

Clause 19—Power for local authority to appoint inspector of meters :

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : This clause appeared to be a new departure in Bills of this nature, but it was a provision distinctly in the interests of the community. Were the inhabitants of Cottesloe and Peppermint Grove in favour of the Bill ?

HON. A. B. KIDSON : When moving the second reading he had omitted to say the Bill had been referred to a Select Committee, who conferred with the local authority on the matter ; and the outcome of these deliberations was this measure, of which the inhabitants in the districts affected thoroughly approved.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 20 to 38, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 39—Power to compulsorily purchase the works of the undertakers :

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : Would this clause be effective ? In Acts of this kind, making arbitration compulsory, there was generally a reference to the Arbitration Act, and a provision that the award of the arbitrator could be made a rule of the Supreme Court.

HON. A. B. KIDSON : The Bill would be perfectly effective in that respect.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 40 and 41—agreed to.

Clause 42 Application of other penalties :

HON. J. E. RICHARDSON : Was the provision for informers necessary ? Did it not open the door to blackmailing ?

HON. A. B. KIDSON : No. The clause would operate against the undertakers themselves, who were perfectly agreeable to the provision.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 43 to 47, inclusive—agreed to. Schedule—agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment, and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the House at its rising do adjourn till Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 20 minutes past 6 o'clock until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 16th November, 1899.

Paper presented : Land Act Amendment Bill (private), third reading—Annual Estimates, in Committee of Supply, Colonial Secretary's Department (resumed) completed ; progress—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER : Cookernup Cemetery Board balance-sheet.

Ordered to lie on the table.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL (PRIVATE).

THIRD READING.

MR. JAMES moved that the Bill be read a third time.

MR. VOSPER : Was this Bill designed to hand over to the Salvation West ? certain blocks of land in the South- Army

MR. JAMES : Yes.

MR. VOSPER : As freeholds ?

MR. JAMES : No ; under the conditional purchase provisions of the Land Act. The Bill simply gave the present leaseholders power to amalgamate the whole of the leases under one authority, and the only exception as to conditions was that instead of an external fence being required round each lease, the leases when amalgamated would be regarded as one for this purpose.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed from 14th November, at page 104.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT (Hon G. Randell).

Printing, £29,661 (vote further considered) :

Remaining items passed, and the vote put and passed.

Registry, £4,885 ; Friendly Societies, £865 ; Charitable Institutions, £21,959 11s. ; Government Gardens and Government House Domain, £1,184 15s. ; Central Board of Health, £700 ; votes passed.

Educational, £68,125 :

MR. VOSPER: Referring again to the small salaries which teachers received, he would like an assurance that means would be taken to improve the status of teachers generally.

THE PREMIER: Most of the increases asked for had been provided on the Estimates, but there were some additions to be made on the Supplementary Estimates, which would be on the table, he believed, on Monday. The salaries of teachers were governed by regulation.

MR. GREGORY: Was that not the same in the Post and Telegraph Offices?

THE PREMIER: No. In regard to that department, all the salaries were shown individually, but salaries paid under regulations were not shown individually. It was the same in the Railway Department.

MR. MORAN: Speaking generally on the vote, he wished to express the hope that the Government would see their way clear next year to bring the educational system of this colony somewhat up to the level of the Eastern colonies. The teachers in the Government schools were very poorly paid; they received nothing like the salaries the teachers received in the public schools of the other colonies. He had received from Queensland many applications from teachers—and in Queensland there was a high class of education—who wished to try their fortunes in Western Australia; but the low rate of remuneration in this colony had prevented the teachers coming here. The teachers in other parts of Australia should be able to come to this colony without losing any remuneration at all. Speaking of Queensland, there were a number of teachers desirous of trying their fortunes in Western Australia, who had written to him (Mr. Moran) asking that their applications might be forwarded to the Education Department, and in every case the applicants were disappointed with the remuneration given in Western Australia. If the Government wanted the teaching staff of the public schools equal to the teaching staff of the public schools in the Eastern colonies, the rate of pay must be increased. There was a difference of 30 per cent. between the rate of wages paid to teachers in this colony compared with the salaries paid in the Eastern colonies.

If the Government could not make up that difference next year it could be done gradually. The Education Department should be made one of the most, if not the most, important branch of the civil service of the colony. Civil servants in most departments of the State were fairly well paid; there was no other department except the Education Department in which there was such a disparity between the rates paid in this colony and those paid in the other colonies. The Government had not been backward in building schools; they had done a great work in this respect.

MR. GREGORY: Where?

MR. MORAN: The hon. member referred to his own little part of the world, but the Government had done too much in the way of erecting public buildings on the goldfields. The amount of money expended in public buildings was enormous. The Government had been too eager to follow up the goldfields with the erection of public buildings. On the Eastern goldfields, schools had been built in places where they ought not to have been built, and to-day these buildings were idle. The Government had also built wardens' quarters, post and telegraph offices, in out-of-the-way places, but perhaps in that part of the country represented by the hon. member (Mr. Gregory) neglect had been shown.

MR. GREGORY: There had been very much neglect.

MR. MORAN: In the way of erecting public buildings the Government had not been neglectful. Never before had a colony built so quickly in centres which looked as if they would be permanent, but which afterwards turned out to be worthless goldfields. He recommended that in future public schools in small centres should be carried on in Mechanics' Institute buildings, or in buildings erected for other purposes; and he suggested that itinerant teachers, or half-day schools, should be provided. Especially should this be the case on the goldfields. There was Kanowna, which had 20,000 residents a short time ago, but now there were only 3,000 or 4,000 people there. Then there were Broad Arrow and other centres which were not of a permanent character. There were the 25-Mile and all the cement settlements, which it was thought at one time were

going to be gigantic fields, but there were very few people at those places now. With our railway system there could be a scheme of itinerant teachers, and we should not commit ourselves to having large public schools erected until a place was proved to be permanent. What was wanted in Perth and Western Australia generally was more classification between boys' and girls' schools. The disparity between our system and the systems in the other colonies was great in this respect. There were only two separate girls' schools in Western Australia. There ought to be a separate girls' school at Kalgoorlie and the Boulder, which would in time be the largest inland centre in this colony. We could with advantage separate the girls and the boys and the infant schools. In no other colony did mixed schools exist to such an extent as they existed in this colony. The girls should be educated by women teachers, and the boys by male teachers. The Government had always shown themselves anxious and willing to do everything in the way of education, but there was no harm in expressing the hope that in two or three years the teachers in Western Australia would be able to stand side by side with the same grade teachers in other parts of Australia, and get the same rate of pay. Why was every man better off in Western Australia except teachers? Working men got better wages; the working miner received thirty-three and a third per cent. more wages in this colony than the working miner in other parts of Australia; and all round the wages were higher in Western Australia than in any other part of Australia. He believed in high wages, high duties, and high everything else in a young colony, where there was plenty of gold. Let us, if possible, raise the grade of the public school system to the level of the other colonies. We who came from the Eastern colonies knew that the Education Departments were of a very high grade there. The head of a school in any district in the other Australian colonies was a man of importance, as he should be. He was a man of good character; he had to pass a very high-grade examination, and socially he was looked up to. That was as it should be. One hoped that never again in Western Australia would the finger of scorn be pointed at the

public school system, and that it would be stated that teachers in this colony were paid less than grooms, or paid half what a working man received. He hoped this would be the means of making the Government look round and see if they could not apportion more revenue to the deserving purpose of public education.

MR. MOORHEAD: As ignorance was an ally of crime, the way to improve the status of the people was to provide means of education. He noticed that a small sum was provided for the technical education of the people, but he hoped a larger amount would be provided in future for this purpose. It was to his mind absurd that the Government should spend thousands of pounds in the erection of schools, and yet provide inefficient teachers to teach the scholars. Mr. Moran had said that a teacher received thirty-three and a third per cent. less wages than a working miner. In the little town of Nannine a teacher was in the enjoyment of £100 a year, and out of that he had to provide quarters. One appealed confidently to the Premier, whose sympathies were always extended towards the needy, to say whether that was a fair remuneration for a man who was teaching 15 or 16 children. The effect on the community was demoralising in the extreme. A man could not feed and clothe himself decently on £100 a year, and the miners whose children the man was teaching received from £3 15s. to £4 2s. 6d. a week. What respect could the parents of the children have, or what opinion could they entertain, of a man who in the community could only obtain £100 a year as adequate remuneration for his services when they, by their hands, procured £4 2s. 6d. a week? The effect was demoralising on the community. Furthermore, £100 a year or £200 would not procure efficient men for the teaching of our children. If men could see that by the ordinary exercise of their hands they would derive far more than by teaching, and could obtain a higher position in the community, why should they turn to teaching? It was imperatively necessary that the teaching staff of this colony should have increased remuneration, so that it should include in its ranks men of adequate attainments. We could not obtain such men at the

present salaries. We also required a training school for teachers. At present our supply was derived entirely from the other colonies, and that supply was falling off because the salaries were not up to the standard procurable in the other colonies. It was useless to teach the youths of this colony reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, music, and those other sciences and arts, and not teach them to use their hands. He was strongly in favour of instruction being given to the masses, but did not believe in educating people for positions which would not be available to them. He believed in the technical education of the masses, who should be taught to be artisans, and to not only use their hands but their brains as well.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Persons in the other colonies who would be a credit to our Education Department were unable to come here, because they could not obtain anything like adequate remuneration. He knew the vote was rising year by year, and we must expect it to rise. No expenditure was more important or gave us better returns than that on education; and he hoped the Government would endeavour to bring the salaries up to a standard commensurate with the work expected to be done.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Teachers were not prevented from coming here because salaries were so much less in this colony than in the others, but because salaries were not so high as they would wish, perhaps.

