

<url>[https://www.historichansard.net/hofreps/1901/19011011\\_reps\\_1\\_5](https://www.historichansard.net/hofreps/1901/19011011_reps_1_5)</url>

1901-10-11

House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker

took the chair at 10.30 a.m., and read prayers.

PAPER

Sir GEORGE

TURNER (for

Mr.

Kingston) laid on the table -

Regulations under the Customs Act 1901.

SUPPLY BILL (No. 4)

<page>5977</page>

In Committee of Supply :

Sir GEORGE

TURNER (Balaclava-

Treasurer). - I move -

That a sum not exceeding £928,322 be granted to His Majesty for or towards defraying the services for the year ending 30th June, 1902.

Honorable members will recollect that some time ago the committee passed Supply for a period of three months, which ended on the 30th September. It is now necessary for the Government to obtain further Supply in order that 'the Treasurer may be able to make the necessary provision for the payment of salaries', and the various other claims that are made upon the Government from time to time. Some days ago I circulated, for the information of honorable members, a list of the amounts asked for by the various departments. As I said yesterday, however, I had had no opportunity of checking the requirements there stated, and when I saw the total amount I was satisfied that the heads of departments were asking for more than I was justified in requesting the House to grant. Yesterday I went as carefully as possible through the various demands that were made, and I have made a deduction of about a quarter of a million from the amount originally asked for. That, I think, was only right and fair to the House, because, while the Treasurer may be justified in asking for Supply sufficient for three months, he ought not to request more than that, or, at all events, he should not ask for more than will afford a reasonable margin beyond what he expects to expend - otherwise he might find that he had four months Supply instead of three. I took out some amounts that were not required to be paid before the 31st of December, I have reduced other payments, and I have only allowed for those amounts which I think it is absolutely necessary to pay during the currency of the three months. The total expenditure on votes comes to £3,636,577, and one-half of that amount is £1,818,288. In addition to this there were large arrears that came forward from the last financial year, which would have to be paid either during the quarter which has passed or during the current quarter. The Estimates were somewhat increased last quarter, because these arrears necessarily had to be paid. The amounts that, in the ordinary course, would be paid before the 30th June to mail contractors and others are, as a rule, paid early in July. Supply was granted so late in June that it was impossible for me to pay these accounts before the 30th June, and, as honorable members are aware, under our Audit Act we have to close down sharp on the 30th June. These arrears amount to £246,899, and the total expenditure for the half-year, plus arrears, therefore, comes to £2,065,187. The first Supply amounted to £1,010,732, and now I am asking for £928,322, making a total of £1,939,054 or something under the total expenditure for the half-year, according to the Estimates. There are no extraordinary payments provided for. I have looked carefully over the list, and I have provided for just the ordinary expenditure. There are increases of salary provided for in the Estimates, but none of these increases will be paid until the Estimates have been finally dealt with. Honorable members will, I dare say, notice with pleasure that I have provided a considerable sum for maintenance and repairs - about £40,000 altogether - because complaints have been made to the department of Home Affairs with regard to the delay in carrying out repairs. I put down a very small amount for this work during the previous quarter, with the result that we have not been able to go on as rapidly as we ought to have done, and we are therefore asking for a larger amount now. It is somewhat late in October for us to bring

down a Supply Bill, but circumstances over which we had no control compelled us to hold over the financial statement until this week. Therefore I am very anxious now to get this- Supply through both Houses to-day. The Senate does not sit until "Wednesday next, and unless I get the Bill through that Chamber to-day it will be Wednesday before it can be passed and Thursday before I can get it assented to. In the meantime, there are claims which I am very anxious to pay at the earliest possible moment. I do not know that there are any really debatable matters in the Supply, and, therefore, I would ask honorable members to reserve any comments on the Estimates themselves until we have them before us - I hope in a month or six weeks' time at the outside. If, in the meantime, honorable members desire any information in regard to any of the items my colleagues and I will be only too glad to supply it.

Mr REID

- I think that under the circumstances the committee will be disposed to fully accept the assurance the Treasurer has just given us. Under ordinary conditions this is a matter which might provoke considerable discussion, but inasmuch as the financial statement has just been delivered, and honorable members will soon have full opportunities of dealing with every subject which presents itself to us under this motion, I think we might well - unless some honorable member has some matter of great importance to mention allow this Supply to go through without any delay, in the interests of public business. I have a number of observations to make upon the financial administration of the Government but I can well postpone these until the general debate upon the financial statement of the Treasurer, when I think we shall have much larger scope, and where such a discussion would perhaps be more appropriate. Therefore, I am quite prepared to facilitate the Treasurer in getting Supply through at once. At the same time, I think honorable members will agree with me that this granting of a three months' Supply should not be made a precedent. The more regular course is to grant one month's Supply at a time, and we must not make it too easy for this or any other Government to dispense with the proper constitutional method of obtaining Supply. The Prime Minister has, however, fully recognised this, and has asked us, on this occasion as a matter of unusual urgency, to give this three months' Supply. Under the circumstances, I shall facilitate the passing of the Bill to-day.

Mr POYNTON

- It is not my desire to prevent the Supply from going through, but I should certainly like to have more information as to the expenditure that is provided for under the heading of "contingencies." In connexion with the Estimates, I find that the word "contingencies" covers an enormous amount of money; and I think it is necessary that we should have the details clearly before us, so that we may know what we are voting. As a matter of fact, under "other expenditure" - which means new expenditure - "contingencies" represent a greater sum than salaries. I am not going to allow these items to pass, at any rate in the future, without further information than we have at the present time. Under the head of the House of Representatives, for instance, there is set down £1,500 for contingencies, and £1,554 for salaries.

Sir George Turner

- The contingencies are large, because they all come in during the session, whereas salaries are spread over the whole year.

Mr POYNTON

- We ought to know what these contingencies mean.

Sir George Turner

- They are all set out in the Estimates.

Mr POYNTON

- Then we have the large sum of £3,000, in connexion with Government printing, put amongst the contingencies.

Sir George Turner

- Most of the printing is done during the session. I could not set out every detail. I should have to re-copy the whole of the Estimates, and honorable members will - not I am sure, ask me to do that.

<page>5978</page>

Mr POYNTON

- I hope the Treasurer will not find fault with me. I take his assurance that the item is for printing; but, at the same time, it might cover a multitude of sins. The same remark applies to the old expenditure; but I am not taking so much exception to that, because in that case, the States have handed it over to us as a

sort of legacy. Nevertheless, we shall, later on, require more information in regard to old expenditure ; and, as to new expenditure, the Treasurer would save time by giving full particulars of what is covered by contingencies.

Mr. HIGGINS

(Northern Melbourne). I should like to ask the Treasurer if any of the items under the Defence department include any moneys proposed to be expended from loans

1

Sir George Turner

- Certainly not ; the items are simply revenue expenditure, and are not intended to cover new buildings.

Mr HIGGINS

- I am not alluding to new buildings. From the Budget statement I understand that a quantity of ammunition and other things are to be purchased with loan moneys.

Sir George Turner

- No ammunition is to be purchased out of loan moneys. There is £70,000 provided on the Estimates for ammunition.

Mr HIGGINS

- I have not the Estimates by me, but I have a clear vision of what I saw there, namely, that a large amount was to be expended out of loan money for ammunition and for other purposes, which ought to be provided for out of revenue.

Sir George Turner

- The honorable and learned member will not find ammunition mentioned in the loan schedules, though he will see rifles and guns.

Mr HIGGINS

- Ammunition is covered by the schedule. Though it is not mentioned, there is an expression used which distinctly is meant to cover ammunition. Do any of the numerous items to which I am referring include sums which are to be expended out of loan moneys 1

Sir George Turner

- Not a shilling ; it is all money to be paid out of revenue.

Mr HIGGINS

- The Treasurer has intimated that the " other " expenditure - that is expenditure other than that connected with the transferred departments - amounts to about £269,000. That can easily be brought out by debiting to loans a great deal of the expenditure which ought to come out of the revenue ; it is simply a matter of bookkeeping. Of course, according to the estimate this expenditure should not exceed £300,000.

Sir George Turner

- But that does not include anything for new buildings, for which I am providing £24,000.

Mr HIGGINS

- I do not want to be drawn off the track. I hope the committee will understand that this loan money is meant to cover a number of other things besides buildings. It is meant to cover a number of matters which, ordinarily and properly, in any good system of finance, ought to be provided for out of revenue. I have to warn honorable members that the very greediest department with which we have to deal is the Defence department.

Sir John Forrest

- Do not put it in that way.

Mr HIGGINS

- I do not say a word against the Minister for Defence, but, unless the right honorable gentleman is careful, he will be helpless in the hands of numerous commandants and others. Here we have about 19 pages of supply schedules, and about 13 are taken up with Defence. It is very significant that the most unprofitable department is that which occupies most of the space in the Federal Supply schedules. I fancy there will be a big discussion eventually on the question whether we are to give the Treasurer power to borrow for the purposes he has mentioned. I feel that we are getting into the old rut of financial policy which has injured several States of Australia.

Mr Wilks

- A policy of drift.

Mr HIGGINS

- It is a policy of borrowing for purposes which should be defrayed from revenue. I did hope that in starting the career of this new Commonwealth, we should have had an announcement that the Government were going to use none of the loan moneys in this way, except in cases of absolute necessity and of emergency of an extreme sort, or where the expenditure was for remunerative investment. We cannot too soon lay down the principle that we will not allow future generations to be burdened with expenditure which we ought to pay ourselves. Honorable members here represent living persons - the existing electors of Australia - but we have none here representing the future electors of Australia. The worst of it is that the whole tendency is to lift the burden from the present taxpayers and put it on future taxpayers. Whatever may be said in regard to the expenditure in other departments, there is no department which is so unremunerative, so costly, and so greedy, as the department of Defence. I intend to object to any loan moneys being raised or applied for the purposes of defence. I am not speaking at present of the permanent forts, which may present an exceptional case from which future generations can reap a benefit; but in the Budget statement there is a clear intimation, which we ought to weigh well, that the Treasurer intends to throw on to the £1,000,000 loan, a number of items of expenditure which properly, and in the eye of any business man, ought to fall on revenue to be obtained by our own payments. We have a trust not only for the present taxpayers but for future taxpayers, and we ought to see that we do not allow the position to be glossed over. It is very easy, by throwing the expenditure on loans, to make out that we are keeping within the £300,000 limit.

Sir George Turner

- There was no expenditure for new buildings provided for in the £300,000.

Mr HIGGINS

- No one says that there was.

Sir George Turner

- But the honorable and learned member wants me to pay for all new buildings out of the £300,000.

Mr HIGGINS

- If the Treasurer says that, he misunderstands me, because my position is absolutely different. What I am saying is that I object to the Treasurer using loan moneys to meet expenditure which ought to come out of the revenue. The Treasurer has indicated that he intends to expend some of the £1,000,000 loan for defence purposes, and for such defence purposes as ought to be met by expenditure from revenue.

Sir George Turner

- Surely we can discuss this question better when I bring in the Loan Bill, and we have all the details before us.

Mr HIGGINS

- Do I understand from the Treasurer that none of the items here under the department of Defence involve the application of loan moneys 1

Sir George Turner

- Not a shilling.

Mr HIGGINS

- Then we are free afterwards to deal with the whole question.

Sir George Turner

- Yes ; there is not a shilling in the items which deals with loan moneys.

