one-fourth of the amount placed on the Estimates for 1888.

Agreed to.

Item 18, *Inspection of Sheep*, £441 :

MR. A. FORREST asked whether these inspectors were to be kept on at the public expense, when their districts had been declared clean? No contribution was levied from the flock-owners after a dis-

trict was declared clean, and these inspectors then had to be paid out of general revenue.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the matter had been under the consideration of the Board of Advice, under the Scab Act; and probably, when he brought down the Estimates for next year, there would be some proposals made. It must be borne in mind that we could not immediately remove an inspector the moment the district was declared clean; a certain time must elapse before the contributions on account were allowed to cease.

MR. RICHARDSON pointed out that there was this danger: so long as scab existed in the colony, and sheep were allowed to travel from one district to another there was always an element of danger, and a possibility of an outbreak. He thought they should exercise some caution in dealing with this question, and not rashly reduce the inspectorial staff.

MR. SHENTON thought a great deal of the work might be done by honorary inspectors, as at the North, and the paid staff reduced.

MR. MARMION thought there was room for reduction in this item. They seemed to have a large staff, and nothing for them to do, in many of the districts.

MR. HENSMAN said it appeared that at present we were spending a lot of money. Why did not someone propose a reduction in the vote? The committee were voting thousands and thousands of pounds away with a celerity never known in that House before. He could do nothing alone in the matter. He was opposed altogether to any of these items being voted, but he was not a Don Quixote, to tilt against every windmill. But he protested against this manner of voting away the people's money, and running through the Estimates.

MR. MORRISON thought it would be a mistake to abolish these offices the moment an inspector managed to get his district clean. It would simply be a premium for these officers not to complete the work of eradication, if they thought their services would be dispensed with once they succeeded in getting rid of scab in their district.

MR. A. FORREST hoped the Colonial Secretary would be able to make a large

reduction in this vote when they met again in March.

The item was then put and passed.

Item 19, *Educational*, £2,737; Item 20, *Registry Department*, £90:

Agreed to, without comment.

Item 21, *Poor Relief*, £2,413:

MR. A. FORREST: Does the Colonial Secretary think that in the present state of the colony this will be sufficient?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): I hope so. The greatest charge upon the vote is during the winter months.

Item 22, *Aboriginal Department*, £813;

Item 23, *Government Storekeeper*, £242:

Agreed to, without comment.

Item 24, *Government Gardens*, £155:

MR. MARMION moved to reduce the vote by £30, so as to bring it down to one-fourth of the sum placed on the Estimates for 1888.

Agreed to.

Item 25, *Volunteers*, £1,110:

MR. SHENTON said the vote for this department for 1888 was only £3,496; he would therefore move that the present item be reduced by £250.

Agreed to.

Item 26, *Mining Department*, £283;

Item 27, *Special Coast Survey*, £625:

Agreed to, without comment.

Item 28, *Works and Buildings*, £6,000:

MR. SHENTON thought there were some of these works that might be postponed until the House met again; such as the proposed alterations to the Central Gaol, £1,000; Gascoyne police cells, £1,000; and Jarman island lighthouse, £2,200.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said it would be necessary to proceed at once with the alterations to the Central Gaol, as it was proposed to transfer the female prisoners from Perth on the 1st April, and there was no accommodation for them at all at Fremantle prison. It was proposed to convert the old prison hospital into a female ward, and build a wall around it. The lighthouse on Jarman island also ought to be taken in hand at once; the material was lying there now. He was quite willing, if hon. members wished, to postpone all the other buildings, until they met again; but these two works ought to be proceeded with, without delay. Of course there

would be the usual general repairs to buildings required during the quarter.

MR. A. FORREST was opposed to any cutting down of this vote. There were lots of people without employment, and the sooner some public works were commenced the better.

MR. MARMION said it must be understood that in voting this item they were not committing themselves to any particular work enumerated in the Estimates-in-chief. He thought it would cause no inconvenience if the vote were reduced. He took it for granted that the Government having withdrawn the Re-appropriation Bill, the works there referred to would be proceeded with.

MR. SHENTON moved that the vote be reduced by £2,000. The Director of Public Works said he was quite willing to postpone all the items except the Central Gaol alterations and the lighthouse on Jarman island, which would only require £3,200.

MR. SHOLL called attention to the question of the necessity for an improved water supply for the town of Carnarvon. The present supply was not fit for human consumption, and it was very necessary that this work should be taken in hand without delay. There was £700 down for it on the Estimates, and he hoped no opposition would be offered to that money being expended as soon as possible.