MR. MORAN: The salaries were not nearly so high here as in the other colonies.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: There had been many expressions of opinion regarding teachers' salaries here as compared with teachers' salaries in the other colonies. He was prepared to give a little information on the subject. At present the teachers in this colony, through the Teachers' Association, were bringing under the notice of the Minister of Education certain matters in relation to salaries and educational management; and he believed the subject would be considered at an early date. A new classification of salaries was introduced by him (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) when Minister of Education, but it could not come into effect until the 1st of January, 1899, because the funds were not provided for the ex-

penditure at that time, and up to the present time it had not had time to bear the fruits expected from it. According to the scale now in force, the annual salaries of classified head male teachers of schools of the first-class, schools with an average attendance of 500 and upwards—were from £350 to £400 a year; the salaries paid to head female teachers in schools of the same class being from £280 to £320; in schools of Class 2, with an average attendance of from 350 to 500, head male teachers received from £300 to £350, and head female teachers from £240 to £280; in schools of Class 3, with an average attendance of from 200 to 350, head male teachers received from £250 to £300, and head female teachers from £200 to £240; Class 4, average attendance of from 100 to 200, head male teachers from £220 to £250, and head female teachers from £175 to £200; Class 5, average attendance of from 50 to 100, head male teachers from £180 to £220, and head female teachers, £145 to £175; Class 6, average attendance of from 20 to 50, head male teachers from £120 to £180, and head female teachers from £100 to £145; and in provisional schools (schools with an attendance of under 20) head male teachers from £90 to £120, and head female teachers from £80 to £100. The complaints probably arose in relation to the small schools. The member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) was referring to Nannine, speaking of a school with only about 15 children, and probably the teacher there would get only £100 a year. No doubt in some places, particularly on the goldfields, it was very hard for a man to keep himself respectable on £100 a year. He (the Minister) fully admitted that a teacher should be in a position to set an example to those whom he taught, and should be able to —

MR. MOORHEAD: Put something by for a rainy day.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: As to a teacher at Nannine putting by money for a rainy day, one did not know about that. A man should always be neat and tidy in his appearance, and set an example in everything else if possible. Teachers should be above reproach, and he did not suppose they always were, for possibly it was difficult for a man to keep above reproach on £100 a year, particularly on

the Eastern and Northern goldfields. Probably the cases that had been brought under notice chiefly referred to teachers in these small schools, as he had said.

MR. VOSPER: If the whole of the salaries paid were put together, it would be found that the average was very low.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: That was a question he would speak upon in a few minutes. At the time the new scale of payments was started, it was arranged that when a teacher first took charge of a school he should have a certain salary, say £300 a year in a school of the second class, and that his salary should annually rise by £10, increasing up to £350. When it reached £350, he could not obtain a further increase unless removed to a higher class of school. That was a good arrangement. The teacher knew exactly what he had to expect, and that unless there was a particular black mark against him, he would obtain an annual increase of £10 until he reached a certain amount.

MR. WILSON: Did that apply to the lower rates?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It applied to all rates. If a man went into a school of Class 6, which had an average attendance of from 20 to 50 children, he would commence with a salary of £120 a year, and gradually rise by £10 increments until he reached £180 a year, unless there was something particularly against him which would warrant the Minister in not approving of the increase, if recommended not to do so. Of course when a teacher in a school of Class 6 received a salary of £180 a year, the only way by which he could get a further increase was by removal to a higher school. With regard to a comparison between the salaries of teachers in this colony and the salaries paid to teachers in the other colonies, he found that the minimum salary of a male classified assistant in Western Australia was £100, in South Australia £100, in Queensland £102, in Victoria £105, in New South Wales £113. Hon. members would understand that he did not speak of head teachers, but assistants. Naturally there were a good many more assistants than head teachers, and these were the people mostly affected. The maximum salary of a male classified assistant in Western Australia was £200, in South

Australia £200, in Queensland £204, in Victoria £243, and in New South Wales £255. As to the cost of living, the Government could not regulate that, and undertake to supply teachers with food and lodging at certain rates. He wished the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) would go to schools and see what had been done, just as he went to Rottnest. The hon. member would go to gaols and run the risk of losing his life at sea, and goodness knew what, but he never visited schools to see how they were conducted. The hon. member possibly got hold of some disaffected teacher who had left the department. Everyone having any trouble brought it to the hon. member, who aired the grievance in this House. The hon. member should interview some teachers who were not dissatisfied, and from whom he might obtain valuable information which would assist him in correctly judging the department.

MR. KINGSMILL: Were there any teachers who did not want increases?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Salaries here were about the same as in the other colonies; therefore hon. members should not say they were lower. Teachers would not come from other colonies unless offered a substantial increase of salary.

MR. MORAN: Wrong!

MR. VOSPER: The difference in the purchasing power of money was the *crux* of the whole question.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: But that was not the position hon. members took up. They said salaries here were lower than in the other colonies. In this large colony, numerous small schools were expensive to keep up, not only by reason of the salaries, but in rent, so that the Government must be economical. It was hard, for £100 a year, to secure a teacher who would maintain a respectable appearance.

MR. MOORHEAD: How could such men be expected to train good citizens?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: At the same time, teachers in this colony would compare favourably with those in other countries; but, naturally, in a large department there were found dissatisfied persons with grievances. If hon. members, on receiving such complaints, would apply to the department, as some of them

did in respect of the Mines Department, satisfaction would probably be obtained.

MR. VOSPER: Some said it was impossible to get an answer to an inquiry—that everything was referred to the Premier.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The present Minister of Education (Hon. G. Randell) had been a long time connected with education in this colony, having been on the old Central Board for many years, a body of which he was at one time chairman. The Minister was anxious to do what he could for the teachers, and, no doubt, the question of salaries would soon be thoroughly investigated. He (the Minister of Mines) agreed with the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) as to the necessity for a training college. Such an institution would give an opportunity to our own colonists to be trained as educationalists. Teachers required training probably more than any other class of men, and numbers would be glad to take advantage of such an institution. Much better train men locally than send for them to other colonies. When he (the Minister of Mines) was the Minister of Education, he had acquired for the purpose of this college a block of Crown land at Claremont. Victoria had found out the mistake made in closing its training college, for all the educational authorities there had since been asking that it be re-opened, and it had been decided to comply with their request. Even in the worst times of retrenchment New South Wales and South Australia had not closed their training colleges. Teachers' salaries here, generally speaking, were not lower than in other colonies, though it must be admitted that the cost of living was higher.

MR. MORAN: Then wages should be higher.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: But the cost of living was growing less every day. On the goldfields that cost was high, and the goldfields were unpleasant to live in; so that persons of education and refinement, such as teachers ought to be, did not care to reside in those districts. The Education Department were fully alive to these considerations, and this matter having been brought prominently before the Government, something no doubt would be done to assist the

teachers of the small schools, to whom hon. members had more particularly referred.

MR. WILSON: The remuneration of teachers should receive careful consideration. The Minister's admission that the lower-grade teachers were underpaid proved the truth of hon. members' arguments, because most schools were of class No. 6, in which salaries ranged from £120 to £180 per annum.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Many of the salaries were lower.

MR. WILSON: That made matters worse.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: True.

MR. WILSON: If a labourer were entitled to a living wage, surely a man in charge of the education of the young had the same right; and £90 or even £120 per annum was not, in present circumstances, a living wage for a married man in Western Australia, especially on the goldfields. Although the departmental regulations provided for an annual increase of salary of £10 for each teacher, he understood that last year such increase had not been given, and that teachers whose salaries exceeded £125, only received £5 increases. Was this true; and if so, would the full increases be granted?

THE PREMIER said he thought they had been granted.

MR. WILSON: The regulations provided that the teachers should receive an increase of £10 to their salaries in January, 1899, but he was given to understand the increase only amounted to £5. Was he to understand that the teachers would receive a £10 increase?

THE PREMIER: Inquiry would be made as to what the teachers were promised?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The new scale of salaries came into force on 1st January, 1899, so that the increase in salaries was not due until 1st January, 1900. The new scale might provide for increases in some cases and decreases in others, but amended salaries began 12 months after the regulations came into force. It was provided in the regulations that salaries might be raised by annual increments of £10, but an increment could be stopped at the discretion of the Minister if there were an unfavourable report or serious complaint against the teacher.

MR. MORAN: So far as classified salaries were concerned, it would appear from what the Minister had stated, that they were not so far below those of the other colonies as the Committee had been led to suppose; but he had been informed by the Inspector General, Mr. Cyril Jackson, that the salaries paid in Western Australia were not sufficient to put teachers here on an equality with teachers in the East. All money values were of course relative, and as it was undesirable, especially in a young and prosperous country, to bring down the cost of living and thus reduce the price of produce, the teachers' salaries ought to be raised to a corresponding standard. Teachers in Queensland and New South Wales received all sorts of perquisites in connection with the system of payment by results, and very often the salary amounted to only two-thirds of the sum actually received. Head teachers in those colonies, in addition to the capitation grant for the scholars, received a bonus on every pupil teacher successful at the examination; and as in some schools there were eight or nine of these juniors, and the bonus, he thought, was £5 a head, this meant a considerable addition to the income. This plan gave a head teacher a monetary interest in the success of his juniors, and *esprit de corps* made the pupil teacher do his best, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of the man who trained him. Taking these facts into consideration, the salaries in Western Australia would appear to be much lower than in the other colonies. The Minister of Mines took a deep interest in educational matters, and the present Minister of Education was a public school enthusiast, while the Inspector General was devoted to his work; and if the Public Works Department could be induced to move with the celerity Mr. Jackson would like, greater results would be attained. It was quite right not to speak of private cases, but to confine the discussion generally to the Estimates, and he could say he had not been spoken to by any teacher, nor had he been asked to take any part in the agitation which had been going on, because, in every instance, his information came from the head of the department. He felt perfectly satisfied that as a result of this debate, the position of teachers in

Western Australia would be improved socially and materially.

MR. GREGORY: In no case had the Minister of Mines shown that the salaries in Western Australia were as high as or higher than in the Eastern colonies. The cost of living here was much greater than elsewhere, and the Government had a larger income per head of population; and it was right that the teachers should be as highly if not more highly paid than in the other colonies. He desired to move that the consideration of Item 34 be postponed pending the presentation to the Committee of a complete schedule of salaries paid to school teachers. It was not right to ask the Committee to pass a sum of £45,000 without information as to how the money was being disbursed. In the Postal and most other departments, with the exception of the Railway Department, every salary, down to that of the lowest officer, was shown in the Estimates, and the same plan should be pursued in the department under discussion. A teacher stationed at Mount Malcolm and Mount Leonara had to divide his time between the two places, travelling the 12 miles twice a week; and though this was a most expensive district in which to live, that man was paid a salary of £160 a year, an utterly inadequate sum under the circumstances. In this instance the Government had to spend no money on school buildings and very little on books and furniture, and there were similar cases in other districts. He had a newspaper extract with him, and though he could not vouch for their accuracy, the figures there given might be worth quoting to the Committee. From this extract it appeared that the average salary of head teachers in schools with numbers under 50 was £113 (male) and £81 (female). These schools numbered 132 out of a total of 186 in operation during the year. The salary of assistant teachers averaged (males) £129 2s. (female) £93 7s., while the salary of the head teacher in the 54 schools with numbers above 50 averaged (males) £197 4s. (female) £165 9s. It was only right that members should know the individual salaries received by teachers. In connection with other departments all this information was given. He would move that the consideration of

item 34 be deferred pending the supply to the Committee of a complete list of the salaries of the teachers.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could not do that; he could only move that progress be reported.

THE PREMIER: A list of the teachers and their salaries could be supplied on Monday.

MR. VOSPER: Were the Committee to pass the items before they obtained the information? What was the use of giving the Government all the trouble of preparing a list, when the evidence was to be obtained after the verdict was given.