Mr. REID

(East Sydney). - I hope we shall make up our minds whether we are going to discuss the whole financial policy of the Government while the Senate is waiting to pass a Supply Bill in order to pay salaries, or whether we intend to reserve our observations until we can deal with the proposals of the Government at one time. The Opposition are not delaying the progress of the Bill in any way. I could easily make a speech on the subject, but I shall have an opportunity of doing so in two or three days' time. I hope honorable members will allow this general discussion to stand over until we are dealing with the general financial policy and proposals of the Government. I am quite as much in earnest in this matter as the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne, but I feel that there is no time, under existing circumstances, to enter into such questions, and I should like to see the rest of the time to-day devoted to

important measures now before the House.

<page>5980</page>

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I subscribe to all that the leader of the Opposition has said, but I have to complain that there are no loan funds available for necessary public works. I believe in every word of the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne, who has uttered a caution which is wise and opportune ; and I hope with him that we shall not resort to loan funds except for purely reproductive purposes. I want to call attention to a very serious disability which the services of the whole of the States are labouring under by reason of their being no loan funds available at the present time. The Post-office, we know, is a constantly expanding department, in which fresh expenditure is continuously required on permanent reproductive works. But there are no loan funds available for expenditure in that direction, and the consequence is that these works are entirely suspended. The Postmaster-General and the Treasurer should, on taking office, either have made arrangements with the States to carry on the normal expenditure on these new services, or have themselves raised a loan for the purpose. I do not care how small a loan it might have been, but there should be a fund out of which the services could have been continued. Honorable members will perhaps realize my point by an illustration afforded in my own electorate, and that instance is multiplied in other electorates. In the fruit-growing districts in my electorate, those engaged in that industry have been trying for some time to get connected with Sydney by telephone. All arrangements for this were made last year. A guarantee was asked from the fruit-growers by the Government, and that guarantee was forthcoming, and a deposit paid in January. Notwithstanding that fact, no work has yet been done.

Sir George Turner

- Why did not the

States start some of these works ? We did not take over the departments till the 1st March.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The Treasurer knows just how long it takes a State department to make a beginning - even the Victorian department. Now, honorable members are told that there are no funds to enable the work to be carried out until loan moneys are available. The same condition of affairs prevails in regard to urgently required additions to post-offices. At one place, with which I am acquainted, the population has of late considerably increased, with the result that people cannot gain access to the local post-office during certain hours of the day, to say nothing of transacting any business.

Sir George Turner

- If we gave everything that is asked for there would soon be trouble. We should be blamed for the expenditure.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- This is an expenditure which the Treasurer cannot escape. I am not talking about superfluous expenditure.

Mr Deakin

- No one thinks that expenditure in his own constituency is superfluous.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The Postmaster-General says that this expenditure must be incurred, and will be incurred as soon as loan funds are available. If the Government, through their own mouth-piece, declare that these works are absolutely necessary, surely some arrangement should have been made with the Public Works departments in the various States for the continuance of extension operations in connexion with post-offices. I hope that some arrangement will be speedily arrived at which will enable these works to be put in hand. There is another matter to which I should like to direct attention. In New South Wales I believe that the line repairers are regarded as temporary hands. They have not those privileges which attach to the permanent servants of the State.

Sir William Lyne

- Has not that been promised?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- There was a promise made by the Minister, but it was taken back by the head of the Government. The latter gave us to understand that there was not much likelihood of the Ministry being bound by the declaration of the Minister for Home Affairs. He would not commit himself to saying that the promise made

by the Minister would be carried out. If what I ask is going to be done, I have nothing further to say. I merely desire that the line repairers in New South Wales should be placed in a similar position to that which they occupy in the other States. Either there must be a levelling down or a levelling up. I hope that this Parliament will not permit of any levelling down process so far as the ordinary services of the Commonwealth are concerned. The disposition should be rather to level up those services to the highest possible point. I trust that we shall soon see a realization of the promise made so definitely to the House by the Minister for Home Affairs. I wish also to say a word or two upon the question of increments to transferred officers. It is well known that in New South Wales certain increments have been restored to officials of which they have been deprived for several years. But whereas our Public Service Bill provides for the payment of increments of £15 a year up to a certain amount, only £10 per annum has been given for some years past to these officers by the Public Service Board.

Sir George Turner

- I directed the Post-office to give them what they were entitled to under the laws existing in the States.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I take it that the increments which are being restored to the State officials will also be paid to transferred officers.

Sir George Turner

- Yes ; up to £150. I gave instructions that they should be paid what they were entitled to under the laws of the States, and in the absence of any such laws that they should be paid according to the practice in vogue in the various States. We provided £28,000 for that purpose, nearly all of which will be disbursed amongst officials in the Postal department.

<page>5981</page>

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- That meets the point which I have raised. There is one other subject regarding which I should like some information. I desire to know what is being done in reference to the Federal capital site. This matter seems to be in a most nebulous condition. No one seems to have any precise knowledge regarding it. The Minister for Some Affairs says that he is doing all he can to facilitate the selection of the site. On the other hand, the Premier of New South Wales declares that he has already done all that can possibly be done to assist in its early selection. In other words, he has collected all available information and presented it to the Minister for Home Affairs, with a view of expediting a decision in regard to this matter. What is the cause of the delay in the department of the Minister for Home Affairs ?

Sir William Lyne

- What does -the honorable member wish me to do ?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I want the site to be selected and operations commenced for the building of the capital. I wish the Minister to carry out his specific promise to the people of New South Wales in regard to this question. Except for the vague statements which appear from time to time in the newspapers, as emanating from the Minister, nobody seems to know that anything of a tangible character is being done, and I therefore hope that he will see his way clear to make a statement to the House concerning the position which this very important matter occupies at the present time

Monaro

Mr CHAPMAN

. - I agree with a good deal of what has been said by the honorable member for Parramatta regarding the Postal department. The delay in erecting new buildings and in extending post-offices which now provide insufficient accommodation for the general public, has given rise to keen disappointment in New South Wales. I do not blame the Government for this delay, because they have had no opportunity of getting the public service into line. Whenever an attempt is made to do that, it seems to me that honorable members are expected not to voice the wants of their constituents, but to sit quietly by and allow some high officials - as in the case of Mr. Outtrim the other day - to do what they choose. These officials are permitted to put their constituents to very great inconvenience, and a hubbub is created the moment an honorable member expresses disapproval of what has been done. I wish to enter my protest against the actions of some of these gentlemen. I do not single out Mr. Outtrim particularly. Many officials in New South Wales seem to think that applications from big centres of population are entitled to every consideration,

and that any request from them backed up by a deputation, such as can be got together at any moment, ought to receive immediate and -favorable attention. But the invariable reply to people upon small mining fields or in the "nevernever" country, who ask for some trifling consideration, is that an officer will be sent to report upon the matter. Then two or three months are wasted before any satisfaction can be obtained. It frequently happens that men are driven off these gold-fields, which might, under other circumstances, become centres of population, because they are denied the most ordinary postal facilities. I wish further to point out that in many cases new mail services are required. In New South Wales a system was formerly in vogue under which, when a mail was asked for a new goldfield, a report was obtained from the nearest postmaster upon the matter. If there was anything like reasonable justification for the request a small mail service was granted on trial. Owing to the opinions entertained by some of the highly-salaried post-office officials that system has now been swept away. There is a great deal of discontent in New South Wales amongst the postal officials. They say that a system amounting almost to tyranny is growing up, and there is a very bad feeling right through the department.

Sir George Turner

- If the honorable member will give me any specific instances of the kind I will have them inquired into.

<page>5982</page>

Mr CHAPMAN

- I shall be very pleased to furnish the Treasurer with particulars. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction caused by the tyranny of some of these officers, and by what is regarded as favoritism on their part. Some of the men are afraid to make representations on the subject lest they should suffer for them, and I think this is the proper place to ventilate such matters. While we can understand that the Government are not to blame, inasmuch as they have half-a-dozen departments to administer under very difficult circumstances, pending the passage of the Public Service Bill, nevertheless I think some of these officials should be pulled up with a round turn. As the result of information which I have received during the last two or three days, I propose to supply the Postmaster-General with the names of some of these officials. I have no doubt that the Minister will take steps to let them know that they do not own this country, and that the department is not run for their especial benefit. I do not wish to go any further than that. Many of these men require only a little "shaking up," and we shall soon have some changes made. I agree also with some of the remarks which have been made upon the question of defence. When the Defence estimates come before us we should take care to see that men in country districts who desire to form rifle clubs or corps of the Australian Horse and other regiments of that description receive some consideration. Very little difficulty has been experienced in securing the expenditure of large sums of money by the Defence department in the principal centres of population. I hope we shall now give some attention to the residents of country districts who desire to train themselves, so that they may be prepared to fight for their country should occasion arise. To my mind it is an alarming fact that, while hundreds of thousands of pounds are spent on city forces, no attempt is made to secure scouts or men with a knowledge of the coast line, who would be invaluable in time of invasion. Something in that direction should be done, and when the vote for the Defence department is before us I hope we shall take the matter into consideration. These men in the country districts are ready to train themselves at their own expense, and the Government should facilitate the carrying out of their desires. I would welcome the formation of a corps of scouts, and of men having a knowledge of the coast line. It is unnecessary to make any further reference to the question of a citizen soldiery, but before I resume my seat I desire to say a few words on the question of the site for the Federal capital.

Mr Wilks

- The honorable member must be getting sick of the delay.

Mr CHAPMAN

- I am certainly getting tired of it. I am anxious that we should settle on the site as early as possible.

Mr Tudor

- What site?

Mr CHAPMAN

- I have no doubt as to the site which will be selected, but I am anxious that honorable members shall be afforded an early opportunity of coming to a decision. All that the people of Southern Monaro desire is that honorable members shall be given a fair opportunity of judging of the merits of the respective sites.

The newspaper paragraphs referring to a proposed parliamentary picnic in connexion with the inspection of sites must be taken with a very large grain of salt. It seems to me, however, that there could be no better way of enabling Parliament to come to a proper decision than by allowing honorable members to visit the various sites. The experts who have gone into the question of water supply, climate, and other matters should be with us when we make the inspection, and with their statements before use we shall be enabled to come to an early decision.

Mr A McLEAN

- After honorable members have seen the sites they will not be in a hurry to shift.

<page>5983</page>

Mr CHAPMAN

- We know, of course, that there is a very strong inclination on the part of honorable members to settle down in the comfortable quarters provided for us here. Many have said that we have not been made welcome, but I do not think that is so. I know of no honorable member who has not settled down comfortably here, and who has not been treated with courtesy and kindness by the people of Victoria. The statement that we have not is only a libel, fomented by persons who have certain objects to serve. Some of the suggested sites are no larger than a garden, with nothing but barren country about them. Honorable members should see them for themselves, and after the inspection has been made we should take a vote on the question as speedily as possible. I entertain no doubt as to the site which will be selected, but I am willing to bow to the decision of the majority. There is no reason why we should visit any place other than those recommended by the New South Wales commissioner. That gentleman has expended a great deal of time and trouble inquiring into the respective claims. Some 30 or 40 sites were submitted to him, and he has selected three or four, the merits of which in his opinion stand out conspicuously. If we visit those places we shall have very little difficulty in coming to a determination. Once the location of the Federal Capital has been agreed upon, we should proceed with the erection of temporary quarters, so that the Federal Parliament may settle down with as little delay as possible, in what is to be its permanent home. I hope the visit will be made at an early date, and that every facility will be afforded honorable members to come to a right decision.

Mr HUME COOK

- I propose to follow the example of other honorable members and avail myself of the present opportunity to refer to the administration of the Postal department, and more particularly in regard to the construction branch. I agree with the honorable member for Paramatta as to the unfair and almost improper way in which some of the works are being carried on. Let me cite a case in point. Prior to the taking over of the Postal department by the Commonwealth the people of Preston were promised that a post-office would be erected there. That promise has not been carried out.

