

ing out this item and putting it on the free list.

Agreed to.

Item: "Leather (American Patent):"

MR. PARKER read a petition from certain boot and shoe manufacturers, praying that other descriptions of leather required in the trade should be included in this list, instead of the $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. list. In pursuance of the prayer of the petition, the hon. member moved that the following new item be added: "Leather—kid skins, mock kid skins, patent leather, Morocco leather, Levant leather, seal-skins, French calfskins, roans, satin hides."

MR. PEARSE said he believed that the various kinds of leather enumerated would meet the requirements of the trade. Any other kind of leather could be made in the colony.

The motion was agreed to.

MR. PARKER also moved to add the following item: "Machinery used in the manufacture of boots."

MR. RANDELL said that at present he was not prepared to vote for a reduction of the duty upon machinery, which would have the effect perhaps of depriving many men of their work.

The motion was negatived.

Item: "Machinery for crushing quartz:"

MR. A. FORREST asked that this item might be placed on the free list, in view of the immense freight, and cost of transport. This class of machinery was required for the development of a very important industry, which ought to be encouraged in every possible way. Machinery for boring was on the free list, and he thought they might put this item there also.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said he would be very happy to agree with the hon. member's proposition.

MR. PARKER said he certainly should not agree with the proposition. Boring machinery and crushing machinery were two very different things. The former was required for purposes of discovery, whereas the latter could only be required after the mineral wealth of a claim had been ascertained. As a rule machinery for crushing would only be required by wealthy proprietors or syndicates, who expected to make a fortune out of their

claims, and he thought they could well afford to pay a duty of at least 5 per cent.

MR. SCOTT would support the motion to strike out the item. We had not yet satisfactorily proved that our goldfields were going to be a success, and that people were going to make fortunes there.

MR. MARMION thought that the greater number of these companies were formed, and, the more quartz-crushing machinery they introduced, the better would it be for the colony; and he thought every possible encouragement should be given to them.

MR. PARKER said the Kimberley district, at any rate, had been proved to be a magnificent gold country, and it had already been the making of some fortunes, and he believed others were likely to be made there. He hoped he was patriot enough to rejoice at the discovery of all this auriferous wealth in the colony, but he certainly was not patriot enough to allow wealthy Melbourne companies, who expected to make thousands of pounds out of these mines, to introduce their machinery into the colony free of duty.

The motion to strike out the item was agreed to.

Progress was then reported, and leave obtained to sit again.

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Thursday, 29th December, 1887.

Report of Tariff Commission: adjourned debate—
Motion for Adjournment: Estimates for 1888—
Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at noon.

PRAYERS.

REPORT OF TARIFF COMMISSION.
ADJOURNED DEBATE.

THIRD SCHEDULE (*continued*.)

Item: "Printing presses and type:"

MR. HENSMAN said he should be inclined to move that this item be placed on the free list.

MR. SHENTON pointed out that it was placed on the same footing as other machinery.

Item greed to.

Item: "Soda-ash and nitrate of potash:"

MR. RICHARDSON said he understood some of these came under the head of fertilisers. Much of our soil was known to be deficient in those elements necessary for successful cultivation, and he thought it was very desirable that every encouragement should be given to our farmers to experiment and to improve the character of their lands, so as to increase their productive capabilities. Under these circumstances he thought these articles should be placed on the free list, with other fertilisers.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said it was the intention of the Commission that all fertilisers should be introduced duty free; but the question here was how were we to ensure that these articles were to be used as fertilisers. They were used for other purposes. He did not know whether by some chemical process they might be so altered in their character as to render them unfit for other purposes, and so distinguish them from the ordinary article of commerce.

MR. VENN said it was stated last session that a manufactory was about to be started in the colony for the treatment of phosphatic guano; but, apart from that, it was a very simple process to convert dead guano, which was of little or no value in its crude form, into an active and valuable fertiliser, by the addition of some of these substances.