THE PREMIER: It would be a guide next year.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The regulations for teachers' salaries had been before hon. members for years. The regulations were laid on the table, yet no hon. member moved in the matter until the Estimates were before the Committee. If members desired to move in this matter a motion should have been brought forward before the Estimates came on. He (the Minister) had never heard any expression of opinion on this matter before; but now some hon. members woke up to the fact that they desired to have the individual salaries of the teachers on the Estimates. Some intimation of this might have been given before, and the information would have been supplied in a return. If members referred to the regulations, they would see that teachers in certain schools had certain classes, and received salary according to the class they were in. If members had any particular school in their mind, all they had to do was to ask how many children there were in that school, then look up the regulations and see what the teacher was receiving. The Inspector General of Schools had informed him (the Minister) that there would be some difficulty in giving this information, and he might say the Inspector General of Schools was one of the most zealous officers in the colony, in spite of what we read in the Press; the colony ought to be congratulated on having an officer of Mr. Jackson's attainments. He was second to no one in Australia, his whole heart and soul were in his work, and above all things he had not a single relative in Western Australia, in spite of what was said in the Press. The Inspector General

of Schools said in regard to setting out the teachers' salaries in detail that such a course would be impossible. He said the teachers were paid in accordance with the regulations and the carefully-thought-out scale passed in accordance with the Act by the Governor in Council and laid on the table of the House. By giving this information it would prevent any transfers from school to school with promotion and increase of salary. At present the pay of teachers varied according to the class of school, and their own classification and certificate. There would be no difficulty in the Education Department setting out in their annual report the names of all teachers in the schools and the salaries attached to their positions, and if the Education Department had been asked to do that it would have been done. In the Blue-book the names of the teachers and their salaries were given. It was not altogether fair at this stage to ask the Government to postpone the Estimates, as ample opportunity had been given for the information to be asked for.

MR. WOOD: Hon. members were entitled to know the names of all civil servants and the salaries paid to them. As far as he was concerned he had repeatedly referred to the absence of the Blue-book, which used to be laid on the table of the House before the Estimates were gone into.

MR. VOSPER: The Blue-book was three years old when it was received now.

MR. WOOD: The consideration of the Estimates was entirely a farce from beginning to end. Members knew nothing of what they were talking. There were a lot of clerks and messengers and other officers set forth, but no one knew who they were. The Committee might just as well pass the Estimates as a whole, and save a fortnight or three weeks' time. A document ought to be issued containing the name of every civil servant, and a number could be given against the name corresponding to the number on the Estimates. It was all very well to say that the Estimates should be left in the hands of the heads of the departments; but the heads of departments wanted bringing up at a round turn sometimes. Up to the year 1896 the Blue-book always accompanied the Estimates, so

that hon. members could refer to it while discussing the Estimates, but the Blue-book had not been on the table, he thought, since the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) had been in the House.

MR. VOSPER : The Blue-book would be sent to members when the session was over.

THE PREMIER : There could be no objection to having the names of all the officers laid before hon. members. It was done in some of the other colonies. The name of every officer was given in a document which was laid on the table, and he (the Premier) certainly had no objection to that course being pursued. The only objection was the trouble of having the return prepared and printed. There was no reason why the information should not be supplied, and he would see to it next session.

MR. VOSPER : There had been great difficulty in obtaining information from Ministers in the past when a member wished to bring any matter forward. It was not right that all the salaries of teachers should be grouped together. We did not know whether the teachers in the Education Department were treated well or not, or whether they were unduly paid or not. It was farcical to be discussing Estimates and trying to raise an argument when we had not the information on which to base that argument. As to the proposal to place the information on the table in a day or so, that was making a farce even more farcical. He (Mr. Vosper) had just asked for a copy of the Civil Service Report, and he found there was not a copy, as a separate document, in the House. When there was a deficiency of that kind in the library, was it to be wondered at that the debate was carried on in a slipshod manner?

THE PREMIER : That had nothing to do with the Government.

MR. VOSPER : That was a great difficulty for hon. members to cope with. We knew that every permanent officer of the civil service, from a telegraph boy upwards, was absolutely pure and incorruptible. We had assurances of that.

THE PREMIER : From whom?

MR. VOSPER : From the Treasury bench.

THE PREMIER : That was not so, he thought. Members of the Treasury bench knew to the contrary.

MR. VOSPER : They generally knew when it was a trifle too late. Let a member lay a charge or make a complaint against any officer of the civil service, and it was stated that the particular officer was the best man in the service. The utility of publishing names was that at some future period nepotism and favouritism might creep into the public service, and if the names were given in the Estimates, together with the positions the officers occupied and the salaries they received, there would be a possibility of checking evils. Dealing with the Estimates in the dim twilight from which members were suffering at present was to a certain extent farcical. It would have been well to postpone the whole of the educational vote until the return asked for was in the hands of members. Would he be in order in now moving that such should be done?

THE CHAIRMAN : That could not be done now.

MR. GREGORY : Were members to understand from the Minister of Mines that on Monday next there would be a complete list of the salaries paid to teachers, and that such list would be given in future Estimates?

THE MINISTER OF MINES : No.

MR. GREGORY : Then he would move that progress be reported.

THE MINISTER OF MINES : The Estimates were not in his charge.

MR. MORAN : Did the Minister think it probable we should have the Estimates of the Education Department prepared in the same way as those of the Postal Department?

THE PREMIER : If there was nothing in the way, he would do his best to have it done. He did not see why it should not be.

MR. GREGORY : Did members understand that it would be done?

MR. MORAN : The Premier had promised to do his best.

MR. GREGORY : The least one expected was a civil reply.

THE PREMIER : A reply had been given.

MR. GREGORY : It was not heard by him, and he wished to know what it was.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member had been told by him that he would do his best. He was not going to be pestered by the hon. member.

MR. GREGORY moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

THE PREMIER: Twice he had given an assurance that he would do his best, and the hon. member still persisted. That was not the treatment one expected from him.

MR. LEAKE called attention to item "Public Exhibitions" and to item "Scholarships." Was it proposed to limit these exhibitions and scholarships to Government schools?

THE PREMIER: The Act said "efficient schools," he thought.

MR. MORAN: That had been debated before.

THE PREMIER: "Efficient schools."

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The Upper House did that.

THE PREMIER: The Assembly inserted "bursaries."

MR. LEAKE: The Assembly struck out "scholarships."

THE PREMIER: The other House inserted the word. It was not the proposal of the Assembly.

MR. LEAKE: The idea was that scholarships should only be given to scholars attending Government schools. Members did not want all schools to participate.

MR. VOSPER: A resolution was carried by the Assembly that all schools should participate.

MR. WOOD: What was the difference between exhibitions and scholarships?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: One, he believed, provided for the scholar to attend a particular school, and the other provided that a scholar might go to England and attend a university.

MR. KINGSMILL: In regard to the school which he had attended, an exhibition was a sum of money paid down at the time it was won, and a scholarship was granted for possibly two or three years, an annual sum being paid quarterly. It was a distinction in terms and not in fact.

MR. VOSPER: Was there any gentleman on the Treasury bench who knew anything? An explanation was asked for, and the only person in the House

capable of giving it was on the Opposition side.

THE PREMIER: Who referred it to the Opposition?

MR. VOSPER: The member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) asked if any member would tell him the difference.

MR. WOOD: The Opposition side was not referred to by him.

MR. VOSPER: A member of the Opposition gave the answer.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The hon. member (Mr. Vosper) ought to know as much about it as members of the Government. The hon. member professed to know everything under the sun.

MR. VOSPER: Those who invited people to pass the Estimates ought to be posted on the subject.

THE PREMIER: If members of the Treasury bench were as polite as the hon. member opposite (Mr. Vosper), doubtless we should get on splendidly. He did not know why the hon. member adopted this dictatorial mode, and mentioned ignorance, incapacity, and everything else. That was not the way to treat people. Evidently the hon. member had been associating with persons who had no manners.

MR. VOSPER: For some time he had been in Parliament.

THE PREMIER: A bursary was, he thought, a small sum given to pupils after examination in an efficient school of the colony. He took it that a scholarship would be a sum given to a scholar who succeeded in passing the necessary examination to attend some school. Hitherto the High School had been the school attended by the winners of scholarships. Exhibitions, he took it, would be money grants to persons who had succeeded in passing the requisite examinations.

MR. JAMES: Who was entitled to compete?

THE PREMIER: Every child in an efficient school was, he believed, able to compete for a scholarship, and doubtless it would be the same in regard to exhibitions. We had a law in relation to scholarships and bursaries, and there would be no reason whatever to depart from the rule in regard to exhibitions.

MR. JAMES: Why Government money should be used to provide scholarships for private schools he had never been able to understand. So long as the item

"scholarships" stood as at present, the Act would apply and the money would be available for all private schools; but he wished to avoid that, if possible.

THE PREMIER: "Scholarships" had been inserted in the existing Act, and members could not alter the law.

MR. JAMES: We need not say "scholarships," but something else. He proposed to strike out "scholarships" and call them "prizes."

THE PREMIER: Did the hon. member object to give them to private schools?

MR. JAMES: Decidedly.

THE PREMIER: The Act was duly passed that they should be so given.

MR. JAMES: There was no legal definition of "scholarship," either in the statute or in the text books, that he was aware of.

THE PREMIER: The ordinary meaning could be taken.

MR. JAMES said he proposed to strike out the whole of this item, and then we could see the logical position arrived at. Then would be seen how long the Education Department was to be controlled by a certain party in the country which was also represented in the House. On the education question, this House was being controlled by a rude and noisy minority of members.

MR. MORAN: Was the hon. member in order in referring to any section of the House as a rude and noisy minority?

THE CHAIRMAN said he did not think the hon. member was in order.

MR. JAMES withdrew the expression. There was nevertheless an unreasonable minority who used their positions in Parliament for the purpose of promoting certain interests.

THE PREMIER: Why did not the hon. member say this when the Education Bill was before the House? Had there ever been a division on this question? Surely not.

MR. JAMES: This agitation was brought up year after year, and the public funds were constantly being "got at" for the purpose of promoting education in private schools. Parliament had no right to spend public money on education except for the purpose of improving public schools. It did not matter whether the private school were a Scotch college, a Christian Brothers' college, or any other.

MR. MONGER: Then why not strike out all scholarships, including those given to the High School?

MR. JAMES: The High School was established by statute. In an Act passed last year, the House departed from a practice established for years past. It would be better to strike out scholarships altogether, than use public money for such private purposes. He moved that item "scholarships" be struck out.

MR. MORAN: For the purpose of allaying the terrible state of agitation exhibited by the last speaker, he would support the amendment; but what a subject was this for such an outburst of passion! A sum of £385 was proposed to be voted for the encouragement of education. A large section of the people supported their own schools. The House had decided that the State should not support private schools; but he would suggest to the hon. member (Mr. James) that the people referred to were still members of the State. Though cut off from State aid, they were not yet deprived of citizenship.