Sir George Turner

- When was it made?

Mr HUME COOK

- Some four or five months before the department was taken over.

Sir George Turner

- Then why did not the State Government go on with the work ? They made a lot of promises which they did not fulfil, and we get the blame.

Mr HUME COOK

- Application was made to the Federal Government for the erection of the post-office, but an answer was received that no funds were available. The people of the district were satisfied with that reply until they saw what was being done elsewhere. The honorable member for South Australia, Sir Langdon Bonython, has made three or four requests for the erection of a post-office at Tarcoola or Walkerville. He has been told again and again that no funds are available, but I suppose that because he has a big newspaper at his back, in which articles have appeared pointing out the delay of the department in dealing with this matter, provision has been made on the Estimates for the work.

Sir George Turner

- But that is a wooden building.

Mr HUME COOK

- That does not affect the question. The honorable member was told by the Prime Minister, on the first



occasion, that the work could not be carried out. A similar reply was given by the Minister representing the Postmaster-General, but as soon as articles appeared in the honorable member's newspaper, and pressure was brought to bear, the money was found. That is not fair to honorable members from other States, who have equally pressing claims.

Mr Watson

- Is the money for that work being found out of revenue ?

Mr HUME COOK

- I do not know where it is coming from, but I say it is hardly fair, and honorable members are justified in expressing their disapproval of what looks like favoritism.

Sir George Turner

- There is no foundation for the suggestion of favoritism.

Mr HUME COOK

- It looks like favoritism.

Sir George Turner

- It is not so.

Mr HUME COOK

- Another matter to which I desire to refer is the alleged political influence in the Postal department. That question has been commented upon pretty freely in the public press, and my name has been associated with those of other honorable members, who, it is said, endeavoured to do something improper and unfair in connexion with the administration of the department.

Mr Tudor

- The honorable member should be proud of the advertisement.

<page>5984</page>

Mr HUME COOK

- It is all very well to have one side of the case stated in the press, but it is only fair that the other side should be put. It is true that I, with some other honorable members, waited on Mr. Outtrim touching certain departmental matters. The first case was that of a man who had been working for years as a telegraph operator. His right hand had given way, and he had been forced to use his left when working his instrument. He thought that his left hand would also break down, and he desired a change. He asked me if there were any chance, and I recommended him to apply to the department, promising to see Mr. Outtrim about it. I laid the matter before Mr. Outtrim, who said there was no objection to a transfer if there were an opening. The man sent in an application; and was transferred to a position a long way up the country. When he asked what was the reason for this, he was told - not by Mr. Outtrim, but by one of the other officers - that he should not try to bring political influence to bear, but should attend to his own business. Now, I had asked Mr. Outtrim in the most friendly manner about this man being transferred, with the result that my action was resented, and that the man who applied for the transfer was sent away 120 or 130 miles into the country. The other case was even worse. A man was sent out to do some telegraph line repairing and had climbed up a telegraph post, when one of the cross-pieces broke off, and he fell to the ground, and hurt his hip, and was laid up for months. He put in an application, not for compensation, but for sufficient to cover the doctor's fees, amounting to £20. He was put off from time to time, but, meanwhile, made inquiries, and found that the very cross-piece that had given way with him, had been reported upon by the inspector of the department some months before as defective, and requiring to be replaced. The department, in that case, was clearly to blame in not having the cross-piece repaired; and yet the man who met with serious injury in consequence of their neglect, could not even get a refund of the money spent in doctor's fees. If he had been an official he would have drawn his salary all the time, but being only a poor working man he did not even get his doctor's fees. At my suggestion, he made an application to the Federal Government, but what was the paltry treatment he received from them? He was informed that, in view of the fact that this matter was not settled by the State Government, it was now too late for the Federal Government to take it in hand. It was too late to do this man justice.

Sir George Turner

- Will the honorable member give me a note of the matter?

Mr HUME COOK

- With pleasure. I consider that that was a paltry way in which to put off a man who had a good case and

a genuine grievance. Then again, there was the case which was brought forward by the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. O'Malley, in which an innocent man was accused of stealing money belonging to the Post-office, and discharged. The honorable member brought the case before the Postmaster-General, and, on inquiry, it was found that the man was absolutely guiltless, and that two messenger-boys had taken the money. If the honorable member had not brought that matter before the head of the department, an innocent man would have rested all the days of his life under the stigma of a crime in which he had no hand. These are the sort of cases which justify members at times in bringing matters before the responsible Minister, and I am rather pleased at the fact that members can go to Ministers of the Commonwealth Government and see that justice is done. I deprecate altogether statements being made in the press which seek to implicate

Members of Parliament in attempts to bring unfair pressure to bear upon officials and induce them to do something improper. If a-11 the facts were-stated it would be found t,17t in most cases at any rate, honorable members act in a perfectly legitimate manner. My experience has been that the Member of Parliament who brings alleged grievances under the notice of the department is in nine cases out of ten convinced by the officials that he has got hold of the wrong side of the story, and he allows the matter to drop, but it is the tenth case in which there is a real grievance that renders it necessary that Members of Parliament should have opportunities to make their representations to head-quarters. I am glad to accept the assurance of the Treasurer that he will cause inquiries to be made into the matters I have mentioned.

<page>5985</page>

Mr G B EDWARDS

- Whilst the question of increased postal facilities is under consideration, I should like to direct the attention of Ministers to what I consider to be a still greater cause of complaint than anything yet mentioned. In the very crowded suburb of Erskineville, which forms part of my constituency, the residents have had a post-office in their midst for many years, but now, for some reason which I am quite unable to understand, the department are going to close up the office, and it is proposed to substitute mere letter receiving boxes. It seems to me that if we are going to conduct the Post and Telegraph department on these lines under federation we shall not develop it at all, but shall have to allow for a decrease in the receipts of the department. One reason given for the proposed change is, I believe, that there is a post and telegraph office at Newtown, which is little less than a mile away, and another post and telegraph office at Alexandra, which is a little over a mile distant, but that seems to me to afford no ground for removing the post and telegraph office from the midst of a thickly-populated suburb such as Erskineville. I desire to express my great gratification that the Treasurer has cut down the Estimates, and I can assure him that he has the great sympathy of honorable members on both sides of the House in his efforts at economy, and that he will be fully supported in any stand he may take in that direction. I have been looking at the Defence Estimates, and it seems to me that there is a terrible crop of contingencies provided for in that department. Although I do not wish to debate that particular subject now, I hope the Treasurer will do everything he can to cut down, the defence expenditure and ear-mark it, so that we may know how the money is spent.

Mr WATKINS

- I quite sympathize with honorable members who have complained that they cannot get reasonable replies to the requests which they make upon the Postal department. No doubt the transfer of the departments from the States to the Federal Government has been responsible for some of the delays, but now that federal matters are getting under weigh, it is time that the affairs of the departments were conducted in a businesslike way. While I quite agree with what has been said as to the necessity for economy on the part of the Federal Government, I think it will be false economy not to meet reasonable public requirements in the way of post and telegraph facilities. I do not contend that the Federal Government should be called upon to carry out any particular work that might have been promised by a State Government after it was known that the post and telegraph service was to be taken over by the Commonwealth, but if what has been stated by the honorable member for Bourke is true, and favoritism has been shown to one honorable member who happens to be supported by a big newspaper, I think that honorable members have not been treated fairly.

Sir George Turner

- I hope the honorable member does not believe it.

Mr WATKINS

- I do not say I believe it. In. my own case I. have had a distinct refusal on the part of the Postmaster-General to carry out a work that was promised by the Government of New South Wales prior to the transfer of the department to the Federal Government. I was prepared to accept that position on the understanding that general economy was to be practised, but I shall not be satisfied if any. exceptions are made: If the Lyne administration had met the Parliament of New South Wales during the last twelve months that work would have been carried out, as the plans had been drawn and the work authorized prior to the date at which it was known that the department was to be taken over by the Commonwealth. I shall be quite ready to join with other honorable members in putting: down anything like favoritism, because I think that would be the very worst form of political patronage that could be. introduced) into this Parliament.

Mr KIRWAN

- I desire to raise an objection to. what I understand is the intention of the Federal Government, namely, to run. the Post and Telegraph department on, commercial lines. If this policy is carried out, it will operate very injuriously in regard to a number of mail services in the larger States-. There are mail services in the back blocks of Western Australia which, perhaps-, do not pay directly, but from which the country generally derives much, indirect benefit. Some services will perhaps accommodate only 50 or 100 people, but they have practically kept open large tracts of country that would otherwise have been abandoned. So long as the bookkeeping clauses remain in existence those services ought not to. be interfered with, purely on the ground that they are non-paying. So long as these clauses are in operation, the various State Governments will be responsible for any loss or gain in connexion with the services. The State Governments have thought it worth their while to keep the services open for years past, and have regarded the States as repaid many times over for their maintenance. If in consequence of such services into the back country, another. Kalgoorlie or Boulder were opened out, that would pay for their maintenance for years. Before any of these mail services are stopped on the ground of their non-paying character, the State Governments ought: to be consulted.

Sir George Turner

- West Australia and Queensland have the two large increases in the: Postal department, simply because of their outlying territories.

Mr KIRWAN

- If necessary, I could mention a case where a. service has been maintained for many years by a State Government, for the reason that it has kept open country extending over hundreds of miles. It is good auriferous country, and any day there may be most valuable finds ; yet the Federal. Government are now threatening to do away with that service, although.it is of immense advantage indirectly to the whole of the Commonwealth. It seems to me only fair that the States Government shouldbeconsultedinthematter.

<page>5986</page>

Sir George Turner

-I sent a copy of the Estimates to each State, with a request for advice and suggestions. I could not consult the States before I brought in the Estimates.

Mr KIRWAN

- I take it for granted that if any suggestions come as to the maintenance of any services threatened with extinction, the suggestions will be favorably considered:

Sir George Turner

- The suggestions will be fully considered, but I cannot say that they will be favorably considered.

Mr KIRWAN

- It is to be hoped that all such suggestions will be favourably considered, at any rate during the operation of the bookkeeping clauses. These people in the back, country are quite cut off from the advantages of civilization, except by the communicating link of the Post-office. They were the most enthusiastic throughout the Commonwealth in favour of federation, and some of' them, when the Bill was submitted, travelled hundreds of miles in order to record their votes in favour of unity. But the very first intimation they get after the accomplish of federation, is a notification from, the Government threatening to remove their one link to civilization. The only public money ever spent on these people, so as to induce them to remain in those outlying districts, has been that devoted to the postal services, and I ask that, at any rate,

during the operation of- the bookkeeping, clauses, no alterations be made contrary to the wishes of: the States Governments.

Minister for Home Affairs

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

. - One or two expressions have been used on which I think it is necessary I- should say a few words. The honorable' member- for Bourke drew attention to the provision of postal conveniences at Tarcoola, and I refer to this because those matters are dealt with- mainly in the department of Home Affairs, which has the carrying out of" all public works. In this particular case, I found; on making inquiry, that \* promise had been made to provide the desired accommodation. I- am not sure that a sum of money for the purpose was- not placed' on> the estimates in South Australia. Tarcoola, is in very exceptional circumstances as a new mining centre; good returns have been obtained, and fell place has- no postal convenience at all. The circumstances are very exceptional; and' it would seem hard if the Federal Government were to refuse to carry out a work of the kind desired:

Mr HUME COOK

- I do not object to the work being carried out, but I only point out that other honorable members- cannot get works- which have also been promised.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- We have honorable members attacking the Government for putting' too much money on the estimates, and other honorable members complaining that not enough provision, is made for necessary, works. I unhesitatingly say that in- every State the Federal Government feel bound to carry out these works pretty well in the same ratio as in the past, especially in new mining centres, where development is so necessary. But honorable members must not forget that we have not had time to ascertain exactly what is required in the various States.