MR. SHOLL thought they had conceded quite sufficient for our agriculturists; and, as it was problematical whether these substances would ever be used as fertilisers, he thought they might remain on the present schedule.

MR. MARMION moved that the item be struck out. It could not affect the revenue, seeing that at present none of these articles were introduced; while, on the other hand, it might be that the mere

fact of there being a duty upon them had had the effect of preventing their introduction.

MR. VENN pointed out that soda was largely used in the manufacture of soap, and also as a sheep-wash.

The item was struck out.

Item: "Sulphur:"

MR. SHOLL moved that this article be placed on the free list. It was largely used by farmers and pastoralists, and also in vineyards. He did not see how they could consistently do otherwise than place it on the free list, after what they had already done in the same direction.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the present duty was 10 per cent., and it was proposed to reduce it to 5 per cent. The amount of duty received last year was only £16, so that it could not affect the revenue very much, whichever way it went.

MR. VENN asked the Attorney General whether sulphur, in combination with treacle, was not a patent medicine?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) had no personal experience of the value of sulphur in combination with treacle, but he knew that it was absolutely necessary for the preservation of the vine, which was one of the most important industries—or ought to be one of the most valuable industries—in the colony.

The item was expunged.

Item: "Wire cloth for quartz-crushing machinery:"

MR. KEANE said, as they had struck out quartz-crushing machinery from the schedule, they could not do otherwise than strike out this item. He therefore moved that it be omitted.

MR. VENN said he would oppose the striking out of this item, for this reason: he felt satisfied that when these schedules came before them again in the Tariff Bill the item of quartz-crushing machinery, which they had just struck out, would be reinstated.

The motion to omit the item was negatived.

The remaining items on the schedule were agreed to.

FOURTH SCHEDULE:

(*Ad Valorem duty of 10 per cent.*)

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said he deemed it his

duty to move that the *ad valorem* duty, instead of being reduced to 10 per cent., should remain as it is ($12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.) The Commission, when they were framing their report, were anxious, if possible, in view of the increased duties which they had suggested upon certain articles, to relieve the community generally, as they thought, by reducing the *ad valorem* duty; and they were satisfied that, if the Council accepted the proposed changes as submitted to the House, the revenue would not suffer. Since then the position of affairs had altered, and the tariff, as regards the first, second, and third schedules, had been considerably hacked about; and he thought we could not at this juncture hazard the chance of any reduction in the revenue. He believed hon. members, generally, were in accord as to the advisability of restoring this schedule to its present position, of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It was estimated by the Commission that the proposed reduction would have made a difference in the revenue from this source of about £8,400; that was calculating on the basis of the revenue for 1886.

MR. MARMION: Do I understand the hon. gentleman to say that it is not intended to take this $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. increase into account in considering the revenue as against the expenditure for the ensuing year?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): The estimates of revenue now before the House were calculated upon the existing tariff. Therefore, if there is any material alteration in the tariff, it will be necessary to recalculate the revenue upon the basis of the new tariff.

MR. MARMION: I think we have increased it rather than otherwise. But is it intended to increase the amount of the estimated revenue for next year if the committee now agrees to make the *ad valorem* duty $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. instead of 10 per cent? If we are not going to get credit for it in the estimated revenue, I shall oppose it.

MR. SHENTON said it was his intention, as a member of the Commission, to oppose the proposal to increase this 10 per cent. schedule to $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It was distinctly understood amongst the members of the Commission that, in proposing the 20 per cent. schedule, there

