

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 29th January, 1891.

Members calling for returns—Clearing of York-Yilgarn Road—Amounts paid to Delegates to England re Constitution Bill—Smuggling on the Northern Coast—Loan Bill: first reading—Privileges of Parliament Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7-30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

CALLING FOR RETURNS.

THE SPEAKER: Before calling upon Mr. Throssell to put the question standing in his name (asking for certain returns), I wish to call the attention of members to an irregularity both in that question and the question put in similar terms by Mr. Keane (also calling for a return). Mr. Keane's question, since it was handed in, has been altered by my direction into the form in which these questions to Ministers ought to be put; that is, by a notice of motion. Members should give notice of their intention to move for these returns, and not ask Ministers to furnish them without giving the House and the Government an opportunity of objecting, if they desire, to such returns being prepared. Questions calling for returns should be put in the form of a motion, because Ministers may object to a return being laid on the table, and the proper course is to give them an opportunity of doing so. Therefore, when a member wishes for the production of returns, he must give notice of his intention to move for such returns, so that the Government, if they think the preparation of the return will cause unnecessary expense, or there be other reasons why it should not be furnished, may have an opportunity of opposing the motion.

CLEARING ROAD FROM YORK TO YILGARN.

MR. THROSSELL, in accordance with notice, asked the Minister of Works the total amount expended in clearing the line of road from York to Yilgarn, the distance cleared and remaining to be cleared, why such clearing was discontinued, and when the work would be resumed?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied: The total amount of expenditure on the York-Yilgarn Road to 31st December last (the latest date to which accounts have been received) is £2,704 5s. 10d., and deducting cost of equipment, horses, carts, tools, tree-pullers, &c., the net amount is £2,261 12s. 8d., made up as follows:—

Eastward party ... £1,122 6 11

Westward party (York-

Youndegin) ... 1,139 5 9

Amount cleared by each party—

Eastward party, 44 miles = to £25 10s. per mile

Westward do., 36 miles = to £31 13s. per mile

Total distance cleared, 80 miles.

The funds provided for the service being insufficient to carry out the work in an effective manner, the Westward party has been disbanded, but the other party is still at work.

A distance of 80 miles remains to be cleared.

The funds to provide for this 80 miles and other branch lines form an item in the Loan Estimates, and the work will be proceeded with when the funds are voted.

EXPENSES OF THE DELEGATION TO ENGLAND.

MR. KEANE moved that there be laid on the table a return showing the amount paid from the public funds to Sir F. N. Broome, Sir T. C. Campbell, and Mr. S. H. Parker in connection with the delegation to England to facilitate the passage of the Enabling Bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. Forrest) said he would have much pleasure in laying the return on the table the following day.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT: SMUGGLING ON THE NORTHERN COAST.

MR. CANNING: I wish to move the adjournment of the House, in order to bring under the notice of the House the fact that it has been currently reported for a considerable time past that a very large contraband trade is carried on along the Northern coast of this colony; and I think it is most desirable that some steps should be taken to prevent that trade being carried on. It must

be greatly to the prejudice of ordinary traders in this part of the colony, and also in other parts, that the steamers engaged in the coast trade should be able to contribute, unwillingly no doubt, to the carrying on of this contraband trade; therefore I hope, sir, that the Ministry will take some steps, some immediate and decided steps, to guard against the continuance of such practices. In justification of what I have stated, we know that convictions have taken place, and not so very long ago, at a certain port on the North coast,—that is to say, on the coast between this and Roebourne. We all know that the import duties are very heavy; and merchants and traders in this part of the colony must be seriously handicapped by these frauds, if it is possible that trade can be carried on in such a way as to evade the payment of Customs duties. I think this is a matter of such importance that it is desirable it should be brought under the notice of the Ministry. I do not think that at the present moment it would be proper to take formal notice of the matter or to call for returns; but, unless something be done to check this trade, no doubt a formal motion will be made, which would have the effect of showing what are the exports from the ports of departure of the steamers that trade along this coast, and what are the amounts actually received for duties, and what is the extent of this contraband trade? Having called their attention to the matter, I hope the Government will adopt immediate measures to prevent this fraud upon the revenue, and the injustice that is done to the merchants and traders in this part of the colony.

The motion for adjournment was negatived.

LOAN BILL, £1,336,000.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. J. Forrest), this Bill was read a first time.

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES BILL.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I rise to move the second reading of a Bill for defining the privileges, immunities, and powers of the

Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. This House will be aware that one of the earliest functions of newly-constituted Legislative Chambers is to declare and define, by an Act of this description, their privileges, their immunities, and their powers; and, by reference to the Constitution Act (section 36, I think), it will be observed that power is given there to our own Houses of Parliament to define and declare the privileges, immunities, and powers to be held and exercised by the Council and Assembly respectively. But, while we are entitled to define our powers, it will be observed by that section that they are not to exceed the powers possessed and exercised by the House of Commons, not only at the present time, but that may be possessed by the House of Commons hereafter, and it will be seen that that principle is carried out by this Bill, which I now propose to be read a second time. But, beyond declaring in general language that our privileges, immunities, and powers shall be the same as those possessed by the House of Commons now or hereafter, we have specified, and thought it better to specify, in this Act certain matters in respect of which Parliament may deal, such as contempt committed by a member, or by strangers in the House. These provisions, it will be seen, are provided in section 8 of the Bill; and in cases where these powers are particularly defined, in the sections of the Bill following clause 8, the provisions of this Act shall prevail; that is to say, if the House desires to exercise the summary power of committing for contempt, it shall not go back to ascertain what the powers of the House of Commons would be, if we find that that particular matter is dealt with in the sections of this Bill following the 8th section. I may say really that this Bill is one of a somewhat formal character; I do not anticipate that any discussion will arise upon it, and, with these few words, I beg to move the second reading.

Motion agreed to, *nem. con.*

The House adjourned at 8 p.m.