Mr Kirwan

- Why should the Government do away with existing mail services 1

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- I know the case to which the honorable member refers ; and so- far as- I understand . the matter,, the Postal department will have to give up the idea of running this and similar services on commercial lines. No railway would ever be built if it were expected to pay from the start, and the same remark applies to postal and telegraphic matters. These services are for the convenience of the public, and in no more than one or two of the States have they previously paid expenses. In regard to the Preston, case,, I do not know the reason, though no doubt there- is a reason, why that work has not been proceeded with. Claims come into the department of Home Affairs, and in almost every case where the postal authorities recommend a work, the money necessary has been placed on the Estimates. But there are bundles of claims in regard to which the postal authorities do not recommend the construction of works, and honorable members, with their past experience in the various States, must acknowledge that claims are sometimes made, on no very solid foundation, for the expenditure of large sums of money. If the Commonwealth is to husband its resources, and not bring down, for the approval of the House, proposals- for large and undue- expenditure we- must be careful not to carry out works- which are not required in the interests) or for the convenience, of the public.

<page>5987</page>

Sir George Turner

- If we spend the States' money indiscriminately, we shall place them in a difficulty.

Mr. W. Atkins. - Is it not a fact in the case of one work recommended, that the recommendation was sent in too late ?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- The Commonwealth Government has laid down the rule, and I think it is a good rule, that in regard to promises made by the States before the establishment of the Commonwealth, the Government of the Commonwealth will carry out the works unless these have actually been commenced by the States. In every case where it was possible, I have had an investigation made, and if it appears to me that a work should be carried out, provision is made on the estimates. One honorable member has asked why the States should not be allowed to carry out these works. I may say I am making arrangements with the

works department in the various States to, in some instances, borrow their officers to carry out works ; but if we are to have a Federal control of expenditure, I, as head of the construction department in the Commonwealth, must know what moneys are being expended, and I shall certainly not give up my right to have that knowledge. Where works have been commenced by a State department, those works are being completed, but in other cases works will be carried out by the Federal Government, so that we may control the expenditure. The work referred to by the honorable member for Newcastle is one that I was very anxious to see carried out. The honorable member did not define exactly what the work was, but I suppose he meant the addition of a tower to the post-office in Newcastle.

Mr Tudor

- And a clock, too ?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- The State Parliament voted a sum of money for a new post-office in Newcastle, and we generally provide a clock in a tower reared in such a building. There is a very large population in Newcastle, and the post-office is a large structure.

Mr PAGE

- What would a tower and clock cost?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- Leaving the clock out of the question, a tower would cost £10,000. The honorable member for Newcastle is quite right in referring to the matter, because I think it was a great mistake to erect the Newcastle Post-office without a tower, seeing that it is a large building of a national character.

Mr Page

- Let the people of Newcastle subscribe and erect a tower themselves.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- The people of a city should not be required to erect part of a building which is to be transferred to the Commonwealth. In this particular case I do not know whether it was £18,000 or £28,000 that was voted by the State Parliament for the erection of the building. But there was a sum voted, and, though the building is a very fine one, it is spoiled by not having a tower such as should form part of a building of the kind. I believe that the sum required to complete the work without the tower is some £8,000 or £8,800 ; but when I made inquiry as to the reason why a tower was not to be built, I found that the plan on which the estimate was based, did not provide for an addition of the kind. When I approached the Minister of Works in New South Wales in the matter, he pointed out that the work had proceeded so far that it would cost £2,000 to pull down a part in order to form a foundation for the tower, and that the latter would cost from £8,000 to £10,000.

Mr E SOLOMON

- Is it necessary to have a tower ?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- If the building had to be commenced now, I should say there ought to be a tower.

Sir William McMillan

- Is it proposed to have a statue of Mr. O'Sullivan on top of the tower?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- I should say that Mr. O'Sullivan had such a statue in the memory of the people of New South Wales, as not to require another on the top of a post-office.

Mr Wilks

- Mr. O'Sullivan will soon have a statue of Australia facing her creditors.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- I am very proud of Mr. O'Sullivan as my Minister of Works. I know that the honorable member for Newcastle and his constituents are very anxious in this matter, and I want to point out the reason why the work to which he has called attention has not been carried out.

Mr Watkins

- Does the Minister not think that the addition to the post-office could have been carried out for about one third of the sum estimated ?

<page>5988</page>

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- The estimate was submitted to me, and when I found that it would cost £2,000 to pull down a portion of the present building in order to carry out the further work, I thought that the expenditure was hardly justified.

Mr Watson

- I would not attempt to justify that at all.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- I regret that the plan was not properly drawn in the first instance.

Mr KING O'MALLEY

- It is proposed to spend £10,000 on a clock-tower, and yet we cannot afford old-age pensions.

Sir William McMillan

- The sum of £10,000 would not be spent on such a work in Tasmania.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- I think some £33,000 is to be spent on a post-office, with a tower, in Hobart. The honorable member for Parramatta referred to the difference between the status of the line-repairers in New South Wales and that of those in Victoria. This matter was brought under my notice upon one occasion in New South Wales. No doubt there is a difference in the status of these two sets of men, who are performing precisely similar work. That is an anomaly which cannot be continued under the Federal Government. I have said that it will be rectified, and I repeat my statement. We cannot have one set of men doing precisely similar work to another set, and yet holding an inferior status. I am merely awaiting the passage of the Public Service Bill through the Senate to have this matter and a number of others put right. As soon as that measure is passed, I shall take the opportunity of appointing persons who are qualified to grade the whole of the service upon one system.

Mr Page

- Will it be a levelling up or a levelling down ?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- My policy is one of levelling up, if that can be done, and I believe it can. But the honorable member must not forget that, in dealing with the whole of the service, regard must be paid to the amount of work which is done in the different States. In a very small State, for example, officials may have to perform anything like the same amount of work that is required of officials occupying similar positions in the larger States. I do not know that the same salaries can be paid to officials in States where there is comparatively small responsibility and work as are paid to those where the responsibilities and work are heavy. Probably all grades will be placed upon the same footing where possible, but officials who have less responsibility and work than others who occupy similar positions in other States will have to be placed in a different grade. I am not going to level down.

Mr Page

- What is the difference between repairing a telegraph line in Victoria and repairing one in Queensland ?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- I am not speaking of matters of that sort. The telegraph line-repairers will all be placed upon the same level. Where officers are engaged in performing the same duties they must, if possible, be put upon the same footing. Some honorable members have complained - and I notice similar complaints in the press - that certain public works are not being carried out. Only yesterday I was looking through the applications received from various States for works of this character. The applications from Victoria are very numerous, but they relate chiefly to small works, such as the repairing of buildings, &c. Already a large number of works are being proceeded with in this State. From the other States the applications have not been so numerous. My desire is to arrange with the Public Works departments of the various States to lend us their officers to supervise any works which we may undertake, at least for a time. I shall make an arrangement for the payment of part of these officers' salaries until the works of the Commonwealth have been advanced to that stage when it will become imperative that we should have a large department of our own. In the interim, however, so long as the department for Home Affairs can exercise the control necessary to safeguard the efficient carrying out of our public works, it is far better to make an arrangement with the States which will not cost the Commonwealth much for supervision, than to appoint a big staff in each State. The staff which I have at present is ridiculously small for the amount of work that is being done.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Does not the honorable gentleman intend to refer to the capital site 1

Mr Wilks

- New South Wales is sick at heart about it.

<page>5989</page>

Sir WILLIAM LYNE

- New South Wales has been sick at heart all along. As soon as it is possible to fix the capital site it will be fixed. It will take a considerable time - certainly some years - to complete the necessary buildings upon that site. I am inclined to think that we shall not have to build on a very extensive scale at first. I saw a gentleman from the Congress of America the other day, and asked him the cost of the buildings at Washington-. He told me that the cost of those buildings was £20,000,000. That is a very large sum of money to expend. We shall have to go reasonably slow. I am hopeful that before the termination of the present session honorable members will have an opportunity of inspecting the capital sites which are in the running. It would be nonsense to inspect a large number of sites which cannot possibly be in the running. But those from Albury onwards I think ought to be inspected by honorable members. It is impossible to give a definite promise, but before we separate this session, I hope that honorable members will be able to take a ten days' trip to the chief sites. They would thus acquire a much better knowledge than they could otherwise bring to bear upon the final settlement of this matter.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Has the matter been considered by the Government?

Sir WILLIAM LYNE. - I am speaking for the Government. In reference to the remarks of the honorable member for Bourke, I wish to say that I have always held it to be the privilege of an honorable member to unearth and rectify any abuse. I held so in New South Wales, and: never refused to see any member who had a complaint of a reasonable character to make. Of course, I recognise that there is a vast difference between that and the practice of going to a Minister with every trivial matter, and thus interfering unduly with heads of departments. But the Ministerial head of a department has a right to see that wrongs are rectified. It is his duty to do so. If he is not aware of the existence of such wrongs, who is better qualified to bring them under his notice than a Member of Parliament, who is the guardian of the public interests? The honorable member for Bourke was unquestionably right in endeavouring to get justice done in the case to which he referred. I know of an instance in which a man had his character blasted till a Member of Parliament embraced the opportunity of exposing the wrong which had been committed, and of insisting upon a searching investigation, with the result that the man's character was thoroughly rehabilitated. This matter has also been referred to by the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. O'Malley. At the same time I shall always deprecate any undue interference with the heads of departments. Where abuses do exist - and they will creep in very often - the fountain head is - the proper authority to consult in order to get those abuses remedied.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I must appeal to honorable members to allow this Supply Bill to go through at once. By delaying its passage we are not acting fairly to the Senate. I would point out that unless we get it passed to-day the public servants cannot be paid at the end of the month. I am aware that there is a motion of no confidence pending. Whilst that motion is pending the Senate will not proceed with business. We have been discussing this measure for two and a half hours, and I ask if it is fair to send it up to the Senate at the last moment, and expect that Chamber to swallow it without any opportunity being given for debate? Surely grievances such as have been made by honorable members can well stand over till the Estimates are under consideration. The Senate must have a reasonable amount of time to deal with this Bill. That reasonable time will not be afforded if honorable members of this House insist upon discussing for two or three hours matters which might well stand over till the Estimates are being considered in detail.

An. Honorable Member. - The Ministerial supporters have occupied the time.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- Time has been occupied by both sides of the House since the leader of the Opposition and I myself appealed to honorable members not to continue the discussion. The responsibility will not be upon my shoulders if the public servants are not paid at the end of the month. When I tried to get a Supply Bill through on the previous occasion, it was - almost the last day of the month before I succeeded. That is

not fair. Our public servants want their money, and our creditors wish to be paid. The matters which honorable members have referred to are proper subjects for discussion upon the Estimates, but not when we are debating a Supply Bill.

<page>5990</page>

Mr Watkins

- If the motion of censure is carried the Treasurer will not get to the Estimates.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- If that motion is likely to be carried there is all the more reason why this Supply Bill should go through to-day. The moment notice has been given of a want of confidence motion all Government business must be suspended.