should be a reduction in the *ad valorem* rate. As to the tariff having been hacked about and large reductions made, he had glanced through it, and he found that, on the whole, instead of reducing they had increased the duties. In some instances there were large increases, which would more than counterbalance any loss sustained by the addition of fresh articles to the free list. Some of the members of the Commission—Mr. W. D. Moore, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. Loton, both very careful financiers—went into a close calculation as to the probable effect upon the revenue of the tariff as recommended by the Commission—and he did not think those gentlemen were likely to make any great mistake; and their opinion was that the revenue under the new tariff would, if anything, be increased. He had already said that the alterations which had been made in the schedules that had passed through committee would have the effect, in his opinion, of still further increasing the revenue, rather than diminishing it. Yet the Government now asked them to give them another £8,000 or £9,000 by altering this 10 per cent. schedule to $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. If the Government now received this extra $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. the result would be that we should be crippling ourselves, by-and-bye, when we wanted a new loan.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said it was for the purpose of being on the safe side that he asked the committee to let the *ad valorem* rate remain as at present, $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It might be desirable, provided this became law, to re-estimate the revenue, and he thought he might go further and say that, if this tariff became law, he would recast the estimates of revenue with the greatest care, with the assistance of the Collector; and, if the result should be beneficial to the revenue, so much the better.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said the Commission had no doubt done their work admirably, but they had departed from the terms of their instructions. What was their Commission? The preamble set forth the expediency of inquiring into the operation of the Customs tariff, with the view of considering whether, without inflicting any serious loss upon the revenue, any

alterations might be made therein which would be likely to promote the trade, settlement, and production of the colony. Then it went on: "Now therefore, I, Sir Frederick Napier Broome, Governor, as aforesaid, have thought fit to appoint, and do hereby appoint you the said Sir Malcolm Fraser, Leonard Worsley Clifton, Stephen Henry Parker, George Shenton, George Randall, William Thorley Loton, and William Dalgety Moore, to be Commissioners for the purpose of inquiring into the operation of the said Customs Tariff, with the view aforesaid, and to make recommendations accordingly, if such appear desirable, accompanying the recommendations with a statement of reasons therefor, and with an estimate of the probable financial effect of the recommendations, giving the facts and figures upon which the said estimate is arrived at." Had the Commission done this? No; they simply said that in their opinion the readjustment of Customs charges as proposed by them could be effected "without any noticeable loss to the revenue." If our revenue were in a normal condition, and there was no difficulty of making both ends meet, we might venture to experiment with our tariff; but it seemed to him that, considering the financial position of the colony, this was hardly the time to play fast and loose with the revenue. They ought to have had the facts and figures upon which the Commission had arrived at their conclusions, and not the mere mention of the names of some two of their number—two great and honorable men no doubt. These gentlemen might be, and no doubt were, very shrewd and successful merchants, and yet be no financiers. We could not take it for granted that articles now on the 5 per cent. list, if placed on the 10 per cent. list, would be imported in the same quantities. Nor would it do to come to the conclusion that goods which were removed from the 10 per cent. list and placed on the 5 per cent. would be imported in correspondingly larger quantities. He did not know how the gentlemen referred to arrived at their conclusions, nor did he know how the Commission arrived at their conclusions—the report was silent on the subject. The fact remained that the finances of the colony were not at the present

moment in a position that would justify the committee in playing any doubtful experiments with them, nor could we afford to risk any loss of revenue. In these circumstances it appeared to him the committee would do well to accept the proposal to fix this *ad valorem* rate at $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., instead of 10.

MR. PARKER said the first schedule embodied the views of the Commission upon the subject of specific duties, and the 20 per cent. schedule and the free list schedule were avowedly intended for the purpose of protecting and encouraging the industries of the colony. But the Commission, finding that the various increases which they had imposed would considerably augment the revenue, and, as it was not part of their duty or instructions to frame a tariff that would have that effect, but simply to take care that the revenue did not seriously suffer—finding themselves in that position, when they came to this $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. schedule they thought they might reduce it to 10 per cent., because they saw from the figures placed before them that they could afford to make this reduction, and still leave the revenue in just about the same state as at present. He would remind the House that the Commission had nothing to do with the financial position of the colony. It was no part of their duty to adjust the difference between the revenue and expenditure. In fact they knew nothing about the position of the finances when they were prosecuting their labors. But we were in quite a different position now. It appeared now that we may have a large deficit to meet at the end of next year, unless some steps were taken to adjust the revenue and expenditure; therefore it became very desirable that we should provide as much revenue as possible. The intention of the Commission was with one hand to protect certain industries, and with the other hand they offered a boon to the general community in the reduction of the *ad valorem* duty. But, now, circumstances had changed, and he was not aware that the public were making any complaint as to the present *ad valorem* rate. Seeing that it would make a difference of about £8,000 to the revenue—which the Government would no doubt take into consideration—he thought they might well now adopt

the proposal to let the *ad valorem* rate remain at 12½ per cent.