MR. JAMES: They had received £15,000 as a commutation.

MR. MORAN: It was a pity the hon. member could not introduce the old penal laws into this colony. The hon. member rendered himself liable to be called to order, and had had to apologise.

MR. JAMES said he had not apologised. He had withdrawn the assertion.

MR. MORAN: Only a gentleman "apologised;" the hon. member had "withdrawn." One professing such broad and liberal views on federation as the hon. member should not be so ready to arouse religious discord. The House had decided that children attending "efficient" schools should be rewarded by scholarships, and yet the hon. member would prevent one-third of the children of the colony from receiving any benefit from the State. Every one had to pay for the State school system. He (Mr. Moran) desired to see that system raised to the highest level; but do not let us penalise children whose parents had to provide their own schools. Was there a fear on the part of the hon. member that the heavily subsidised public schools would have no chance in competing for the scholarships against private establishments? To show that

the hon. member's charge of partisanship was groundless, he (Mr. Moran) would support the amendment.

THE PREMIER: This matter had been thoroughly discussed when the Education Amendment Bill came before us at the beginning of the session, and no division had been called for. The hon. member (Mr. James) had moved to strike out "efficient" schools from participation in bursaries, but had not divided the House on that; and, on reading the report of that debate, it did not appear that the hon. member had made anything like the violent display he had made this evening.

MR. JAMES said he had used the same words then that he used now.

THE PREMIER: Then one was sorry for the hon. member. One would have thought that, after using the words once, the hon. member would have been ashamed to use them again.

MR. JAMES said he would repeat them presently.

THE PREMIER: Surely the hon. member would not repeat the words he had withdrawn? There being a law that all private schools must be examined and must pass as efficient schools, why should such establishments be prevented from receiving the benefit of this small sum, given as an inducement to the children of the colony? The logic of the situation was that these were efficient schools not supported by the State, which ought to receive such encouragement, and not the schools of which the upkeep was wholly provided by the State. Presumably, the hon. member wished to have no private system of education in the colony. He (the Premier), on the other hand, wished private education to be as widely extended as possible, provided it were efficient. There was no disadvantage in children having their education paid for by parents; on the contrary, such a system should be encouraged. No more burdens than were necessary should be placed on the taxpayers, and when parents were found educating their children without expense to the State, ought they not to be encouraged to the same, if not to a greater extent than those who left the State to educate their children? The citizen who paid for his children's education was doing his duty better than he who left his children's education to the State,

provided, of course, the two parents were in similar circumstances. All knew there was an extensive system of education carried on in the colony by a certain denomination, for which the State was at no expense. Speaking at random, he might say that denomination saved the colony £20,000 a year. [A MEMBER: That sum was near the mark.] Were the children attending those schools, which by law had to be efficient, to be debarred from competing for this paltry amount, and it was paltry, of £385? Surely the position of the hon. member was not founded upon reason. Certainly it was not founded upon justice.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

Amendment—that the item "scholarships" be struck out—put and negatived.

MR. JAMES: When speaking on the item, he had expressed his intention of moving an amendment for making scholarships available in public schools only; but from an interjection by the Premier, he understood that in view of the Education Act passed this session, such an amendment could not be submitted, and for that reason the amendment just negatived had been substituted. When the Education Bill was before the House earlier in the session, he moved that Clause 19, which dealt with this question, be amended for confining the scholarships to Government schools; but the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) then suggested an amendment, giving the Government power by regulation to grant a certain sum for Government schools and a certain other sum for private schools, keeping the competition distinct. He thought the Premier was right in his opinion that the amendment he had intended to move this evening could not be submitted; but he must say that Section 19 of the Education Act did not carry out the intention of either the member for Albany or himself, and had he looked at the matter more carefully then, he should most certainly have opposed the section.

Vote put and passed.

Postal and Telegraph, £245,145 18s. 6d.:

MR. QUINLAN: A Royal Commission had recently concluded an investigation

into the administration of this department, and had issued a report which must be of interest to hon. members and the public generally. He thanked the members of the Commission for their courtesy, and more particularly did he desire to make reference to the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), who was one of the Commission. The hon. member and himself had little differences at times, as members of the Commission; but he (Mr. Quinlan) was glad to say publicly that he was convinced of the excellent qualities of the hon. member, more particularly as he observed those qualities in his conduct and in the opinions he expressed at the meetings of the Commission. It must have been pleasing to the hon. member as well as to the Government to find that the Postal Department came so satisfactorily out of the inquiry, and no one would be more ready to admit the fact than the member for the Canning. The recommendations of the Commission dealt with the salaries paid in the department, and perhaps the report did not deal so extensively with this subject as might have been expected, because it was generally admitted that the salaries in this and the Police Department were the lowest, taking the service as a whole.

MR. KINGSMILL: What about salaries in the Education Department?

MR. QUINLAN: It was true that salaries in the Education Department were low. It was to be hoped some provision would be made in the Supplementary Estimates for a few of the worthy officers who were deserving, and had been recommended by the Postmaster General for increases. Not knowing who these officers were, he (Mr. Quinlan) could only urge their claim generally; but he felt sure the Postmaster General, who was known not to be extravagant, would make only reasonable recommendations in these cases. Among the recommendations made by the Postal Commission was one to the effect that those post-offices in districts where little business was done should be closed wherever practicable. It was hardly feasible to expect that the Postmaster General would give to the Postal Commission a list of such offices as he thought should be closed; but certainly there were offices kept open now for perhaps one telegram, and perhaps two

or three letters a day, thereby causing an unnecessary expense to the country. Not many years ago it was a general custom for people to travel miles to a post-office for obtaining their letters; but the Forrest Government had taught the people of this colony to expect so many conveniences and privileges, that most of the people seemed to think they could not ask for too much.

MR. MORAN: This vote interested him deeply, because when formerly representing the great undivided constituency of Coolgardie, he had to make so many appeals to the department for conveniences here, there, and in many places, that he could not help appreciating the liberal and satisfactory way in which this department had responded to all such appeals for meeting the requirements of a great and growing population on the goldfields. The Postmaster General was one of those who had been abused most liberally; but it was almost an axiom that a public servant who got no abuse was not worth much. The Postmaster General was always courteous, considerate, and approachable; on all occasions he might be reasoned with; and he was constantly doing his best to meet the requirements of all parts of the colony. If there was one fault in this high officer, it was that he was not too fond of paying large salaries; he tried to make a little go as far as possible. Members generally would agree that the Post Office servants as a body should be paid better salaries; and particularly was this so on the goldfields, where living was dearer and the conveniences of life were fewer and more expensive than on the coast. There was formerly a goldfields allowance of £30 per annum for officers of this department; but that had been reduced to one-half about a year ago, and he had heard a rumour emanating from Kalgoorlie that an official letter had recently intimated that the remaining £15 a year of goldfields allowance was to be knocked off. It was to be hoped this rumour was not true, for it would be particularly hard to take away this necessary allowance for officers who were working often 10 and 12 hours a day, with the thermometer up to 120 in the shade during summer. The department should at least wait until the promised stream of fresh water for the goldfields was really supplied, so that

persons up there might have the cost of living and of domestic comfort reduced in that way. The town of Coolgardie could not be called "dead" yet, as the Postal and Telegraph estimates contained a list of officers there covering more than a page of print.

THE PREMIER: Too many officers there.

MR. MORAN: Comparing this large staff with the very small staff at Boulder township, where in many respects the business was perhaps larger than in any other part of the colony, especially in sending away money by working miners, it did appear reasonable that a larger provision should be made in this department for a mining centre that was extending so rapidly and doing so great a business. The business done at Coolgardie post-office was not at all on a par with that done at Boulder township, especially in money orders; and there should not be so great a disparity as appeared on the Estimates between the staff provided for Coolgardie and the staff provided for Boulder. If the working miners and others could not get the conveniences necessary for sending away money, and this kind of business generally came in a rush, they would have to go to the banks, and that was undesirable, because the people in this colony should be induced to regard the post-office savings bank and the money-order branch as institutions specially belonging to themselves. He knew that much of the money-order business was going to the banks, and he had been told so by bank managers.

MR. GREGORY: The Government were chasing the business away by raising the charges.

MR. MORAN: The offices provided for such a large and growing centre as Boulder township were not adequate to the requirements, and they looked especially poor when compared with the palatial buildings erected at Kalgoorlie, which were not only ample for the present, but would be sufficient for years to come. Comparing the facilities of the postal department provided for the public of this colony with those provided in some portions of Eastern Australia, the difference was greatly in favour of this colony. A visitor lately from Broken Hill, Mr. Josiah Thomas, a representative man, had expressed his gratification and astonish-

ment at finding such services as that of the post-office and other public conveniences provided so extensively in this colony, as compared with the much smaller provision in a place like Broken Hill. The telephone service in this colony, though not perfect, was better than that supplied in London, and certainly better than the service supplied in many towns of the Eastern colonies. Indeed every effort was being made by the Post Office Department to meet the vast requirements of every part of this great colony. A great deal of credit and consideration was due to those who were so zealously looking after the interests of the colony in this department. During the storm of abuse levelled against the head of the department, in the last six years, he did not think he had heard anyone say anything derogatory to the character of the Postmaster General. The head of the department was an officer who had at heart the very best interests of the public, and whose only desire was to serve them faithfully and well, and spend wisely the money placed in his hands.

MR. MONGER: It had been his privilege for seven or eight months to sit and inquire into the working of this particular department; and he regretted that, so far as he could judge, a few recommendations by the head of the department for increases to heads of different branches had been refused by the Premier. He trusted that, later on, the right hon. gentleman would see his way to adopt such recommendations. He believed the head of the department had worked in the very best interests of Western Australia. The department came out of the inquiry by the Royal Commission in shining colours, and he would like to take the opportunity of paying a tribute of respect to the hon. member who occasioned the inquiry (Mr. Wilson). At the time the motion was introduced, he was one of the strongest in denouncing that gentleman for the action he took, though at the same time he made use of the remark that the hon. member was absolutely a fair man. He had now the greatest pleasure in saying that no fairer man than the hon. member had ever sat at a public inquiry. The result of the inquiry was that a unanimous opinion had been submitted to the

people of Western Australia on the postal arrangements of the colony, and thanks were due to Mr. Wilson for having brought out many things during the course of the inquiry. The Chief Accountant had been associated with the department for the last 50 years, and the Inspector of Mails for almost a similar period. During the time the Government wanted savings effected, there was more saved in the mails department than in any other portion of the Government service; and it would be only fair for the Premier to make provision in the Supplementary Estimates for increases to those old and valued hands. The Premier had found no stauncher friends in the service than those who occupied the principal positions in this particular branch, and they were worthy of more than ordinary consideration. If these old and highly respected officers were known personally to every hon. member, they would receive from Parliament far greater consideration than was even suggested in the recommendations of the Postmaster General.