Mr Crouch

- The Opposition must take the responsibility.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I do not want any one in particular to take the responsibility for delay, but I certainly do not wish it placed upon me. If supply is not granted to-day the Treasurer will be blamed for not having the money. I have a right to appeal to honorable members not to discuss this Bill further. Surely a consideration of such little matters as are involved in additions to buildings and the like can well stand over. I appeal to honorable members to allow this Bill to go through at once, so that we may be able to send it up to the Senate, and give the members of that Chamber an hour or two for its discussion. If we do not get the Bill through at once, there is no possibility of our passing it for another three or four weeks.

Mr MAHON

- I think there is some force in the appeal of the Treasurer. At the same time, if he wished to get his Estimates to the Senate at the proper time, he should have brought them down a little earlier.

Sir George Turner

- I have been working night and day to get them down.

Mr MAHON

- I admit that the Treasurer has had difficulties to contend with.

Sir George Turner. - If the honorable member knew the difficulties, he would not refer to the matter:

Mr MAHON

- I know that the Treasurer has been overworked, and on that account he is entitled to the sympathy of the House. But I object to allowing what the Treasurer calls "little matters" to pass unnoticed, as they may be important matters to the people we represent. The only opportunity which honorable members have of ventilating their grievances is upon an occasion of this sort. It is not a little thing that districts and important towns should be deprived of telegraphic communications, as is the case in one portion of Western Australia at the present time.

Sir George Turner

- We cannot deal with that until we come to the Estimates. We cannot deal with it on the Supply Bill.

Mr MAHON

- I hope that the principle laid down by the Minister for Home Affairs will be preserved; that is to say, that the ratio of expenditure in the Postal and Telegraph department observed by the various States prior to federation will be maintained. It would be a monstrous thing to deprive new towns or settlements of postal or telegraphic facilities upon which their very existence depends. It is unfair to deal with their claims in the same way as those of established towns, which merely want new towers on their post-offices, such as the demand put forward by the honorable member for Newcastle. I know of a town in Western Australia where nearly £4,000 per month is being distributed in wages. It has a population of between 300 and 400 people, and though a telegraph line passes a point within three miles of the place, the Postal department of Western Australia refuses to recommend that the line be extended to that township.

Mr Tudor

- What is the name of that place?

Mr MAHON

- I refer to the township of Euro. It is one of the new towns which have sprung up in Western Australia of recent years, and it is certainly on the fringe of civilization. The people have enough hardship to contend with there in battling against the forces of nature without being placed at the disadvantage of being



refused telegraphic communication. Their request has been refused absolutely by the officials in Perth. Therefore I hope that the Minister for Home Affairs; who, I think, said he would act on the report of the department--

Sir William Lyne

- What I said was that so far as I could, I would provide on the Estimates for everything recommended by the department.

Mr MAHON

- If I can satisfy the honorable gentleman that in this case there is some personal feeling which prevents the extension of the line, I hope he will grant the request. I do not wish to delay the Treasurer in obtaining Supply ; but I do desire to put before the House the view that the principle applied to well-established towns should not be observed by the Government when dealing with the claims of new settlements.

<page>5991</page>

Mr WILKS

- I should have allowed this Supply Bill to go through without complaint, and have respected the compact between the Treasurer and the leader. of the Opposition, but for the remarks made just now by the Treasurer. Honorable members on this side of the House voluntarily suppressed their desire to speak on this subject in order that public business might be expedited ; and I wish to remind the House that several honorable members on the Government side - notably the honorable member for Eden-Monaro, the Minister for Home Affairs, the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne, and the honorable member for Bourke - have occupied more time this morning in discussing Supply than have honorable members on the opposition side. You, Mr. Chairman, must have marvelled at the facility for the transaction of business afforded by the Opposition, and then for us to be insulted by the Treasurer in this way--

Sir George Turner

- I spoke to both sides of the House ; I did not refer particularly to the Opposition.

Mr WILKS

- Well, then, I must have misunderstood the right honorable gentleman. From the very outset the Opposition have given the Government every assistance in the transaction of business ; in fact, we have been a model Opposition, and the Treasurer should not have blamed us as he has done. The Minister for Home Affairs, who has charge of the selection of the site for the Federal Capital, has said to-day that he will deal with the question, but he has given no more definite promise than that which he made three months ago. The people of New South Wales are tired of the delay that has taken place in dealing with this matter, and I trust the Minister will organize some plan for keeping the spirit of the bond entered into with that State. I hope we shall come to a definite decision this session. I do not intend to air the grievances of my constituency, because they are too numerous; but I could not allow this occasion to pass without urging upon the Minister the desirability of proceeding at once to the selection of a site for the Federal Capital.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported.

Resolved

(on motion by

Sir George

TURNER -

That the standing orders be suspended in order to enable all steps to be taken to obtain Supply and to pass a Supply Bill through all its Stages without delay.

Iti Committee qf Ways and Means :

Resolved

(on motion by

Sir George

Turner) -

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending 30th June, 1902, the sum of £928,322 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill, founded upon resolutions of Supply and Ways and Means, presented, and passed through all its stages.

## POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

Mr. SPEAKER

reported the receipt of the following message from the Senate : -

Mr Speaker

- The Senate returns to the House of Representatives the Bill intituled " An Act relating to the Postal and Telegraph Services of the Commonwealth," and acquaints the House of Representatives that the Senate has agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 3 to 5, 7, 9 to 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21 to 49, 51 to 57, 00, 01, 63 to 05, 67, 68, 70, 72 to 74, 76 to 86, 90 to 104, of the amendments made by the House of Representatives ; has agreed to amendments Nos. 2, 8, 13, 16, 19, 20, 50, 66, 69, 71, 75, with the amendments indicated by the annexed schedule ; and has disagreed to amendments Nos. 6, 58, 59, 62, and 87 to S9, for the reasons assigned herewith. The Senate desires the concurrence of the House of Representatives in the amendments to the amendments of the House of Representatives, and desires its reconsideration of the Bill in respect to the amendments disagreed to.

C. BAKER, President.

In Committee

(Consideration of the Senate's message) :

<page>5992</page>

Attorney-General

Mr DEAKIN

. - The amendments which have been made by the Senate are, I think, for the most part such as can be accepted without any hesitation. The first amendment is in clause 1, omitting the first day of October, and substituting the first day of December, as the date on which the Act shall come into operation. The second amendment is in clause 10, from which it is proposed to omit the word " seventeen." and insert " eighteen." We had fixed seventeen as the age at which telegraph messengers should cease to act hi that capacity, and should retire from the service if no other occupation could be found for them. The Senate have raised the age to eighteen, and have thus given the lads another year in which they may act as telegraph messengers. At the end of the clause it is proposed to insert the words " but may be eligible to be appointed to some other position in the public service." This means that if, at the time a lad reaches the age of eighteen, there is a vacancy in some other branch of the service for unskilled youths, he is to have a chance for it.

Mr Page

- I thought that was understood.

Mr DEAKIN

- The provision did not exist in the Bill, but I do not think there is any harm in inserting it. The next amendment accepts all that is contained in the definition of a newspaper in clause 26a, except the amendment that was inserted at the instance of the honorable member for Bourke. I doubt if it is worth while insisting finally upon that, as there are other means of attaining the same end. The next amendment is in clause 27, in which we proposed to omit the words "seditious and blasphemous." The word " blasphemous " has been given up by the Senate, but they desire to retain the word " seditious."

Mr WATSON

- Oh, no. We cannot agree to that.

Mr Conroy

- Do the Government intend to agree to that amendment?

Mr DEAKIN

- If the committee desires to insist upon its amendment, it can do so, but I do not consider the matter of great importance.

Mr Watson

- We have not yet seen the schedule of amendments, and as it is difficult to understand what the effect of an amendment is without having it before us in print, I suggest that we should wait until the schedule of amendments can be circulated amongst honorable members.

<page>5993</page>

Mr DEAKIN

- It seems to me that, with two or three exceptions, we might accept all the amendments of the Senate. If honorable members prefer to wait until the schedule is before them we can adopt that course. As I stated, in clause 27 the Senate propose to retain the word "seditions." The amendment in clause 78 is a purely verbal one, omitting the words "which were" and "before the commencement of this Act," and inserting further on in the clause the words "in force at the commencement of this Act." The next amendment is in the new clause following clause 88, which was inserted on the motion of the honorable member for Kennedy, to enable the Postmaster-General to take over any private telephone line at six months notice. The Senate have accepted that provision, with the condition that the action shall be taken by the Postmaster-General with the consent of Parliament. There is no objection to that. It is also proposed to insert the word "acquired" after the word "erected," so that if the Postmaster-General ever takes over a private telephone he shall have the right to maintain it. That, of course, is a necessary provision. The next amendment is in clause 92, giving power to officers to refuse to transmit objectionable messages, in which we have proposed to omit the words "a person employed in a telegraph office," and insert "postmaster." The Senate now proposes in lieu of postmaster to insert - "person employed under the authority of the Postmaster-General." In clause 93 we inserted a new paragraph enabling the Governor-General to make regulations providing for the payment by the receiver or by the Government of any State instead of the sender of the rate payable on any postal article. The Senate have now amended that so as to provide that the payment may be made by the Governor or by any other person instead of the sender, thus enabling business firms and friendly societies to make such arrangements as they may desire with the Postmaster-General regarding the transmission of postal articles. This will meet the views of the honorable member for Maranoa, at whose instance the paragraph was inserted. In the schedule of amendments made by this House to which the Senate have disagreed, the Senate object to the words in clause 3 extending the definition of "indecent or obscene matter" which were inserted on the motion of the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse. They consider that the words "indecent or obscene matter" are sufficient, and that they will cover all the indecent advertisements which it was the special desire of the honorable member for Tasmania to preclude from passing through the post. The next amendment to which exception is taken is the omission of the word "through" from clause 83. This clause relates to the carrying of telegraph wires through private buildings, and the word "through" was omitted, but the Senate urges that it should be allowed to stand, because in tunnelling it may be necessary to pass underground through a man's property or through a cellar, and because the expense of working an underground system of telegraphic and telephonic communication would be greatly and unnecessarily impeded if the department were not permitted to carry wires through private buildings. The next amendment is in reference to the question in which -the honorable member for Parramatta and others took a great deal of interest,, and relates to the power of the department to carry its wires .through streets where the municipal authorities have .ornamental trees growing. This House limited that power by striking out the provision -that -the department should have the right to Sop off "the branches of trees without giving any compensation. The object of this -was to require that the department should compensate the local bodies for any trees that were injured or destroyed. The -Senate, however, adhere to the view that it is necessary, in the public interest, to give the department power to cut down and lop, and that it should be indemnified for any reasonable action taken to insure the proper working of telephone lines. The department will still be required -to consult the municipal authorities, and to meet their views as much as possible, but they are not to be called upon to pay damages. The last amendment to which objection is taken is the proposal to omit the words "unlawfully or maliciously" from clause 126, relating to injuries to telegraphs. The Senate urge that the importance of maintaining a telegraph system inviolate is so great that no person -interrupting communication by cutting or breaking wires or otherwise should be excused on the ground that he did not act unlawfully or maliciously.

Progress reported.

PAPER

The Clerk laid on the table

Return to the order of the House, dated 3rd October, showing the actual cost of cane-cutting per ton in Queensland.

PACIFIC ISLANDS LABOURERS BILL

## Second Reading

Debate resumed (from 10th October, 1901, vide page 5955), on motion by Mr. Barton -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr WATKINS

- In addressing the House with respect to this Bill, I wish to direct attention chiefly to the question whether we should grant the postponement that has been asked for, and refer -the matter to a (Royal commission in the way suggested -by the honorable member for Oxley. It seems to me that we should decide this matter now, once and for all, as I fail to see how any postponement .would be of any advantage -to those engaged in the sugar industry. The cry for an extension of time is simply a repetition of the demands that were made in 1-884, 1686, and in 1-889.