MR. KEANE said, if they voted more than was absolutely necessary now, they might find that the money had been expended upon works which perhaps they did not care for, unless they specified each particular work they wished to have carried out between this and next session.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) concurred as to the necessity of proceeding with the water supply at Carnarvon, which could now be done and prove a benefit, whereas if they waited until March many months would be lost. There was another item, "Geraldton water supply, £200," which he thought ought to be proceeded with as soon as possible. Beyond these two works, and those he had already named—the alterations to the Central Gaol and the lighthouse on Jarman island—he was not aware that there was any pressing necessity at pre-

sent for a further vote, except for ordinary repairs.

MR. RANDELL said he felt very unwilling to make any remarks upon the subject before the committee. He thought they were going on wrong lines altogether. Hon. members were taking on themselves responsibilities that ought to rest upon the Government. He was sorry in one sense that the Chairman had ruled that they were at liberty to deal with all these items separately. Although there was a feeling in favor of retrenchment, he thought all sensible men agreed that this retrenchment should be carried out with some degree of discretion. He thought this remark applied especially to public works. It must be borne in mind that they were not now discussing the Estimates, and he hoped the hon. member for Toodyay would not press his motion. He believed there was a great want of employment among the working classes, and it would be a great pity to cripple the department more than was absolutely necessary.

MR. MARMION asked the Director of Public Works whether the money for a lighthouse on Jarman island (£2,200) had been voted by that House?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said it was part of the improvements at Cossack intended to have been carried out, out of that portion of the 1884 Loan, but the amount proved insufficient.

MR. MARMION said they were not now dealing with the various works on the Estimates specifically, and he presumed this would not authorise the Director in undertaking any new works that had not been authorised by the House.

The committee divided on the motion to reduce the vote by £2,000—

Ayes	8
Noes	13

Majority against	...	5
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MR. Hensman	MR. Congdon
MR. Keane	MR. A. Forrest
MR. Layman	Hon. Sir M. Fraser
MR. Marmion	MR. James
MR. Pearce	MR. McEae
MR. Shall	MR. Morrison
MR. Venn	MR. Parker
MR. Shenton (Teller.)	MR. Randell
	MR. Richardson
	MR. Scott
	Hon. J. G. Lee-Steele
	Hon. C. N. Warton
	Hon. J. A. Wright (Teller.)

Item 29, *Roads and Bridges*, £2,500 : Agreed to, without comment.

Item 30, *Ecclesiastical Grant*, £886 :

MR. A. FORREST said this was an item he should like to see expunged altogether, and, if he thought he would have any support, he would move that it be struck out. In fact, he should do so. He begged to move that this item be omitted.

MR. MARMION did not suppose the hon. member was in earnest. [Mr. Forrest: Amn't I?] He thought it would be a grievous mistake on the part of that Council or of the Government to abolish this grant at the present stage of the colony's history.

The motion to strike out the item was negatived, on the voices.

Item 31, *Literary, Scientific, and Agricultural Grant*, £263 ; Item 32, *Pensions*, £736 :

Agreed to, without comment.

Item 33, *Revenue Services, N.W. Coast*, £500 :

MR. PARKER said he noticed this was calculated on the vote for 1888, which was considerably in excess of the vote for the current year.

MR. SHOLL said he should oppose this item. The Colonial Secretary, when making his budget speech, said he thought the Home Government had acted very generously in handing over its share of the *Meda* to this colony. He considered the *Meda* quite an unsuitable boat for the purposes of a revenue cutter, and that, instead of being of any service to the colony, it would turn out to be another "white elephant." They were now asked for an additional £800 a year for this revenue service, although the vessel to be used in the work was quite unfit for it, being of too deep a draught. He thought, before the Government had put the colony to the expense of fitting out this vessel, they might have obtained the opinion of that House on the subject. He moved that the item be reduced by £200, reducing it to £300, which would be exactly one-fourth of the grant for the present year. It appeared that when it suited the Government to take the vote for next year as their basis—that was, when the vote was larger than it was for the present year—they did so ; but if the vote for the present year was larger than

the vote for next year, they took this year's vote as their guide.

The committee divided on the motion to reduce the vote, the numbers being—

Ayes	9
Noes	10

Majority against ... 1

AYES.
Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Hensman
Mr. Keane
Mr. Layman
Mr. McRae
Mr. Pearse
Mr. Richardson
Mr. Venn
Mr. Sholl (Teller.)