MR. KEANE said he quite agreed with the hon. member for Perth. This was now a question of revenue rather than of any particular fiscal policy. He was glad to find the Attorney General agreeing with him that it was the business of this Commission to have furnished the House with the facts and the figures which led them to the conclusions they arrived at.

The proposal to alter the duty from 10 per cent. to 12½ per cent. was then put and passed.

FIFTH SCHEDULE :

(Goods free of duty.)

MR. PARKER moved that "Raw hides" be added to the list. He understood that hides of a certain description were imported largely into the colony, and were necessary for tanning purposes.

Agreed to.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said the committee yesterday moved the item "Machinery for crushing quartz" from the 5 per cent. schedule, with the view, as he understood at the time, of placing it on the free list. He would therefore move that it be inserted in the schedule now before them.

MR. PARKER said he opposed the removal of this item from the 5 per cent. schedule yesterday, and he intended to oppose its being placed on the schedule now before them. He pointed out yesterday that there was a great difference between machinery required for boring for water, or coal, or minerals, and machinery required for quartz crushing. The former was required for purposes of test and discovery, whereas the latter was required at a stage of affairs when things had passed beyond the range of speculation and become a solid and accomplished fact. No one would dream of introducing a quartz-crusher into a district unless he had proved the quality of the reef he proposed to operate upon. Machinery of this kind was not introduced until the value of a mine or reef had been proved, and probably passed into the hands of some wealthy syndicate, as was done with the Jackson's Reef Company, which recently started in Melbourne with a capital of £120,000

to work a certain reef in the Kimberley district. It appeared to him absurd for us to suppose that we were encouraging the mining industry by allowing a wealthy company like that to introduce their crushing machinery into the colony free of duty. As to the difficulty of transporting this heavy machinery to the goldfields, the removal of the duty would not remove the difficulty of transport. He hoped the committee would reconsider this item, and not consent to its being placed on the free list. At present it was on the 12½ per cent. list, but he would be satisfied himself if it were reinstated in the 5 per cent. list, where it was placed by the Commission.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the impression on his mind yesterday was that they were omitting this item from the 5 per cent. schedule in order that it might revert to its former position on the 12½ per cent. *ad valorem* schedule.

MR. A. FORREST was certain the Colonial Secretary must have understood that he (Mr. Forrest) did not move to have the item struck off the 5 per cent. list in order to have it put on the 12½ per cent. As to the wealthy companies and syndicates referred to by the hon. member for Perth, no doubt, if the reefs turned out well—as they all hoped they would—these companies might become wealthy; but, for one mining speculator who did become rich, there were thousands who lost by it. He should divide the House on this item, not only now, but also when the Tariff Bill came before them.

MR. MARMION thought it was a mistaken policy to do anything that would hamper an industry to which they were looking forward, he might say, for the redemption of the colony. He thought we should do all we could to encourage the introduction of this class of machinery. It would be a good advertisement for this colony if there were a dozen Jackson's Reef Companies floated in Melbourne.

MR. RICHARDSON said anyone would think that the imposition of this small duty would have the result of strangling the mining industry, and of preventing the introduction of any such machinery as this. He believed the present duty had not had that

effect; nor was it likely to do so in the future. If people considered the reefs were worth it they would not be prevented from introducing the necessary machinery by a small import duty. Those who introduced such machinery must be thoroughly well satisfied in their mind that the enterprise they were about to embark in was likely to be a profitable one. If that House could not refrain from taxing the necessities of existence in the case of our own people, it looked very bad indeed, and came with a very bad grace, to show all this consideration for wealthy companies coming here from Melbourne or other places.