Mr Barton

- The cry will always be raised.

<page>5994</page>

Mr WATKINS

- ?es. If .there is a large vested interest in the sugar industry, that interest -will not grow less in the future, and if we cannot deal with it now, it will be more difficult to legislate regarding it in ten years' time. I am totally opposed to the proposal 'to remit the matter to a commission -for further inquiry, because sufficient information has been placed before honorable members to -enable them to come to a decision at once. Two commissions have inquired into this question, one in 1885, and another in 1 889, and -the reports of both of them were simply directed to asking for more time. Any further inquiry at -this juncture would fail to enlighten us beyond the extent to which we have already been informed by -the speeches made during this debate, and by the facts and figures, derived from various reliable sources, which have been placed before us. It has been urged that we should be very careful in dealing with this question, because sugargrowing is practically the national industry of Queensland, and our action is being protested against by the Queensland Government. If I thought that that Government, as at present constituted, represented the people of the whole of Queensland, -I should perhaps be prepared to attach some weight to their views. But when we know that, under their State laws, a majority of the people of Queensland were not represented, and when we compare the result of the State election with the result of the Federal campaign, which was fought entirely on this one question - and when we consider that there have been returned a vast majority of honorable members from that -State in favour of the abolition of kanaka labour - I am inclined to think that the Federal elections represent -the voice of Queensland. The first time the people of Queensland had an opportunity of giving effect to one man one vote, they proclaimed with one voice the abolition of this traffic. Some honorable members who have spoken in support of the continuance of kanaka labour, have said that the kanakas are well treated, and that the regulations are properly carried out, and, further, that the kanakas are harmless and peaceful citizens of the State. But if honorable members examine for a moment the reports of the Royal commission, they will find that no fewer than eight vessels were cruising with a view of obtaining kanakas, and that in almost every case kidnapping obtained to some extent, while, in the other cases, the islanders were deluded into entering the agreements.

Mr Isaacs

- What year was that ?

Mr WATKINS

- That was the inquiry which was commenced in 1889, and extracts from the reports were published in the newspapers of Australasia in 1892, when the final report of the Royal commission was presented.

Mr R EDWARDS

- That is ancient history.

Mr WATKINS

- The history is not so ancient as the honorable member would no doubt like to make it appeal, but even if it occurred as far back as 1885, I do not think that the honorable member could convince the House that there has been such an improvement as to make it desirable to have the traffic continued.

Mr Sawers

- We all know there has been an improvement.

Mr WATKINS

- We know there has been some improvement, but when I read an extract from one of the reports it will be found that there is any amount of room for further improvement. The first report stated : -

Our opinion is that all the recruits brought by the Ceara on this voyage were seduced aboard by false pretences ; that the nature of then engagements was never fully explained to them that they had little or no comprehension of the kind of work they had to perform, and that the period for which they agreed to come was in no single instance three years.

That is only one of the eight cases, and there is no suggestion of ancient history about that. At that time every leading newspaper throughout Australia commented on this traffic, and even in England attention was drawn to the fact that slavery was being carried on in Australasia. Call it what we like - smother it up as we like - this is what the American people called slavery many years ago. If that be a correct position to assume, I cannot understand, after the experience of America in dealing with black labour, how honorable members can stand up in the Federal Parliament and justify the continuance of such a trade in what is supposed to be a Christian country.

Mr R EDWARDS

- The blacks were sold in open market in America.

<page>5995</page>

Mr WATKINS

- That is so ; and here the kanakas were kidnapped in , the islands, as the blacks were kidnapped in Africa for the slave market in America. There may be a difference in the method, but the principle is exactly the same, and if it was slavery in the one instance, it is slavery in the other. We have practically had admissions on the floor of the House that the sugar industry cannot be carried on by white labour - that such work is the work of slaves. If that be so, 'I do not think there is any need to argue the point further. As it presents itself to me, it is a question of cheapness - a question of labour, and nothing else. It is futile to tell a working man, who knows all about the subject, that it is harder for a white man to work in the cane-fields than to work in a railway cutting in such a climate as that of Queensland. No work is harder in a tropical climate than that in a railway cutting, or anywhere else in railway construction. The carrying of huge iron rails in a hot climate like that of Queensland is much harder labour than I, at least, would care to perform, and the same may be said of shovel work in an open cutting, where there is no chance of getting any breeze. The white man has done all the pioneer work in the tropical portions of Queensland. He went there when the climate and general conditions were much worse than they are to-day ; and we know that as a country is opened up and railway communication and other agencies of civilisation are brought to bear, the work in such climates becomes easier. With other honorable members, I think that the Queensland people accepted federation believing that a federal Parliament would pronounce on this question with no uncertain voice. I believe that the majority of the people of Queensland accepted federation with the full knowledge, or with the hope, that the Federal Parliament would once and for all abolish kanaka labour.

Mr Wilkinson

- It was the one great question.

Mr WATKINS

- It was the one great question, and instead of listening to the few interested individuals who try to prolong this particular traffic, the Commonwealth Parliament would be more faithfully doing their duty if they paid attention to the not uncertain voice of the majority of the people of the country.

Mr Sawers

- The honorable member is willing to allow five years. It is only a question of degree.

Mr WATKINS

- If I had my way, five years would not be allowed. I would do away with the traffic at once ; but I, and those who think with me, accept the five years<sup>1</sup> limit, because it is the nearest possible point to what we desire.

Mr Sawers

- The honorable member, to be consistent, ought to vote against allowing five years.

Mr WATKINS

- But to vote against the five years' limit might result in prolonging the traffic for twenty years, and in placing the advocates of the traffic in a better position.

Mr Isaacs

- The traffic is being diminished in the meantime.

Mr WATKINS

- That is so ; but in 1859 the supporters of the traffic asked for nine or ten years, and by this time they should have made preparation for doing without coloured labour. The time they then asked for has now expired, and we should be quite justified in stamping the traffic out at once. As it is, however, we propose to allow five years, with a diminution in the traffic as time goes on. The ablest minds in public life, not only in Queensland, but in all the States, have at one time or another spoken against the employment of aliens in this industry. Sir Henry Parkes spoke against it, and we have had other gentlemen, whose names have been mentioned, taking a similar course. But there is another phase of the question. Would it be a fair thing, now that Inter-State free-trade has been established, to allow one State to employ coloured labour in competition with another State where only white labour is employed? In New South Wales most of the sugar is grown by white labour, and it would be totally unfair to the people engaged in the industry in that State if their ports were thrown open to sugar grown by kanaka labour, when all are subject to the same Tariff.

Mr Wilks

- On the northern rivers in New South Wales a lot of Hindoos are still employed.

<page>5996</page>

Mr WATKINS

- There are about 300 kanakas and some Hindoos employed, but the kanakas will come under this Bill, while the Hindoos will be dealt with by another measure. We must not forget that we found it necessary in New South Wales, even under a free-trade Government, to levy a £3 duty on all sugar, because the majority of the people engaged in the industry were white, and because we had to compete with the black grown sugar of Queensland ; and if it was necessary to impose a duty of that kind then, it is more necessary now that there is Inter-State freetrade, and all Australian-grown sugar is placed on a level. No one can make me believe that those engaged in the sugar industry of Queensland will under this Bill be in any worse condition than they are in at the present time'. The Government propose a Tariff of £6 per ton, and give an advantage to those who employ white labour instead of kanaka labour, and, with InterState free-trade and an extended market, those engaged in the industry in Queensland will be more than compensated for any loss which they may sustain by the abolition of alien labour. But, apart from questions of trade or labour, the facts laid before us by the honorable member for Maranoa show that it is time the people of Australia dealt with this matter from a racial standpoint, and let the people of Queensland know that we are determined to no longer permit this black blot on the Commonwealth map. I shall not weary members with quotation after quotation, but we have had it pointed out that at Cairns, when a petition was presented to the local council, with a view of abolishing Japanese brothels, which at that time were increasing very rapidly, the council, by its vote, declared in favour of their continuance, in order, as it was said, to protect white females. If there were only that example, together with the quotations laid before honorable members by the honorable member for Kennedy, there is disclosed a disgraceful state of affairs, which this Parliament should not tolerate for one moment longer than we can help. I do not think it is the desire of any honorable member here, on the threshold of our federal career, to continue this traffic in flesh and blood. We have had placed before us the death-rate of those kanakas engaged in the sugar industry, and it has been disclosed to us that immorality is rampant, and, with the honorable member for Maranoa, I say that we must regard this question from a different stand-point than that of wages. It would be a danger to the poorer classes of our community, and a blot on the history of this Parliament, to any longer allow these hordes of savages to intermingle with our people ; and it would not have redounded to the credit of the Government had they not dealt with the question as firmly as they are now proposing to do. Irrespective of what may transpire during the next few weeks, it would be to the interests of Australia generally to grace the opening of our Federal Parliament by ridding at least one State of this traffic, which carries such dread consequences in its train. If we do that, and that alone, in the next few months, we shall have done a great deal. We shall have earned the thanks of many thousands of people, and we shall have told the world, once and for all, that we in Australia are not prepared, directly or indirectly, to countenance anything in the way of slave traffic. My only regret is that the Government have not tackled the whole alien question in the same firm way.

<page>5997</page>

Mr ISAACS

- A problem that has been familiar to a people for over 30 years is one the solution of which, I think, cannot be said to have been in any way hurried. As Australians, we have been for over a generation painfully familiar with the presence of the kanaka on our soil, and through the whole of that time there has been one thread of constantly increasing determination that sooner or later this traffic must be ended. Speaking for myself, and as a representative more directly of the southern portion of Australia, I consider that the people of Queensland are entitled to hear from us the reasons why we have come to the conclusion at which I believe we have nearly all arrived, and which, I trust, will very soon be put into statutory form. The maintenance of kanaka labour is, I venture to say, indefensible, and I have not been able to gather that any person dares, in view of his own conscience as well as of the great mass of public opinion, to defend that traffic upon its own merits. I think that when we face the evidence before us - as we are bound to do - calmly, coolly, and considerately - as calmly, at any rate, as our sentiments as human beings will permit us - we are forced to the conclusion that we cannot temporize with this evil any longer. I believe, with many of those who have preceded me, that by overwhelming numbers the people of Queensland are against the continuance of this traffic, but I should be sorry if even that portion of the Queensland community whose sentiments have been voiced fearlessly, courageously, honestly, and with considerable force by the honorable member for Oxley and the honorable and learned member for Brisbane, imagined for a moment that we are endeavouring to ride rough-shod over a very important industry regardless of consequences. I do not hide from myself that if I had my choice between suppressing the kanaka traffic and putting an end to the sugar industry, I should vote in favour of suppressing the kanaka traffic. Happily we are not placed in any such position. I agree with the view expressed by the Prime Minister in his able, temperate, and logical speech, which abounded in information and argument, that we can - and will - preserve the sugar industry, which is so important to Queensland and the whole continent and yet abolish the evils attendant upon the employment of kanaka labour. By what means, then, are we to satisfy our compatriots in Queensland that we are not carried away by any sudden gust of passion or any momentary sentiment, but are guided by considerations of humanity and consideration even for the planters? The Prime Minister traced clearly and succinctly, down substantially to the year 1895, the progress of thought and the public expression of opinion on the part of Queenslanders in regard to this matter. We have been referred by some honorable members on the other side of the House to an alleged change of opinion on the part of some of Queensland's leaders, notably in the year 1892, when Sir Samuel Griffith, the then Premier and Chief Secretary, issued a manifesto and altered the existing law. Anything that Sir Samuel Griffith says is in my opinion worthy of the greatest consideration. He is a man to whom all in Australia look with respect and esteem. I have looked at his words, and have carefully read the debates which took place at that particular juncture, and I fail to find that Sir Samuel Griffith did alter his opinion upon this subject in any respect whatever. I have his manifesto, and. I propose to make one or two very short extracts from it, because I think that not only should we state that we have arrived at our conclusion upon a consideration of the evidence, but we should also place upon record, so that it may be read by those who cannot hear us, what were the particular points of that evidence which appealed most strongly to our reason. I was very much struck by a letter, which no doubt other honorable members have received in common with myself, and which was alluded to by the honorable member for Oxley yesterday. It was a letter from Mr. Crespin, who is writing on behalf of the planters. In that letter an appeal is made for more time. By questions put to various honorable members, such as the honorable member for Wentworth, and the honorable and learned member for Brisbane, I endeavoured to ascertain what practical advantage would be derived by the planters if we gave them a further extension than that which is proposed in the Bill. I could get no answer.