NOES.
Hon. Sir M. Fraser
Mr. James
Mr. Marmion
Mr. Morrison
Mr. Parker
Mr. Randell
Mr. Scott
Hon. J. G. Lee Steere
Hon. C. N. Warton
Hon. J. A. Wright (Teller.)

Item 34, *Central Board of Health*, £80:

MR. SHENTON said he saw that it was proposed to give the Secretary of the Board a salary of £200 a year; he thought £100 was quite enough.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said that at present the officer in question only drew at the rate of £100 a year. This was not a Government question, but the question of making provision for carrying out an Act passed by that House. It was the proposal of the Central Board of Health.

MR. SCOTT said he observed that the same officer was put down also as Chief Inspector of Nuisances. All he could say was that whoever did the work in Perth, it was more inefficiently done than when the late inspector, Mr. Halliday, used to do it. Either he could have no nose, or he did not make use of it. For his own part he did not know what this officer had to do. He (Mr. Scott) had supported the Public Health Bill with all his weight, but, until the work was carried out more efficiently than it was at present, he should oppose this high salary. There was a Local Board in Perth, who appointed their own officers and paid them.

MR. PARKER asked the Colonial Secretary whether he thought this officer had an hour's work a day as secretary? It would have been far better if the Central Board had given the post to some under-paid clerk as a supplement to his income, instead of making a fresh appointment, and coming there and asking them to vote £200 a year.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said that when hon. members brought into operation a statute re-

quiring certain machinery to work it, and when the central body represented that it was necessary they should have a secretary, the Government had no course open but to come to that House and ask it to make provision for carrying out the Act, its own handiwork. The chairman of the Board informed him that if they did not have a proper staff they would have to resign.

MR. SHENTON thought £100 was ample salary for all there was to do. He moved that this item be reduced by £30, leaving it at £50, or at the rate of £200 a year, which would leave £100 for the salary of the secretary, and £100 for contingencies.

MR. RANDELL pointed out that the object of passing the Public Health Act was that there should be a Central Board, for the whole colony, and it was intended that the Board should have a competent person for their secretary and chief inspector, and that to a certain extent he should be a professional man. He thought it was necessary that this official should be fairly well paid at any rate. But he had expected before now that the Board would have promulgated directions for the guidance of the local boards with regard to matters of hygiene and sanitation. A feeling was growing in his mind adverse to these unpaid public bodies; he thought to a great extent they were a failure. He thought the members of such boards, if the Act was to be carried out in anything like its integrity, must devote a very considerable amount of their time to the performance of their duties, and it was hardly fair to expect them to do so without some honorarium.

MR. SCOTT did not think the present occupant of the office could be looked upon as a professional or competent man for such a post, and therefore, if the motion was pressed, he should certainly support it.

The proposal to reduce the vote was affirmed, on the voices.

Item 35, *Refunds*, £155; Item 36, *Immigration*, £4,000; Item 37, *Geological Survey*, £250:

Agreed to, without comment.

Item 38, *Miscellaneous*, £5,300:

MR. VENN thought there was one item amongst the miscellaneous charges which might well be struck off, and that

was the vote for the Queen's Plate, at Perth and Roebourne. If they studied the annual reports and balance sheets of these turf clubs they would see that they did not require this support out of the public purse. Their funds were in a flourishing condition, whereas the funds of the colony just now were in anything but a flourishing condition. He should certainly move next year that the vote be struck out.

MR. PARKER said the Queen's Plate vote had appeared on the Estimates from time immemorial, and he should have thought it was the last vote anyone would have taken objection to.

MR. A. FORREST said he should strongly oppose the vote for the North at any rate being struck out. It was a young club, and it was an enterprising one, and deserved every encouragement.

THE COMMISSIONER OF TITLES (Mr. J. C. H. James) thought this "Agitation" would be of very short "Duration" indeed.

MR. VENN moved that the item be reduced by £100.

MR. LAYMAN said he had much pleasure in supporting it. He had looked upon this Queen's Plate vote for many years past as a most unnecessary expenditure of public money. When it was first granted, the W.A. Turf Club was in a very different position from what it is now; and he thought the time had arrived when both votes might be discontinued.

The motion was negatived.