MR. WILSON: If there was anything harder to bear than abuse it was praise, because it occasioned a certain amount of embarrassment, and he could not help feeling embarrassed when he heard himself so well spoken of. If members had read the report and recommendations of the Royal Postal Commission, and studied them carefully, they would agree with him that the appointment of the Commission was fully justified, and that the result must be beneficial to the department. He believed his colleagues on the Commission were of the same opinion. He did not wish to go into the details of the report, for it would take much too long, and he did not think that would have any beneficial results. He moved for the appointment of the Commission on the ground that more check was needed, and he thought the evidence and report proved conclusively that at the time there was some want of proper check, but he was bound to admit that the system was not so bad as he anticipated. Still there was some want of a proper check system, and he was happy to say that had been remedied. He was in accord with his colleagues on the Commission in saying that in his opinion the Postal Department was abreast of the times, and as good as we ought to expect.

Owing to the great increase of business in the department there had then been ample excuse for defects in the system. The department, like others, had been disorganised. The recommendations of the Commission had been carried out, and there was now an ample check system both in the Post and Telegraph Departments. In moving for the Commission he had made no charge against the Postmaster General's administration, but had merely stated that good results would ensue from inquiry. That statement had proved correct. The Commission had confirmed the high estimation in which the head of the department was held; he was a man whose heart and soul were in his work; and if the recommendation of the Commission, that the Postmaster General ought to devote less time to the routine of his office and more to general supervision were acted on, much good would result. In all new countries heads of departments in grappling with increasing business found it difficult to leave details to their subordinates. The Commission's report showed that, while the department was on a fairly sound footing, many small matters could with advantage be amended. There were a good many offices, especially telegraph offices in the country districts, which were not required. On this point the Postmaster General ought to be called on for a special report. The matter of the robbery of £934 from the Perth Post Office had received careful consideration from the Commission. The local Press had rather blamed the Commission for not publishing the evidence taken on the subject; but the withholding of that evidence was perfectly justifiable, for its publication before the discovery of the culprit would be calculated to defeat the ends of justice. It had been considered that Mr. Stevens, a most honourable and painstaking officer, had been somewhat harshly treated in the decision arrived at by the Government regarding the money stolen from his office. Though there was considerable neglect on the part of that officer, the Commission considered he had simply carried out the practice with regard to the payment of wages in vogue, probably since his appointment. His superior officers should have provided a proper safe for the reception of the money; therefore the Commission re-

commended the Government to rescind the decision arrived at, and to allow Mr. Stevens to retain his full salary instead of having the lost money deducted from it. Regarding salaries generally, in the opinion of the Commission the bulk of the lower-grade men were under-paid: they should receive a living wage. This dictum also extended to the women employed. A country postmistress receiving £60 or £70 per annum could not possibly "make ends meet." This matter should receive immediate attention. In the telephone exchange some cadets worked for twelve months without salary. The Commission considered that absolutely wrong. A cadet, if required at all, should not have to serve longer than three months without pay. He (Mr. Wilson) hoped the Commission's report would not be thrown on one side like certain others. The Postmaster General or some subordinate should go through the report carefully and pick out the Commission's recommendations, with a view of giving effect to them in the near future.

Mr. VOSPER, referring to item "officers on goldfields," supported the remarks of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) regarding the goldfields allowance. There were seven men at £40, 94 at £30, and 97 at £15 per annum each. Apparently the intention was to keep down the allowance to £15 in large centres like Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, retaining the old £30 allowance in more distant places. There were complaints that the allowance was inequitably distributed. The sum of £15 per annum was too small an allowance for the extra cost of living on the goldfields. The fact of any allowance being made proved that this extra cost was taken into consideration, though not sufficiently. The Commission recommended reform in the matter of annual leave for goldfields officers. This at present was entirely at the caprice of the Postmaster General, and there had been serious cases of sick leave having been refused. Recently at Boulder a man just recovered from a month's illness had asked leave to go to the eastern colonies, which leave was refused, and he resigned. Another man had been forced to go back to work though still sick. No semi-convalescent could fairly earn his salary,

and he must be simply an additional burden to his fellow officers. Whatever grievances country postmistresses in other districts might have, those on the goldfields were still more harshly treated. The highest salary paid in the telephone attendant staff at Kalgoorlie was £160 per annum, the next was £100, with several of £80, and two at £60 each. Those who were paid salaries of £80 and £60 were young women; and he asked how it was possible for any woman to subsist on such a salary in a place like Kalgoorlie. If these women had to live partly by their salaries, and partly by "sponging" on their relatives, it was not a desirable state of things, and something ought to be done for employees whose hours were long and arduous, and whose duties were not infrequently exasperating.

Mr. MORAN: Salaries of £60 each were paid to two telephone girls at Kalgoorlie, also two similar salaries at the Boulder. These girls had been working for twelve months as cadets in the hope of getting the first vacancies in the department. The Postmaster General had explained to him (Mr. Moran) that, in order to meet requirements and show some favour to girls who had been working so long, he created those four appointments; but he added that he could get scores of applications from girls to do the work for nothing, in the hope of future employment at a salary. That was a system, however, which it was not desirable the Committee should approve of, and the Postmaster General ought to be given sufficient money to enable him to pay salaries after three months apprenticeship, which was surely long enough in which to learn telephone work. As soon as these girls were appointed at £60 a year, a newspaper agitation was got up on the fields, it being urged that it was not right that these girls should be paid only £60 a year, while other girls were receiving £80; but the young women receiving £80 a year had been working longer in the service, and it would not have been fair to put beginners and experienced employees on a level. The committee would not be wrong in asking the Postmaster General to make the lowest salaries £80, ranging up to £100 a year. But whether the policy were right or wrong, it was never intended in any country that

the postal assistants should be given a living wage, and no one would think of giving a boy the same wages as a man. As to goldfields allowances, the principal dread amongst officials was not that they would not get £30, but that they were going to lose the £15. The system last year was, that if a man were married he received the allowance of £30, but if he remained single, he only got £15; and certainly a man who married on the goldfields deserved the extra £15.

THE PREMIER: It was gratifying to hear from hon. members, who were members of the Postal Commission, that the results of their investigations had been satisfactory. He felt sure the deliberations would prove of good to the department, which had been put on its mettle and shown weaknesses which could be remedied; and the Government would give attention to the report of the Commission, and try to carry out the reforms and alterations suggested. This was a very large department, but it had been reduced to some extent during the past year, and might be capable of further reduction in some respects in the coming year. But it was not an easy thing to reduce the number of employees; and Governments, like private individuals, did not like to turn adrift a lot of people if it could be avoided; and no doubt for that reason the Postmaster General desired to bring about the reduction gradually, as the country got more settled, rather than all at once. Salaries in the postal department were not very high, as a rule, in the lower grades, but they were very much higher than they used to be.

MR. MONGER: That was only natural, surely?

THE PREMIER: That was doubtful; but in any case the increases had been very considerable. In regard to the officers mentioned by the member for York (Mr. Monger), there was no objection to consider any requests made, if supported by hon. members, in regard to increases of salary, and the Government would meet the views of hon. members as far as possible. The Government had always suffered by the absence of any rule in regard to the increase of salaries in the civil service; and as the Public Service Bill had not become law, it was his present intention to next session

introduce a Bill giving power to make regulations for the service. He saw no reason why the civil service here should not be carried on under regulation as in the old country and other places, and that would probably be a better plan than having a hard-and-fast system, as was proposed in the Civil Service Bill. At any rate, regulations would serve the purpose for a time, and would be a great convenience to the Government and also to the service, giving as they would discretion for the recognition of special ability. Hon. members ought not to suppose that the officers mentioned had not had increases of salary during recent years, because they had, though perhaps not to so large an extent as others who had been referred to. The accountant, for instance, who was a most competent officer, and had grown gray-haired in the service and was in every way a credit, was receiving £300 a year when responsible government was instituted. In 1895 his salary was raised to £330, in 1896 to £370, in 1898 to £440; and the salary now was £445. So that while the salary might not be high, it had been gradually increased; and the same rule applied to every other principal officer. The manager of the Savings Bank, another old and valued officer, was receiving £260 in 1891, and £290 in 1894.

MR. MONGER: That officer was manipulating over a million of money, which no other bank manager in the colony was doing. What salaries did other bank managers receive? That was the light in which the question should be looked at.

THE PREMIER: It was not certain that that was the light in which the question should be regarded. The accountant in the Treasury, for instance, or the Under Treasurer, might manipulate four or five millions of money; and it would be impossible to increase salaries in proportion to the amount involved in the accounts. At any rate, the manager of the Savings Bank now received £400 per annum, while the superintendent of telegraphs received £500, and the latter salary had gradually risen from £300 a year since responsible government came in. All along the line the salaries of officers had been materially increased.

MR. MONGER: But look what they saved last year!

THE PREMIER: There was not much in that argument, for there was a great falling off in the revenue, and consequently a reduction in the expenditure. He felt sure the staff of some of the post offices was too large, but his knowledge of the department was not sufficient to enable him to speak positively; and especially did the staff at Coolgardie appear large, though the reason might be that it was a repeating office. The Postmaster General would, he felt sure, look into the matter, and if possible make some reductions. The general complaint by members in this House during many years had been that the chief officers were too well paid, and the subordinate officers received too little. The remedy advocated for that might be carried too far, because unless there was a good officer at the head of a business or the head of a department, that business would not go on properly, and it seemed preferable to pay well some good officer at the head of a large business rather than pay more to those beneath him, because the success of the business depended so much on the head of it. One was not unwilling to make some alterations in the direction urged by the member for York (Mr. Monger), and the Postmaster General had made recommendations on the subject. Following out the plan adopted by him (the Premier) last year, that no increases of salary above £200 a year should take place unless specially recommended by the head of the department, he might say these special recommendations were not given at the time the Estimates were prepared, though some reasons had been given since which were under consideration. He did not know that the reasons were very good. As to these officers, he could at least say they were excellent servants doing their work well, that they were trustworthy, a credit to the service, and deserving every consideration; but there must be some limit to these continual increases, because the colony would not be able to bear them. The civil service was increasing at a rapid rate. Hon. members could see the demands all over the colony were numerous and considerable, and there must come a time when the civil service would have to be reduced, unless our revenue increased largely. We might get

eaten up with the great expense entailed by the civil service, and that would be the end of it. It was as well that one should speak plainly; and unless there were some rules or regulations to be adopted for the conduct of the civil service, we might get into serious trouble, because every year there was the same demand for increases all round, and this was becoming worse than before. He disliked to make these observations, because they were distasteful to a number of colonists with whom he had worked all his life; but every year there was a demand for increases from one end of the service to the other. Could we afford these increases of salary all round?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No; we could not.