Mr Sawers

- Mr. Philp gives an answer.

<page>5998</page>

Mr ISAACS

- What is it? I have not heard it. It is a significant fact to my mind that no person can give an answer except that if the planters can only delay the final settlement of this question, a chapter of accidents may enable them to get a further postponement in the future. Before I close I shall point out, not merely that

there is no positive advantage in delay, even to the planters, except the mere permission to carry on under present conditions, but that history affords us one remarkable example of the danger all round of acceding to any such request. If we consented to prolong the time - as is desired - we should be making, a precedent and an admission which, in my judgment, are positively in opposition to the position which we are taking up to-day. If we concede the request that we should postpone the eradication of this evil for five or ten years, or any suggested period, what does it mean ? It means that we cannot at present carry on that industry with white labour. It is an admission that we cannot at the present time do, without, kanaka labour. The planters think that if they secure an extension of time they may find for kanaka labour a substitution that is not white labour. Therefore they say, " Let us have time, and see whether we can do it." I am not going to yield to any such suggestion, because that would be an admission that we are not going to put an end to this traffic in kanakas until some other coloured or inferior labour can be substituted for it. If we adopt that course once, we may fairly be expected to adopt it again. In the letter from Mr. Crespin, there is, perhaps inadvertently on the part of those who have published it, a singular piece of evidence that carries to my mind the whole point of the planters' contention, which is that they desire to carry on with kanaka labour indefinitely. I shall read what is a very important passage, because the words it contains are those of the Hon. A. J. Thynne, who is quoted and relied upon by Mr. Crespin. The passage reads as follows : -

In one of Mr. Thynne's letters, in which he presents results inseparable from the abolition of kanaka labour, he says-"So far there are two alternatives ; the substitution of other coloured labour, and the extinction of the industry."

I wish to emphasize those words because the position which is really taken up - not on the surface, but substantially and fundamentally - by the planters is, " We shall have to give up the industry unless we are permitted to use inferior labour." I think that ought to be distinctly understood to be the issue. Apart altogether from what I have said, if we were driven to face that issue, the evidence is overwhelming that we are not confronted with those alternatives at all. There is no reason, according to the evidence of witnesses who are relied upon, by the sugar- planters - evidence that is convincing" enoughs - why we should not pass this Bill. My doubt- really is as to whether we ought not to go further than this measure provides. I am satisfied to take the Bill, because it appears to meet with general assent. But I cannot see why we should not stop the importation of kanaka labour at once. I am not satisfied with the Bill in my own mind as a matter of pure reasoning, but I see that, the sentiment animating the Government is that it is not altogether unfair to postpone the cessation of the traffic for two years, or until the 31st March, 1904, after which no more kanaka labour is to be introduced into Australia under any circumstances. That is a small period in the life of the continent, but it is a definite one, and I am prepared to accede to it, especially as the Government have taken care to diminish the evil as we go along. What is the position with regard to this question ? The honorable member for Melbourne said that the crux of it was, "Can this industry be carried on with white labour?" He appealed to the manifesto of Sir Samuel Griffith. In the first place the manifesto was published, as I understand, at a period when circumstances external to the sugar traffic, and circumstances which are, unfortunately, common to Australia, involving depression and severe commercial stricture, prevailed all round. For a temporary purpose, for a moment of urgency, the Government saw fit, in that particular crisis, to relax the then existing kanaka law. But the urgency of Queensland in 1892 is not the urgency of the Commonwealth in 1901, and the period that was then looked forward to by the Queensland Parliament has practically passed. Apart altogether from that consideration, if the matter came up in the Queensland Parliament, I do not see that the Queensland sugar planters could rely with reason on the argument then used. At page 8, volume 67, of the Queensland Hansard of 1892, I find the manifesto set out at length. In that manifesto, Sir Samuel Griffith makes this clear and assuring statement - at the very moment, it will be understood, when he was advocating and proposing to carry a Bill to relax the kanaka labour law -

It has been proved that in Queensland cane can be grown by white labour. I am aware that this position is still disputed, but it is admitted by most of the more liberal-minded planters with whom I have been in communication.

That is convincing in my mind. At a later stage Sir Samuel Griffith goes on to say that there is a danger of the kanaka coming into competition with white labourers in other occupations. These are most important statements to make in a manifesto of this kind, statements which must force themselves upon our



consideration. The debate upon the Bill which he introduced, and which has since become law, was contributed to by many honorable members of note, the late Mr. Salkeld amongst them, and I find the statement made that in many occupations the kanaka labourers do come into actual competition with white men. Before I pass from this manifesto, I wish to emphasize what I call the third ground of Sir Samuel

Griffith's original objections to kanaka labour. He did not abandon that ground in his manifesto, nor has he ever done so. It is that -

The permanent existence of a large servile population amongst us, not admitted to the franchise, is not compatible with the continuance of our free political institutions.

Speaking of this and other objections, he said in his manifesto - " I recognise the force of these reasons as fully as ever." I trace in this manifesto the honest expression of a most profound conviction on the part of that great Queensland statesman, that even at the moment when he felt the extraordinary circumstances of Queensland demanded extraordinary action, he was still, as ever, profoundly impressed with the necessity of making his proposed measure only a temporary one, and of taking strong steps at as early a date as possible to put an end to an acknowledged and a growing evil. In the course of the same debate, I find the strongest evidence of an unabated and engrossing conviction on the part of Queensland people, that this kanaka traffic was a cancer which must be eradicated. How do I make that discovery ? We have had the overpowering weight of all the quotations which the Prime Minister has given us. They go as far as 1885, but in 1888 we have a document, not of a fleeting nature, not a mere statement made at a public meeting, which might be explained away, but an authoritative and considered expression of opinion, and a pledge, by Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, as to his views. That gentleman knew what he was talking- about. In the letter which he wrote to the press on that occasion he pledged himself solemnly and publicly to a certain policy, and I think it ought to be placed on record in our Hansard. At page 148, vol. 67, of the Queensland Hansard for 1892, Mr. Glassey is reported to have spoken as follows : -

Sir Thomas

Mcllwraith who, by the way, was a member of the Government at the time--

Mr Fisher

- He was then leading the Opposition.

Mr ISAACS

- Yes ; but in 1892 he was the Colonial Treasurer in Sir Samuel Griffith's Government.

<page>5999</page>

Mr Wilkinson

- But when he wrote that letter he was leading the Opposition at a general election.

Mr ISAACS

- This letter was read in the Queensland Legislative Assembly in 1892, at a time when Sir Thomas Mcllwraith was second in command in the Griffith Government. Mr. Glassey said : -

Sir Thomas

Mcllwraith was most emphatic in his declaration on the subject of coloured labour. In the manifesto which he issued to the electors of North Brisbane, to contradict the statements which had been made by the Chief Secretary, he said : -

Now comes the letter, and I think it speaks trumpet-tongued as to the honest opinion of Queensland statesmen, when they felt themselves untrammelled by considerations of financial urgency of an extraordinary nature -

Gentlemen, - With a view of showing you the absurdity of the statements made by my opponents I now pledge myself to the following if I am returned to power : - Not to allow the introduction of coolie or other coloured labour ; not to allow the introduction of Chinese ; not to pay the survey fees of the Transcontinental Syndicate ; not to introduce or support a Transcontinental Railway Bill or scheme ; to oppose a land tax ; to encourage local industries by protection.

I am gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

Thomas Mcllwraith.

What does that letter show ? It shows not only that a prominent statesman pledged himself, and his party,

I apprehend, to oppose the introduction of any more coolie or coloured labour - not ten years ahead, but immediately - but it also shows that the public sentiment of Queensland was so distinctly felt and understood that both parties were competing for support by giving the same pledge. Sir Thomas Mcllwraith felt that the chances of himself and his party were being injured by what he considered to be the inaccurate statements of the leader of the opposing party in saying that he was in favour of coloured labour.

Mr Fisher

- And the leader of the opposing party was Sir Samuel Griffith.

Mr ISAACS

- Yes ; therefore in 1888 there was practically a consensus of opinion on the part of the two competing parties in Queensland on this important subject.

Mr HENRY WILLIS

- Sir Thomas Mcllwraith made another statement on the same subject at the same time.

Mr ISAACS

- Surely not at the same time.

Mr Henry Willis

- Yes ; I can produce it.

Mr ISAACS

- I should be sorry to believe that at the very moment he was giving this definite statement in writing, Sir Thomas Mcllwraith was saying something different.

Mr McDonald

- He was returned to power, too.

<page>6000</page>

Mr ISAACS

- That is so. I say most distinctly that we have one continuous stream of public expression of opinion on the part of Queenslanders in favour of the abolition, and apparently the immediate abolition, of coolie labour. But we must remember that at that time the Act of 1885 was in force, and everybody was looking forward to the termination of the traffic in 1890. In 1892, for the reasons that I have mentioned, what has been called the " Kanaka bridge" was built. That structure has given us a great deal of trouble, and I think it is time it was swept away by the current of public opinion that is flowing, undoubtedly, in one strong continuous stream all over Australia. I have demonstrated to my own mind, and I hope to the satisfaction of honorable members, that, so far as the possibility of carrying on this work is concerned, it is an admitted fact. We are asked to postpone this legislation. I have already given some reasons why I think we should not, and they are fundamental reasons. It would amount to an admission on our part that would be converted into a precedent, and would be used more forcibly than any argument I have heard used at the present time. I have said that there is a precedent in history the repetition of which in Australia I am very anxious to avoid. We are told that if the planters can only, by means of the progress of invention or by some unexpected event, secure a device for doing the work more cheaply than white labour can do it, they will be ready to surrender kanaka labour. Every one familiar with the history of slavery in the United States knows perfectly well how one little invention accentuated the whole difficulty, and brought about a condition of things that led to enormous trouble at a time when it was thought the slave trade was going to die away. I am not alluding to the original compromise in the Constitution, which was considered to be necessary in order to achieve federation. We have no such excuse as America had, because we have not to stoop to such compromises. We have got our Constitution without it. I am alluding to the fact that when cotton was first grown in the southern States, it was difficult, indeed, to separate the seeds from the cotton, and its supply to England and the other countries was comparatively limited. It was thought, therefore, that slavery would die a natural death, but one day an inventive American devised the cotton gin.

Mr KING O'MALLEY

- It was Whitney.