MR. VENN thought it was only just retribution, for all the generosity shown last night towards this industry, that this particular item should now find itself thrown back on the 12½ per cent. At any rate, no one could argue for a moment that quartz-crushing machinery should be admitted at a lower duty than agricultural machinery.

MR. SCOTT thought a 5 per cent. duty would be equitable enough under all the circumstances, seeing that the success of the Kimberley district might be said to be assured, so far as quartz mining was concerned. In districts where the reefs had not yet been tested, it might perhaps be expedient to admit this class of machinery free of duty; but not in the case of a district like Kimberley.

The motion to place the item on the free list was negatived, on the voices.

MR. MARMION moved that the following new item be added: "Paraffine wax, paraffine scale, and stearine." He said he did this at the request of the Swan Soap and Candle Company, these articles being employed in the industry carried on by that company. None of them were at present imported into the colony, so that the revenue could not suffer by their being placed on the free list.

Agreed to.

Item: "Rails and fastenings for railways and tramways."

MR. KEANE asked how this would affect those who wished to start tramways in the public streets—was it proposed that public companies of that kind should be allowed to introduce their rails duty free?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): I presume so.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said the same concession was made in the other colonies. Nothing tended to develop a country more than having good roads, good tramways, or good railways. A duty of 5 per cent. would make a difference of £50 or £60 per mile.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said that the same concession had been made to public companies in this colony, who constructed their own tramways or railways, but the Government had no power to remit the duty without the consent of the Legislature, and it was now proposed to obviate the necessity for that, and to legalise what in the past could only be done on sufferance (as it were). The duty had always been remitted.

MR. HENSMAN said there was this difference: if placed on the free list we could in no case charge a duty, whatever the circumstances might be.

MR. RICHARDSON moved that the item be struck out. He failed to see why people should have their rails duty free, when we were taxing the necessities of life in every direction.

MR. MARMION thought that some encouragement ought to be given to private enterprise for the construction of tramways or railways. We were giving millions of acres of land away to encourage syndicates to construct lines of railways, and surely it was very desirable that we should offer some encouragement to timber companies, mining companies, or other private enterprise.

MR. SHOLL failed to see why private parties should have their rails duty free, for the purpose of having sidings and other conveniences, in order to save paying for labor.

The motion to strike out the item was negatived.

MR. PARKER moved that the item "Surgical, optical, and scientific instruments" be added. He noticed that in Victoria, which was noted as a protectionist colony, these instruments were admitted duty free; and, as it was impossible they could be manufactured in this colony, no industry would be prejudiced. There was another reason why they should be admitted free, and that

was the advisability of professional men being possessed of the best class of instruments, for scientific and medical purposes. It was desirable even from a humane point of view. With regard to scientific instruments, he thought that those who applied themselves to the study of sciences had as much right to have their instruments introduced free as the students of literature had to get their books free.

MR. A. FORREST presumed that the term included such instruments as theodolites, sextants, compasses, and all kinds of mathematical instruments?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton): I always understood mathematics was a science.

MR. SCOTT said that some of the instruments used by professional men were very costly, and, unfortunately, they could not be repaired in the colony; and he thought this was a concession which might fairly be granted.

The motion was agreed to.

MR. CONGDON moved that the item "Flagstones imported by Municipalities for flagging" be added to the list. He thought it was only fair that every encouragement should be given to Municipal Councils to improve the public paths, and the general appearance of their towns.

MR. SHENTON supported the motion. The City Council proposed to expend a considerable sum out of their new loan in flagstones, and the removal of the present duty would make a considerable difference. He thought that where Municipalities came forward, and voluntarily taxed themselves, as they were doing at Perth and Fremantle, and other towns, for improvements of this character, they were entitled to every encouragement.