THE PREMIER: That was what he thought. We must try and do our best for these officers, and if we could only have some rules by which officers should get up to a certain grade, and the salary stop there until the particular officer was promoted to another grade carrying with it a higher salary, and so on to the top--unless we could do this, the country could not afford these continual increases. We all wanted to do the best we could for public servants, and give them as high a salary as was practicable; but the difficulty was that these demands for increases came from all quarters every year; and if a man got an increase of salary this year, instead of being content to wait two or three more years before asking again, he would make another demand next year for a further increase. The only wonder was, with all these continual increases, that the salaries had not got higher than they were; and he supposed the reason was that the officers when appointed did not receive the full amount which had been paid to the older servant who retired or had performed those duties.

MR. MONGER: Young Mr. Randell, in the Treasury Department, got the full salary, although newly appointed.

THE PREMIER: No; he did not get the full salary, but started at £25 less than the officer who previously performed the duties of accountant in the Treasury, the older officer having been in the service about 20 years. Certainly the accountant in the Treasury ought to get as much as an accountant in any other branch of the service.

MR. MONGER: The officer he referred to had points ahead of young Mr. Randell.

THE PREMIER: But that officer had never been in the Treasury, and we did not know what he might do if he were there. With regard to the loss of £900 in the General Post Office, into which matter the Royal Commission had inquired, he was glad that hon. members generally seemed to be so generous in regard to the officer whose salary was affected, and an effort would be made to give effect to the wishes of hon. members. But what were the facts? The Government had inquired into the matter previously, and found this officer had been negligent in not taking proper care of that money; for although he was an excellent officer, and was in every other way satisfactory, yet it was found that this money had been dealt with carelessly by being put in a bag and thrown in a corner, which was certainly not the way to take care of public money. The Commission had confirmed the decision which the Government previously arrived at, and no one could deny there was carelessness in regard to the loss of the £900. If the Government had not taken the action they did, and called upon the officer to repay the money by gradual reductions from his salary, there would have been hon. members in this House ready to call the Government to account for letting the officer off so easily.

MR. VOSPER: Very likely he (Mr. Vosper) would have had something to say about that.

THE PREMIER: Knowing there was a large amount of sympathy for this officer, it was thought to be not unlikely he might be able to repay the money with the assistance of subscriptions from fellow-servants in the post-office, or throughout the service; and seeing that the number of officers was so large, this expectation appeared to be not unreasonable. The Government, however, had done their duty in this matter: they found a certain verdict after careful investigation, and they found it with great regret. If members generally were of opinion that this verdict should not be inflicted on the officer, he would like a motion made on the subject, so that the Government should have a distinct expression of opinion, and then they would try to give effect to it. No one desired to take a

shilling away from this excellent officer, and he (the Premier) would rather put a shilling into his pocket. But hon. members were the guardians of the public purse, and he (the Premier) was not going to exercise any authority he might have on behalf of the Government in doing an act of clemency; but if hon. members wished to have it done, he would give the matter further consideration, and perhaps by Monday next would be able to come to some decision. Referring again to the general increases of salary, he was afraid a stop would have to be put to these annual increases unless in the lower grades of the service. If increases were to be made annually in the higher grades of the service, the expense to the country would be very great.

MR. WILSON: The eight-shillings-a-day man should get an advance: that was what he had advocated.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As had been frequently stated by him before, the civil service of this country was over-manned and under-paid. These were the two points which ought to be kept in view. The servants actually employed or retained should be the most efficient obtainable, and the men should be adequately paid. The Government could save money by having thoroughly capable men, and remunerating them at something like an adequate salary; but there must be a stop to these perpetual increases of salary. There was a standard which ought to be reached; and when an officer had reached it, he ought to be satisfied with the pay allowed for that standard, until promoted to some higher grade carrying with it higher pay. That was the principle of all Civil Service Acts elsewhere, and that ought to be the principle of any regulations made here. A certain official position should have attached to it a certain salary, and there should be no increase to any man when he had reached that standard unless he attained to a higher grade in the service, which higher grade had its own rate of pay. He (Mr. Illingworth) would like to see the suggested regulations made on these lines.

MR. WILSON: What was wanted was to attach a salary to a situation, and then find a man fit for the post. If a man was worth a better position, he would be advanced to more responsible work.

MR. WOOD: A good deal had been said to-night about the telephone service. A lot of salaries were at £55 and £50, and four were at £40. None of these persons connected with the telephone work, except cadets, should be paid less than £60 a year, and also, if possible, an increase should be given to those at present receiving £60.

MR. MONGER: Those receiving less than £60 were cadets.

MR. WOOD: Not those who received £55.

A MEMBER: They had received an increase of £10.

MR. WOOD: They had an increase of £10, but last year the increase was only £5. The telephone service was very good, except between Perth and Fremantle, but so far as the service between Perth and Fremantle was concerned, one could almost send a telegram and get a reply before being connected by telephone, and when one did get connected he could not hear a word. One was cut off and boxed about for half-an-hour, and then gave it up in disgust and wrote a letter.

MR. MORAN, referring to item "Post and telegraph master at Boulder, £225," said this office was the most under-paid in the country, yet it was doing a terrific business—£20,000 a month in money, or close on a quarter-of-a-million a year. Let members look at the few officers there were and the salaries, and also at the building. A bigger business was being done at the Boulder than at an other branch in the colony. It had the misfortune of always being treated as a subsidiary branch of Kalgoorlie, where there was a larger office, whereas the Boulder office was right in the centre of where the working miners lived, Kalgoorlie being the large commercial centre.

THE PREMIER: At Kalgoorlie £310 was paid, and at Boulder £225.

MR. MORAN: Might he suggest that the person getting £225 should receive an increase?

THE PREMIER: An increase of £25 had been given.

MR. MORAN: That was correct, but the increase was not much. The postmaster had never mentioned the matter to him (Mr. Moran). He believed the postmaster was a good officer. The officer, who had the handling of £20,000 a month, was doing very important work,

and received only £160 a year. That was not fair. If members would turn to item 590, by way of comparison, they would see that an officer filling a similar position at Coolgardie received £350 a year.

THE PREMIER: It was a big office, he supposed.

MR. MORAN: The person who filled the position at Coolgardie was an old and excellent officer, and was sent up in the old days when there was a gigantic amount of work; still, the disparity was somewhat noticeable. Under him there were officers receiving £260, £185, £170, and so on. One would like the Premier to notice this point.

THE PREMIER said he would make a note of it.

MR. MORAN: The population of the Boulder district would be doubled in the next twelve months, and that could not be said of Coolgardie. The office at the Boulder appeared to be very badly manned and rather under paid.

MR. ILLINGWORTH called attention to item 711, "Post and telegraph master at Day Dawn, £160." Last year the amount placed on the Estimates was £190, the sum expended being £173 6s. 8d.

THE PREMIER: Probably the officer was removed to another position and the new-comer entered on duty at a lower salary.

MR. ROBSON called attention to item 858, "Post and Telegraph master at Geraldton, £230." The sum estimated last year was £240, the amount paid being £230. This year only the same amount, £230, was placed on the Estimates. He would like to ask if there was any particular reason for the reduction. The officer was very efficient, and he had 21 officers under his control.

MR. MORAN: The office must be over-manned.

MR. ROBSON: No; it was under-manned. The Sunday morning delivery had been cut off, and consequently many people had given up postal boxes. Let the sum to which he had referred be compared with that given in another town of about equal size. At Bunbury, where there were only eight employees in the post office, the postmaster received a salary of £250.

THE PREMIER: Was it the same officer at Geraldton all along?

MR. ROBSON: Yes; he had been there for three or four years.

THE PREMIER: The matter could not be explained by him. The only explanation he could suggest was that there had been a change of officers. If that were not the case, he could not understand it. He noticed that the post and telegraph master at Geraldton used to receive £300 a year. On a change of appointment it was reduced to £240, and only £230 was paid. The hon. member said the officer had been there two or three years.

MR. ROBSON: Since Mr. Innes left.

THE PREMIER: Inquiry should be made by him, and he would give information to the hon. member. At present he could not understand it himself.

Item, Post and Telegraph Master, Norseman:

MR. CONOLLY: This officer, a married man, had been at Norseman three or four years, and his salary was £190, on a goldfield centre at some distance from any railway station.

THE PREMIER: Like all other postmasters he had a house.

MR. CONOLLY: But compare his position with that of the postmaster at Esperance, where living was cheap, and he received £250 and quarters.

THE PREMIER: He was an older officer. Every year applications for increases were dealt with. Did the hon. member want to give the Norseman man the Esperance man's salary?

MR. CONOLLY: No.

THE PREMIER: The Esperance postmaster was on the main line to Adelaide.

MR. CONOLLY: But at Norseman there was a larger staff.

THE PREMIER: The case would be noted. Hon. members were playing him off in favour of their friends; and he would have to contrive some plan for complying with their requests without injury to the country.

Item passed.

Item, Subsidies, coastal steam services:

MR. KINGSMILL: The mail service from Fremantle northward might be improved. The mails of the Pilbarra goldfield were landed at Cossack, and the steamer "Albany," though calling at Port Hedland, did not land the mails there, owing to some difficulty with the owners; hence the mails had to

be brought back from Cossack to Port Hedland. Goods consigned to Port Hedland, for this reason, arrived there two days before the bills of lading. This should be remedied, and a larger steamer should be provided.

THE PREMIER: It was surprising to hear the steamer "Albany" did not land mails when calling at Port Hedland. Perhaps the contract did not so provide. The matter would at once be investigated.

Item passed.

Item, Stationery and Printing:

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why this expenditure of £1,400? The men in the Government Printing Office, through slackness, were employed only five days in the week.

THE PREMIER: The Post Office printed little else but stamps. The Government Printing Office did not indent stationery for the departments. That was procured by requisition on the Government Storekeeper.

Item passed.

Item, Telegraph lines, as may be required:

MR. KINGSMILL: This amount, £850, must be inadequate; for it was rumoured that one line was contemplated, from Lake Way to Mt. Sir Samuel, which would cost £10,000.

THE PREMIER: About £5,000.

MR. KINGSMILL: The whole amount on the Loan Bill for "development generally" was £20,000. If from that sum were deducted £5,000 for a particular goldfield, that goldfield would receive more than its fair share of the vote.

THE PREMIER: There was still a sum on loan account available for the other goldfields.