MR. SHOLL called attention to the item "Destruction of Wild Dogs." Last year the expenditure under this head was £1,300, and £1,200 was asked for next year. This had been going on for many years now, and he thought the squatting element, especially in the Southern portion of the colony, had been assisted long enough. At any rate he thought the amount paid for a dog's tail at the South should be reduced to 5s., the same as at the North. He could not see the logic of the present arrangement at all—paying 10s. in one part of the colony and 5s. in another part for the same thing.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the reason was because it was much more difficult to catch these wild dogs in the more settled districts; they became so cute and cunning.

MR. RICHARDSON said these animals were a great pest and caused a frightful destruction amongst flocks. The mere fact of £1,300 having been paid in rewards last year showed that some thousands of them had been destroyed, and showed what a large number of them there were infesting the country. He thought there was not a better vote on the Estimates.

MR. McRAE reminded the Government of the sum of £2,000 voted last session for providing water on the stock route between Ashburton and Murchison.

MR. RANDELL said he observed with satisfaction that there was a large reduction in the item "Travelling expenses of officials"—which in his opinion was retrenchment in the right direction.

The House then resumed.

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES reported that the committee had considered the vote on account, and had agreed to resolutions granting supplies amounting to £86,831 for the first three months of the year.

The report was adopted.

MR. HENSMAN: I presume the Government intend to bring in some bill to legalise these votes.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): I can only say that every item of expenditure must be included in the Appropriation Act, and we will do so at the proper time, which is not now. It will be done when the Estimates for the year are passed. There is not a single instance on record for many years past in which money has not been spent upon resolutions of the House, and without a bill; and in England these resolutions have the force of law. The Government do not intend to bring in a bill to appropriate these provisional votes until the full Estimates have been passed. If we did so, we should be doing wrong.

TARIFF BILL, 1888.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser), with leave, without notice, moved the first reading of a bill to repeal the Tariff Act, 1882, and to make other provisions in lieu thereof.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said he proposed asking the House to agree to the suspension of

the standing orders with the view of passing the bill through its remaining stages that evening. The schedules had been carefully considered in committee, and the bill was a mere embodiment of the conclusions arrived at by the committee. Importers were looking forward with great interest to the new tariff coming into operation, and it was very desirable that the Government should be in a position as soon as possible to calculate what the prospects of the revenue were under the revised tariff, and for that reason he thought it was desirable that it should come into operation with the new year.

Question put—That the standing orders be suspended.

MR. SHENTON opposed the motion. He thought the hon. gentleman would find there would be a great deal of opposition to the schedule in committee, and that it was proposed to go to a division upon many of the articles, the duty upon which was considered too high.

SIR T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL said that beyond the question of details there was the question of principle involved. There were many members—but unfortunately they were in a minority—who disapproved of the action of the Government and of the House in committing the colony in this way to a policy of protection, which was a most serious matter indeed. It was his intention, when the second reading came on, to move, as a protest against the action taken by the Government and a majority of the House, that the bill be read a second time that day six months; and he believed there were a certain number of members who would support him. In no other colony would such a bill be passed without the opinion of the country being taken upon it; and he thought the action of the House in committing the country to a protective policy, without giving the constituencies an opportunity of expressing an opinion, was a highly improper one.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said he had no intention of discussing the abstract principle of free trade or protection, but he submitted that the fiscal policy embodied in this bill could not be regarded as a policy of protection. Without entering into that question now, he would remind hon.

members that there was an honorable understanding come to in committee on the report that they should discuss the schedules once for all. The bill now before them was precisely as passed in committee. Although a great many of the duties imposed were protective in their nature, they had not been put on as carrying out a policy of protection. There was a great deal of free trade in the bill, in the shape of admitting raw material free of duty. The revenue also had been studied and considered.

MR. HENSMAN drew attention to the state of the House. Was there a quorum?

THE SPEAKER said there was not a quorum, but according to the standing orders he could not adjourn the House until five minutes had elapsed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): I beg to move that the House at its rising adjourn until the 15th March.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman cannot do that, unless there is a quorum.

Shortly afterwards a quorum was formed, and

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton), continuing his remarks, said hon. members had already had their discussions and their divisions upon all these items, and what was the object of going all over the same ground again. It was not anticipated that the revenue would suffer from the proposed changes; on the contrary they expected a considerable addition from the restoration of the 10 per cent. schedule to its original position of 12½ per cent. He thought it was very desirable that they should commence the new year with the new tariff, so that by the time they met in March they would have an opportunity of seeing how it worked.

The motion for the suspension of the standing orders was negatived.

The House adjourned at a quarter to twelve o'clock, p.m.