MR. VENN suggested that the Municipalities of Perth and Fremantle, at any rate, should utilise jarrah timber blocks for pavements. They were found to answer admirably in other places, such as Melbourne.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said he was glad to say they were trying it now in London, and it was found to answer admirably.

The proposal to add the item was agreed to.

MR. PEARSE moved that the item "Soda-ash and nitrate of potash" be added.

Carried.

The remaining items on the schedule were agreed to.

THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES reported that the committee had considered the report of the Commission, and agreed to the same, with amendments.

Report adopted.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT: THE ESTIMATES FOR 1888.

MR. PARKER moved the adjournment of the House. The only remaining business on the notice paper were two bills, which would only take a few minutes to dispose of, and the real question which they had to determine was what they were going to do with regard to the Estimates. He was under the impression that the general idea amongst hon. members was that these Estimates should be referred to a select committee. If so, he could not but think that it would be advisable to appoint that committee as soon as possible, so that it might at once enter upon its labors. He thought the general view of members was that there would be a great deal of pruning. There was a strong feeling adverse to the proposal of the Government to adjust the financial equilibrium by reappropriating certain loan funds; and, such being the case, as there was an estimated deficiency of over £50,000, it would be necessary for them to cut down the proposed expenditure, or find some other means than that suggested by the Governor for balancing their receipts and disbursements. If the select committee went to work as he proposed, taking evidence and inquiring into departmental expenditure and the expenditure upon railways and public works, it would take them at least some weeks. It must be obvious to hon. members that to deal with these Estimates in committee of the whole House would be futile, or at any rate lead to endless discussion, and that the only practical course to adopt, if they were going to cut them down so as to adjust the revenue and expenditure, was to place them in the hands of some competent committee. He had such a committee in his eye; he

thought if the hon. member for Gascoyne (Mr. Sholl), the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Marmion), the hon. member for Toodyay (Mr. Shenton), and the Colonial Secretary (representing the Government) were appointed, they would have a committee in whom the House and the country would have perfect confidence, and a committee which would use its utmost endeavors to reduce the expenditure within the limit of the funds which they were able to provide for next year. It was not competent for him to move for the appointment of a select committee until the Colonial Secretary moved the House into a committee of the whole, for the consideration of the Estimates in detail; he would therefore conclude by formally moving the adjournment of the House.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said he must point out to the House that the coming Saturday closed the present year, and that after that date the Government would be without any funds. Provision had been made on this year's Estimates for the payment of salaries up to Saturday, but after that date they would have no money at all, unless the House came to some decision on the subject. Although the salaries of public servants did not become due until the end of January, still the Government had daily and hourly claims upon it, and expenditure must be incurred if the public business was to be carried on at all. Therefore, if the House adjourned without making some provision for placing funds at the disposal of the Government, they would be in a position of serious embarrassment. He hoped the House, when it met again on the following evening, would be able to come to some definite conclusion on the subject of what was best to be done in the circumstances.

MR. SHOLL said he was opposed to the Estimates being referred to a select committee. He thought it was purely a matter for the Executive Government, in conjunction with the heads of departments. He was satisfied of this, that if the official existence of these gentlemen depended upon the expenditure of their departments being adjusted to the revenue available, they would soon settle the matter. The members of that House were well aware, in their own minds,

that there were lots of items that could be cut down and the expenditure reduced; but it was for the responsible heads of the various departments to do the work of pruning, and not private members, who were not behind the scenes, and were not in a position to know, as well as the heads of departments, what the departments could do without. Therefore, he objected to the appointment of a select committee.

MR. LAYMAN concurred with the last hon. member who had spoken. He did not think it was fair for the Government to thrust upon the House the responsibility of cutting down these Estimates, to the tune of £50,000. It might be a very dangerous course to adopt for many reasons.