MR. GREGORY: The sum of £850 for telegraphic extension was not sufficient, because there were sure to be large extensions required during the coming year. On the Loan Estimates the sum of £20,000 was placed for development generally; and as the information was not concise enough for hon. members to understand how the money was to be expended, he supposed the Premier would explain. He opposed very strongly the expenditure of £10,000 on the telegraph extension from Lake Way to Mount Sir Samuel, because there were only 300 people in the district, and the line would not be warranted. He had made appli-

cation for an extension from Menzies to Mulline, which was a growing and important district, from which about 1,000oz. of gold per month were produced, and where the public battery was returning a profit to the Government of £100 per month. Here even a telephone service would be of some good, but, of course, as the application had come from the Opposition side of the House it was refused, while a district a few miles away, where there were a few influential people with mining properties, was readily given facilities.

THE PREMIER: It was not expected the Government would spend much money this year on telegraph lines, except on the goldfields, but he believed there would be sufficient money from the balances, which with the £20,000 on the Loan Estimates would be all that was necessary this year, and for some time after this year. The £850 on the Estimates would be sufficient for the particular work proposed.

Item passed; other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Audit, £5,716:

MR. LEAKE asked whether it was proposed to do anything with the Audit Department. A few nights ago hon. members were discussing a very interesting report from the Auditor General, in which it was disclosed that the Railway Department were not carrying on business as someone in the Auditor General's Department appeared to desire.

THE PREMIER: It was very unjustifiable language to suggest "misappropriation."

MR. LEAKE: The Railway Department was accused of misappropriating money, and of hoodwinking the Auditor General.

THE PREMIER: It was "misappropriation" to which exception was taken.

MR. LEAKE: Everybody objected to anything like misappropriation.

MR. KINGSMILL: But not to "hoodwinking"?

THE PREMIER: That was a matter of opinion.

MR. LEAKE: It was a strong expression of opinion from an officer who was a parliamentary servant, with the duty of keeping a check on reckless and unauthorised expenditure by the Government. Was the annual threat or promise, that the Audit Act should be amended,

likely to be given effect to at any reasonable date? There had not been anything suggested during this session to that effect, and something ought to be done to give the Auditor General the full powers he was constantly urging were necessary to protect the public interest. If we had not been told year after year by the Auditor General, acting, it was believed under legal advice, that the Act required amendment, it might perhaps not be necessary to mention the matter, but if any hon. member would take the trouble to look at the Auditor General's report, and also the schedule to the Excess Bill, he would see a very constant reference to the letter "J," which meant that most of the sums under that letter were outside any vote.

THE PREMIER: All of the sums.

MR. LEAKE: Ministers managed to get out of little financial difficulties by running to the Auditor General and using this schedule "J."

THE PREMIER: The Auditor General had nothing to do with it.

MR. LEAKE: The Auditor General had to pass it.

THE PREMIER: The Auditor General certified there were no funds available.

MR. LEAKE: And then came in "J," in defiance of the Auditor General and everybody else.

THE PREMIER: The Auditor General certified there were no funds available.

MR. LEAKE: The Auditor General could not help doing so, and that was what was objected to.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was unauthorised expenditure.

MR. LEAKE: Practically, it was unauthorised expenditure.

THE PREMIER: Exactly so.

MR. LEAKE: The Auditor General had no power to withhold his authority.

THE PREMIER: The Auditor General did not give authority, but he certified there were no funds available.

MR. LEAKE: That was just it, and the Ministers had a free hand.

THE PREMIER: The Governor certified.

MR. LEAKE: But the Governor acted under the advice of his Ministers.

THE PREMIER: What else could the Government do?

MR. LEAKE: The Government should not waste money: that was the way out of the difficulty. Something ought to be

done, and if there was force in what the Auditor General said, namely that he had no control over the staff who audited the railway accounts, it was time he had. Judging from what had been said in Parliament, the Auditor General was refused a sufficient staff to carry on a proper audit of the railway accounts; but facilities denied to the Auditor General were granted to the Railway Department, and the department the Auditor General was supposed to check had unlimited control over its own finances.

THE PREMIER: The department were bound by the Estimates.

MR. LEAKE: That was so; but it was such a "bound" that the Minister evaded the Estimates, the Auditor General, Parliament, and the Constitution altogether. These matters should be put under proper control, because Parliament seemed to have none. The Auditor General was crying out for this reform, and could not get it, and it was time something was done in a practical way. The Committee ought not to be silent on this question, but insist on more regard being had to the terms of the Auditor General's report, the reiteration of which was marked; but to recommend seemed to suggest only disregard amongst those to whom recommendations were directed. If matters were allowed to go on as in the past, then either the Audit Act was a farce or the Auditor General was an unnecessary officer. He was not making an attack on the Auditor General, because he knew with what energy that officer threw himself into his work, and the keenness of his criticism was only an evidence of his desire to do his duty; and both the Ministry and hon. members should respect his representations and give him as much power as he required. Matters had come to a very serious pass when, in a special report such as hon. members had had this session, and which was practically still under criticism, expressions of the kind already mentioned could be given voice to. Some understanding must be come to sooner or later on this subject; and it was to be hoped an assurance would be given by the Government that steps would be taken to give effect to the recommendations the Auditor General had so constantly made.

THE PREMIER said he did not remember exactly the terms of the minute re-

ferred to by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), but he believed one of the clerks in the Audit Office thought himself justified in using the word "misappropriation" in connection with the Railway Department. In the usual acceptation of the word, "misappropriation" was next-door to "stealing," and it was a very improper remark for an officer of the Audit or any other officer to make use of respecting a Government department. If an officer misappropriated, he ought to be proceeded against. What was really meant was that there was some difficulty as to the classification. There must have been some attempt to charge an amount of expenditure to a wrong item, or something of that sort; but there were plenty of expressions to meet that case without using the word "misappropriation." He was not able to promise the member for Albany that the Government would introduce legislation on the subject this session; but the Government might be able to do it next session if it was very necessary. Our Audit Act was a good one, in many respects similar to the Audit Acts in Queensland and South Australia. One of the complaints the Auditor General made was that he could not exercise the powers which the Act intended he should exercise, that of summoning persons before him by force and committing them to prison for contempt of Court if they refused to come. The Auditor General was given the power of a Supreme Court Judge, in the Act; but it was not easy to exercise that power. He did not know whether the Auditor Generals in the other colonies could issue warrants to arrest persons and commit them to prison, but one would hesitate to invest the Auditor General in this colony with that power. It seemed a great power to commit a person to prison if the person did not come at 10 o'clock, or if he came at half-past 10, or did not come at all. Perhaps some hon. member opposite would tell the House whether the Auditor General had that power. If the power were used, a *mandamus* would probably be issued, or a writ of *habeas corpus*, to get the man out and also ask the Auditor General to show cause why he did this. It was one of the things which the Auditor General felt he could not do. Then there was some difficulty as to transfers and the sale of Government

property. The Auditor General thought that no property should be transferred from one vote to another without his authority. He (the Premier) was not prepared to go so far as that. The Auditor General was an auditor, and the system of audit in this colony was after payment, not before; therefore, he could not see why the Auditor General should be given the power to interfere with the Government in regard to transfers from one vote to another. It seemed to him (the Premier) that if the Auditor General had any complaint to make, he had the opportunity of making it. If the Auditor General found the Treasurer transferred votes in the wrong way, he could protest to the Minister and the Government, and bring the matter under notice. If an error had occurred, and if the Treasurer and the Government were obdurate, it was an easy thing, and the proper way of doing it, for the Auditor General, who had the right, and it was a great privilege too, of reporting the matter to Parliament. What more power did the Auditor General want than that? We could not have "two kings of Brentford": that would not work. We could not have responsible government in the colony, and also put up another king who would rule responsible Ministers with a rod of iron, and tell them that they were not to do this or that. One did not think anyone should advocate that. There was not more power given in any part of the world, in England or anywhere else, to the Auditor General. The Auditor General here had not to dictate to the Government what they should do and what they should not do. Before any money was paid a Minister had to certify to the Auditor General that it was available: if there was no vote available the Auditor General certified to that effect; then the Governor, acting on the advice of Ministers, advised Parliament that it was an illegal act and unlawful; and the Government thereafter had to come to Parliament and run the criticism of hon. members to get the approval of Parliament. These checks were sufficient to deter Ministers from rushing into unauthorised expenditure. Supposing any Minister wished to expend money for which there was no authority, the Government had to go to Parliament and explain the matter. If there were no Parlia-

ment to go to, and no Auditor General to report, one could understand Ministers spending money with a light heart; but all these things were arranged in such a way that there was plenty of check for Parliament under the existing Audit Act in regard to expenditure. If Parliament said the Government could not expend any money without authority, that would be all right; but such a thing was not done anywhere—it could not be done, it was impossible. The Estimates were closely followed, so that was not necessary now. Altogether he did not think any more powers were necessary for the Auditor General. He did not mind the Auditor General having any amount of power personally, because one recognised the Auditor General as an officer who did a great amount of good in keeping the expenditure in check, and seeing that money was only spent on the votes as authorised by Parliament; but if this Committee wanted to give the Auditor General more powers, he (the Premier) certainly objected to pleasing the Auditor General. He did not speak only as a Minister but as a member of Parliament, and he said it was not the Auditor General's business to override the wishes of Ministers, because Ministers were responsible to the Governor and to the Assembly: he did not see why Ministers should be responsible to the Auditor General. The Auditor General had written a great many reports, and indeed one thought he had written too strongly; and now he (the Premier) had the opportunity of saying so, he might tell hon. members that in his reports the Auditor General's officers had certainly gone beyond the bounds of what was reasonable and proper in such reports. Nothing was gained by hitting hard or saying unpleasant things. When a person had a duty to perform, he should do it as pleasantly as possible. The Auditor General was a friend of his (the Premier's), and he had worked with that officer for many years, and could support him; but he could not support the language which had been used in the reports: it was too strong for the case. In regard to the term "misappropriated," he wondered the Auditor General should have allowed it to go forward. The Auditor General should have sent the report back and asked the officer to use becoming lan-

guage. He (the Premier) thought he might look into the Audit Act during the recess and see if he could not bring the provisions up to date with the Audit Acts of the other colonies. The Audit Act was brought up to date in 1891, and had not been touched since; but he would undertake to look into the matter during the recess, and see if there was anything not in our Act which was to be found in the Acts of the other colonies, and which might bring our Act up to date, giving the Auditor General all the powers that Auditors General in the other colonies possessed. There was one point upon which the Auditor General touched: his salary was not protected by statute. That could be done, and there was no reason why it should not be done. However there was not much in that. It was not likely the Government would propose to interfere with the salary of the Auditor General. The Government could not dismiss that officer: they could only suspend him, and it rested with the Assembly and another place to follow up the suspension by some resolution. If no resolution was adopted, the officer was reinstated, so that his position was perfectly assured under the Constitution. The only thing was that the salary was not fixed by statute.

MR. GREGORY: The salary was small in comparison with that paid to Auditors General in other colonies.

THE PREMIER: That might be so, but this Government did not follow the other colonies in salaries, always. He could give many instances in which the salaries were less in this colony than in the other colonies amongst the higher officials. The salary of the Auditor General was £700: it was not high, but it was not very low. A short time ago a Supreme Court Judge received only £900 a year; and many officers in the service who had rendered far longer service than the Auditor General did not receive more than the Auditor General did. Take the Commissioner of Police, for instance, receiving £750, and he had been 50 years in the service.

MR. GREGORY: The salary was too much.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps the hon. member did not know more about the officer than other members. There were many other officers who did not get

more salary than the Auditor General, but who had rendered longer service. He did not object to the Auditor General getting more salary, if Parliament could increase the salaries of the other higher officials at the same time. There must be some consistency in these matters. He would be glad to look into the matter which had been mentioned, and see during the recess if the Audit Act required altering. He was not prepared at all to meet the views of the Auditor General in giving him control of the finances of the colony: that officer had no right whatever to it. No Auditor General had the power of preventing the Government making transfers from one vote to another, so long as it was done under the law. If the Government did not do that, it was for the Auditor General to protest and report the Government to Parliament.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The member for Albany could not be serious in the objection he had taken to excess votes. The hands of the Government could not be tied completely. Votes were exceeded in exceptional circumstances in this colony, and it was difficult to estimate exactly what amount would be required for a certain work, particularly in a colony like this, which advanced so quickly in certain directions. Take the vote under Post and Telegraphs for telegraph lines, which was £850: supposing some important centre sprung into existence on the goldfields, and it was demanded on all sides that a telegraph line should be pushed forward as soon as possible to that particular locality; then the £850 might all have been absorbed, and hon. members would not wish the Government to have its hands completely tied when such a line was required. Ministers watched excess votes very closely. Take also the item for telegraph repairs: there might be a tremendous cyclone in the northern part of the colony, destroying the telegraph line for miles, a thing quite unanticipated, and the ordinary Estimates could not be expected to provide for such an emergency. One was sure the House would not desire the Government to have the whole of the telegraph system of the colony closed, and the communication between us and the outside world *via* Broome cut off, because there were no vote providing for such an

emergency. The Government were very careful in these matters. Hon. members must agree that in exceptional cases, such as he had alluded to, the Government should have power to ask the Executive Council to approve of the necessary expenditure.

MR. GREGORY: A large number of members considered that the salary of the Auditor General should not be subject to the Government in power, but should be fixed by statute, the same as that of any Supreme Court Judge. The salary of the Auditor General was at present insufficient. We might not always have the same Government in power; on some future occasion a dishonest Government might be in existence; and if the Auditor General had to look to such Government for an increase, things would be bad for him, if he dared to say anything against the Government. It would be better for us to do the same as was done in all the other colonies. In South Australia there were two Auditors General, each receiving £1,000; in Victoria there were three, each receiving £1,000; and in New South Wales, three.

THE PREMIER: There was only one in South Australia now.

MR. GREGORY: The last vote he saw showed two, but there might have been a reduction since. Anyhow, within the last two or three years there were two, at a thousand a year each. Moreover, the Auditor General should have charge of all the Government departments. Members on the Opposition side of the House objected strongly to the Railway Department having its own auditors.

THE PREMIER: There must be auditors in the Railway Department.

MR. GREGORY: But they should be altogether under the control of the Auditor General, if we were to have a proper audit which would be received by the House with any favour.

THE PREMIER: The Auditor General could audit, too.

MR. GREGORY: The Auditor General had control of what we might term the final statements of the auditors of the Railway Department; but his auditors did not go from station to station and see there was a proper record taken in all the offices.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The system prevailing here existed also in Victoria and South Australia.

MR. GREGORY: Members generally thought the whole of the Audit Department should be under the control of the Auditor General. He was not very desirous that the Auditor General should get a higher salary, but members wished his salary to be fixed by statute, and his position to be unimpeachable, except by a vote of the House. The House would then be able to rely in every way upon every report the Auditor General desired to lay before them.

MR. WILSON: The Auditor General should be as much as possible outside the influence of the Government or the departments, and be as independent as we could make him, to carry out his duties properly. Therefore one did not quite agree with the Premier that the Auditor General should always appeal to the Minister, and practically take his ruling.

THE PREMIER: That was not said by him. He said "protest."

MR. WILSON: There seemed good grounds for the protest in the report of the Auditor General. For instance, there was the plant the Premier referred to. It struck him (Mr. Wilson) and others that at present the Government could easily reappropriate moneys from one vote to another. Supposing the vote for the Fremantle harbour works had been expended, if there were £100,000 to the credit of the Bunbury harbour works, all the Government would have to do would be to transfer £50,000 worth of plant.

THE PREMIER: The Auditor General would "pick one up" on that.

MR. WILSON: That was what the Auditor General was doing.

THE PREMIER: There was no specific case at all, but an abstract case.

MR. WILSON: The Auditor General went farther in his report than he (Mr. Wilson) would go, in asserting that authority should be obtained to say certain plant ought to be transferred. Of course that was a question for the Engineering Department.

THE PREMIER: The Treasury had to approve of it before the plant could be transferred.

MR. WILSON: The Treasury might have to approve of it, but that did not get over the difficulty.

THE PREMIER: The plant must be valued, and everything.

MR. WILSON: That he quite agreed with ; but the Government could transfer the plant and take cash out of one vote for another.

THE PREMIER: Plant could be sold to the general public and the money obtained. There was never very much.

MR. WILSON: But there might be. There was proof conclusive that something like what he had referred to had gone on, because the Auditor General had pointed it out in his report. As to the terms used by a subordinate officer in the Audit Department, in connection with some railway account, they were very strong. Either the officer had used the words without due consideration, and they ought to be withdrawn, or, if he gave the matter due consideration, and still thought he was right, and that the money had been improperly used on the railways, he should be called upon to prove it. If he could prove it, someone else should be dealt with ; or, if he could not prove it, he himself should be dealt with promptly. It was most damaging to have these statements going about, and members would not be doing their duty to their constituents and the country at large if they did not take notice of them. As to the Excess Bill, enormous Excess Bills had been brought down to the House, not last year, but in previous years. The Premier explained that to some extent by attributing them to the terrible rush of work which went on at that time, and the necessities of developing the country very quickly ; and also said the amounts of the Excess Bills had now been brought within measurable bounds. Perhaps the reason of the reduction was due more to the fact that we had not quite so much money to spend on the necessities of the country. He believed that if the revenue had been in existence the Premier would have found means of spending it. The Excess Bills must be brought down to as low an ebb as possible.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear. He quite agreed with the hon. member.

MR. WILSON: Excess Bills were an incentive to keep Estimates low, in order that there might be no trouble in passing them through Parliament, and then make the shortage good by this form "J" which had been spoken of. It was easy to introduce Estimates 5, 10, or 20 per

cent. lower than what was thought would be required, hoping the Government might be able to keep within those bounds, knowing they had this form "J" to go upon. He admitted that the Government had to face the ordeal of bringing an Excess Bill down to Parliament, but that was nothing to a Ministry such as we had in Western Australia, with its large majority, which would vote any amount of money the Premier liked to ask for. Members were justified in urging the Government to do their best to control this excess expenditure passed under form "J."

Vote put and passed.

Observatory, £3,123 4s. :

MR. MORAN: Where was the necessity for a meteorological computer and an astronomical observer, as well as two astronomical computers and observers? What was done by the two first-mentioned officers?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: One attended to meteorological phenomena ; the other to the stars.

MR. MORAN: Both were astronomical. There was also an astrophotograph observer and mechanic.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: To keep records.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The greatest waste was the interest on the big building.

MR. MORAN: What were these officers' duties?

THE PREMIER: The duties were the same as at any other Observatory. The meteorological department had been in existence for some 20 years ; and, since being transferred to the department of the Government Astronomer, the records of the rainfall and the thermometrical and barometrical readings were much more complete than before. To say that scientific work was unnecessary for daily wants was in a sense true, for men might live without it ; but the fact of every important country having an Observatory indicated that such an establishment was useful, even from a practical point of view. The other day, when the "Penguin" was surveying at Onslow, the longitude of that place had been determined with the greatest nicety by signals from the Observatory to the local post office ; so with the longitudes of the Ashburton and of Perth, which, before there was an Observatory,

had not been accurately known. There would soon be a time-ball at Fremantle; and no port of any prominence was without such a contrivance for regulating ships' chronometers. The Observatory would almost immediately become an educational establishment for the instruction of navigators, surveyors, and engineers, as in Sydney and Adelaide. Again, at the Observatory one could ascertain accurately the time of day, which could not be done until recently. The Astronomer had a magnificent telescope, fitted with photographic apparatus, by which the whole of the heavens in the southern hemisphere could be photographed. It was something to have such a scientific institution in our midst. Now that the colony was getting out of swaddling clothes, it must do something for science, to show that we were not mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. In other countries, not only the Government but private individuals endowed observatories. The Observatory was a most democratic idea, and it was surprising to find an hon. member from a democratic constituency opposing it. In other colonies the labour vote was always cast in favour of education and of learned institutions; and surely no one would object to having one scientific institution in this community.

MR. MORAN: Still, where was the necessity for a second astronomical observer?

THE PREMIER said he would investigate the point.

Vote put and passed.

Photo-lithographic, £6,683 16s. 10d.—agreed to.

This completed the votes for the department.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:30 o'clock, until the next evening.

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 17th November, 1899.

Question: Postal Commission, Recommendation—Cemeteries Bill, first reading—Executors' Commission Bill, second reading (negated)—Laud Act Amendment Bill, second reading (concluded)—Perth Tramways Amendment Bill, second reading; Select Committee—Motion: To Postpone Orders (withdrawn) Sluicing and Dredging for Gold Bill, in Committee, Clause 5, progress—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—POSTAL COMMISSION. RECOMMENDATION.

MR. RASON asked the Premier, Whether it was the intention of the Government to give effect to the recommendation contained in paragraph 62 of the report of the Royal Commission on the Postal and Telegraph Service, in reference to the monthly deduction from the salary of G. P. Stevens.

THE PREMIER replied:—Having gathered that the opinion of this House is in accord with the report of the Royal Commission on the Postal and Telegraph Service in regard to this matter, the Government propose to give effect to it.

CEMETERIES BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

EXECUTORS' COMMISSION BILL.

SECOND READING.

MR. LEAKE (Albany: in charge of the Bill) said: I move the second reading of a Bill intituled "An Act to amend the Law relating to Executors." The whole scope of the Bill, so to speak, is to be found in Clause 4, whereby an executor may petition the Supreme Court to be permitted to charge out of the estate of a deceased person a commission. As the law now stands, an executor is not entitled to make any charges against the estate, except for actual expenses; and this Bill will place the executor on the same footing as an administrator. The principle has already been recognised by an Act in force in the colony, whereby the West Australian Trustee, Executor and Agency Company is enabled to carry on