MR. VENN said that, hitherto, when the Estimates had come before them, he had felt it a sort of duty not to interfere more than possible with them, as he considered the administration of the various departments of the public service was essentially the duty of the Executive Government. Therefore he failed to see why that House, at the eleventh hour of the present Administration, should be called upon to assist them out of their difficulties, and to perform what would certainly be an invidious task. He thought it was the duty of the Government, when they found themselves in this embarrassing position, to have reduced their expenditure and make it dovetail with the revenue, and the funds at their command. The appointment of a select committee, at the present juncture, would mean a couple of months. Gentlemen who had had no insight into the working of departments could not be expected, in the course of a few days or a week, to make themselves masters of the situation. Why should the Executive Government abnegate their functions, and cast the responsibility upon a select committee? If there was no other course open he thought it would be far better for them to go through these Estimates in the usual course, and vote such a sum as in their opinion would suffice to carry on the public service for a certain time.

MR. HENSMAN was very much in accord with the hon. member for Wellington. It was not the fault of that House that they should be within a day or two of the end of the year, and no provision

made for carrying on the Government. The consideration of the Estimates had been put off until the last moment, at the request of the Government, and the present session was to be held for the purpose of dealing with them, and of dealing with another question, that of Responsible Government. In that, however, they had been doomed to disappointment. He thought that what they ought to do now was to go through the Estimates, and agree to such portions of them, or to such amounts, as they thought proper, and vote an aliquot part of such amounts, as would in their opinion answer the purpose until the circumstances of the case had developed, and they were in a position to know how they stood with regard to the question of Responsible Government, and so to keep their hands upon that matter.

MR. MARMION said it must be apparent that at the present festive holiday season, even if a select committee were appointed, the members of it could not be expected to work like slaves, while everybody else were enjoying themselves. It would take a very long time—longer than hon. members anticipated—for this committee to do its work properly. He was perfectly prepared to accept his part of the responsibility; but work of this kind could not be rushed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) felt perfectly confident that, in committee of the whole House, they would find it impracticable to frame these Estimates so as to meet the approval of hon. members generally. He should like to see a select committee appointed, but not too weak a committee. They had the Estimates of the Government before them, and it was open for that House, in the exercise of its constitutional right, to cut them down; and, if a committee were appointed, and went to work with zeal and discretion, no doubt they would be able to remodel some of the departmental votes in such a way as would meet with the approval of the House. He thought himself that would be decidedly the best course to pursue. It was an unprecedented course so far as that Council was concerned, but it was not without precedents in the other colonies.

MR. SHENTON thought the simplest plan would be to do what they did some

years ago, on the suggestion of a then hon. member (Mr. Padbury), when the vote for the Police Department was cut down. The Estimates sent down by the Government that year were considered by the House to be most exorbitant, so far as the police vote was concerned; and the House, without interfering with details, simply voted a lump sum—many thousands of pounds less than the estimate—leaving it to the head of the department to do the best he could to adjust his expenditure. They found there was no difficulty at all in the matter, and, when the end of the year arrived, there was only a small overdraft—so small that the House agreed to it at once. He thought the same plan might now be adopted, not only with regard to the police vote, but also other departments. Casually glancing over five departments, he noticed where he thought a saving of £20,000 might be effected, and at the proper time he would be prepared to point out where this saving could be made. There would be an increase of £8,000 or £9,000 in the Customs revenue under the revised tariff,—the House having restored the *ad valorem* duty of 12½ per cent., and made other increases; and, even in the Estimates as brought down, there was an anticipated surplus at the end of next year of £14,000. The Government, too, had made a mistake, he believed, in their estimate of the land revenue—[THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope so]—particularly with regard to the double rents falling due next year. All these items put together would pretty well make up the deficiency of £52,000. He thought it would be throwing too much upon a select committee, especially at this time of the year, to go through all these estimates, besides casting upon them a responsibility, and an invidious one, that ought to be borne by the Government. He thought the course he had suggested—voting a lump sum for certain departments—would be the best course to adopt, and he was convinced it could be done without impairing the efficiency of the departments.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): My hon. friend the Commissioner reminds me that unless the House provides ways and means for carrying on the service after Saturday, he will have to stop the trains.

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