<page>6001</page>

Mr ISAACS

- Yes ; Eli Whitney. By means of the cotton gin it was found that the negro slave could multiply his work

infinitely, and it put cotton on the market to a much greater degree than before. That sent up the price of slaves at once, and made the evil more difficult of eradication than ever it was before. We do not know what the future has in store for us. We do not know how invention will turn. It may turn in a direction which will involve the extension of sugar-cane planting in Queensland, and the use of these kanakas, or their resultant product, in some way which will accentuate the evil, may extend vested interests in opposition to the principles of humanity, and put us in a worse position for dealing with the difficulty than we occupy at present. I propose that we should deal with this matter at once ; that we should not wait for a future time which may bring more difficulties than facilities for doing what is required. I can see no reason why any postponement should be granted. I cannot absolve our Australian people from blame in this matter. I think we are greatly to blame. There have been already, as it seems to me, three eras in the treatment of kanaka labour. In the first era there was an open violation of the rights of the kanaka by kidnapping. The Imperial Statute of 1872 (on its very forefront) has the charge perpetuated that it was by reason of the criminal offences committed upon the Pacific Islanders that that measure was passed. That was the first era. The next era was marked by the inconsiderate treatment of the kanakas by the sugar planters, which resulted in an enormous number of deaths - 66 per 1000 from 1885 to 1890. I get that evidence from the Queensland debates at page 173. It appears from the Registrar-General's returns that, from 1885 to 1890 inclusive, the number of islanders in the State each year, added together, made a total of 5,577. During the six years 3,689 of these men died, or at the rate of 66 per 1,000. That was leaving out of consideration the year during which there was a visitation of measles and the year before it, so that those were normal years. The third era is the present, during which the death-rate of the kanakas, though very much less - less than it was by more than 50 per cent. - is still abnormally high. I find from the 1901 report of the immigration agent in connexion with the Pacific Island immigration, presented to the Queensland House of Parliament, and dated 4th June this year, that, independently altogether of 940 labourers who returned to their homes during the year 1900, and who, no doubt, carried with them the seeds of disease and death, the mortality on this continent was extremely large. There were 9,324 labourers in the State, and of these 274 died. Now, if we say, roughly speaking, 5 so that we may calculate it mentally, that among 9,000 there were 270 deaths, that is equal to 30 per 1,000. The general mortality in Queensland, I find from " Coghlan," page 258, is less than 13 per 1,000, and that includes, of course, the Chinese and other Asiatics. The normal mortality of Queensland, therefore, is less than that of Victoria, showing that Queensland is really a healthy country. Thus we find that 14 deaths per 1,000 among the kanakas are' & due practically to the causes attendant upon the sugar-cane work. That is a tremendous mortality when we consider it in conjunction with the diseases from which the kanakas may possibly recover, and the other troubles they have, and I think that if we have any regard for the welfare of these unfortunate beings - these inferior beings who are dragged, so to speak, at the chariot wheels of our progress - we ought, out of consideration for them alone, to abolish this traffic, and at the earliest moment possible. I am reminded by the honorable member for Darling Downs that if we take the percentage of deaths, and even assume that it has not recently been diminished, but has been at this reduced rate during the ten years since the reorganization of the laws, and that there have been 140 deaths per annum among these islanders occasioned by this traffic alone, we find that, roughly speaking, 1,400 deaths lie at our doors. This is an appalling result. When we are told by men whose words can be relied on, that white labour can do this work, and when we see that the sugar industry is not retrogressing, but is progressing, I cannot frame any reason in my own mind that would be satisfying to any humane conscience why we should delay as desired the definite, final, and, I hope, irrevocable solution of this monstrosity. It has been stated that the planters are entitled to notice, but what notice can they have more than they have had for the last 40 years 1 Year after year they have had warnings, and Parliament after Parliament has legislated against them, and kindly and considerately, and far too generously in my opinion, has the path been graded for the disappearance of the kanaka. I have had placed in my hands the words uttered by our kite honored colleague, Mr. W.-H. Groom, formerly the member for Darling Downs, who, in his speech in 1889 in the Queensland Assembly, pointed out what was well understood, namely, that the abolition of the kanaka was in contemplation at no distant date. He says -

I have found prevailing among a large section of the inhabitants of the North the feeling that kanaka labour is merely a stop-gap for coolies.

That shows that as far back as 1889 the planters understood perfectly well that the kanaka had to go.

There is no indication that they have made any preparation for it, but there is this indication, that when they were free from the trammels of the law - I do not say the present men - they did not hesitate, to steal away the islanders from their homes, regardless of the consequences, and the Imperial Government had to stigmatize such action as a crime, and furnish the Queensland authorities with power to stop it. Then came the force of public opinion, unexpressed, but decidedly felt, which compelled the planters -to desist from their wholly inconsiderate treatment of the kanakas, which led to the mortality of 66 per 1,000, so that the death rate to-day, although abnormal, is marvelously smaller. Now, the time has come when public opinion must be formulated in the direction in which it has been expressed articulately at the polls, not only in Queensland, but in all the other States, that the kanaka trade must definitely be put an end to. I do not hesitate to say that this traffic is a reproach to us at the present moment, and I should be wanting in my duty if I did not express myself as I have done, and if I did not do all in my power -to wipe out this blot as soon as possible. I can give no ear whatever to the direct proposal for delay, nor to the other proposal for delay which takes the shape of the appointment of a commission or a select committee. I think that the matter is perfectly plain to all the people of all the States, and I believe that when we have passed this Bill, and carried it stringently into operation, we shall have simply done our duty. Now, with regard to the measure itself, it is proposed that after the 31st March, 1904, no Pacific Island labourer shall enter any part of Australia. The Queensland Acts, as explained by the Prime Minister, are to be left in full operation, except so far as they are controlled and restricted by this measure. The responsibility of the limited administration which will be left to them, will lie upon the Queensland authorities, and what we say is that in the meantime, from the moment this Bill is passed until the 31st March, 1904, no Pacific Islander shall enter Australia except under licence. That licence is to be granted by the Queensland Government, but they are not to have power to issue licences at their own sweet will, and are to be restricted by the diminishing provisions of the Bill. Therefore, it seems to me that the termination of this business is very nearly at hand. They may bring in these islanders until the 31st March, 1904, but no licences are to be granted after the 31st December, 1903, which is to be the final point of permission, and unless the planters make three years' agreements from that time they will not be able to keep the men as long as 1906. There is no necessity to make out the agreements for one year, but there is an almost absolute necessity from the point of view of the planter to make the agreements for more than one year. Therefore the argument that has been used in connexion with the limitation of 'the period of the agreement to one year is divested of all reason. Clause 8 is one of the most important in the Bill. We know that under the terms of the Constitution, after the imposition of uniform duties, the intercourse between the States with regard to persons as well as goods is to be absolutely free, and I welcome the provision that is sought to be made by the Government in clause 8 against the danger that would otherwise exist in regard to the rest of the States. After the imposition by law - not merely by the proposal of the Tariff that we have before us, but by Act - of the uniform duties, in the absence of any other provisions, these islanders would, under the provisions of the Constitution, be at liberty to wander all over Australia. But by sub-section (26) of section 51 of the Constitution, power is given to legislate for any race as to which we desire to make special provision. I have been anxious on this matter, and the Attorney-General has been good enough to permit me to consult him on the subject. I believe that clause 8 will, upon the whole, render impossible such a disaster as permitting those coloured aliens to wander at liberty over the length and breadth of Australia. Up to the 31st December, 1906, Pacific Island labourers, supposing all other conditions are complied with, may be lawfully employed in Queensland, under labour agreement, but they are not allowed, up to that date, to wander about, even in Queensland, nor to be there, unless they are actually employed under agreement. A kanaka is not to be let loose to roam about and come into competition with white men, even in Queensland, and certainly not in the rest of Australia; nor is he permitted to remain in Australia, up to the 31st December, 1906, unless actually employed under a Pacific Island agreement. Sub-clause (2) provides that practically under no circumstances after that date is a Pacific Islander to be allowed to continue in Australia. There may be some question as to the form which that provision has taken, but, on the whole, I commend the Government none the less for that provision than for the other provisions of the Bill. The Government have foreseen, and, on the whole, practically provided against, what would otherwise be a great danger to us all. Australia is under a debt to the Government for carefully and fairly meeting this great question. We should hasten to support them in this work, and, when the desire formulated in this Bill has been carried out, I believe we shall have

approached more closely than even before, and more closely than ever we could have hoped to approach but for federation, to that great ideal which the colonies set before them - one people-one destiny.

Mr WILKINSON

- The case for Queensland has been sufficiently strongly put on this question -without my going over ground which has already been trodden. But there are one or two aspects of the question which do not appear to have been dealt with. The Australian Commonwealth, and the State of Queensland in particular, will no doubt 'feel very grateful for the weighty consideration that has been given to this matter by the parliamentary representatives of the Commonwealth. Such a speech as we have just listened to by the honorable and learned member for Indi must convince the most prejudiced persons on the other side that this matter is not being decided without due and weighty consideration. On this question of the abolition of Polynesian immigration and its employment in Queensland, I take up a somewhat stronger position than even that taken up by the 'Government to-day. But I believe that the proposals of the Government are a most reasonable compromise ; and, after all the evidence we have had brought to bear, showing that this traffic has been considered a matter of temporary convenience for many years past, I cannot see how there can be any objection to those proposals, even on the part of the most earnest advocate of the continuance of this traffic. \_ Here I should like to make reference to a vote I gave a few nights ago. That vote was called in question, but I must say that I do not think that even the honorable member for Maranoa can question my desire for a " white Australia." My desire, however, is to have a " white Australia" brought about as quickly as possible. I do not Want to see 500 Japanese rushed into 'the country by Burns, Philp, and Company, while we are waiting Imperial sanction to any Bill we may pass. I want to see finality as -early as possible. I'f we think afterwards that our rights of self-government have been infringed or interfered with, we -can attend 'to that matter later on. First of all, let us see that we preserve our Commonwealth against the introduction of these people. In reply to an interjection I said that I should be able to answer my constituents on this question, and so I shall. I do not need to fear them.

Mr SPEAKER

- I must ask the honorable member to confine his remarks 'to the provisions of the Bill.

<page>6003</page>

Mr WILKINSON

- Had it not been for the rules of the House I should have explained my vote, or, possibly, I might have claimed that right as a -matter of privilege. However, I have no desire 'to go any further in the matter. All I want to do is to assert that my 'action -all through has been consistent, and is consistent still. My desire is. at the earliest possible moment, to have a " white Australia," and to keep from our shores all coloured labourers of a lower degree of civilization than our own. That is the motive which actuated me in the beginning, and it is the motive which actuates me Still. This is not a matter of to-day with me. I have been stumping Queensland for tho last twelve or thirteen years on the question. I can tell those honorable members who advocate the continuance of the traffic, that I have stood up in the streets of Mackay itself, and for two or three hours held forth against the kanaka traffic. There the toast of the day used to be "Down with Griffith," because he attempted to abolish the traffic. But shortly after Sir Samuel Griffith made that attempt, I stood up in the streets of Mackay, and in the presence of hundreds of the people who are most affected, I spoke on this subject, and my remarks were received as heartily there as they were in the southern parts of the State. The honorable member for Brisbane sought to impress on the House that he was returned for an electorate which comprises constituencies represented by labour members in the local Parliament. In contradistinction to that, I want to point out that the electorate I represent returned nine members to the Parliament of Queensland, and every one of these is supporting the Philp Government to-day. There are 72 members returned to the Queensland Parliament, and the Philp Government have a majority. Yet when the whole of these constituencies were polled we found that three-fourths of the members returned to the Federal Parliament were in favour of a white Australia. Under these circumstances can much weight be attached to the argument of the honorable member for Brisbane 1 Then in the federal electorate of Darling Downs, which was the latest polled in Queensland, only two of the State Parliament representatives are sitting in opposition ; all the rest are Ministerial supporters. Yet with the whole weight of the Government of Queensland opposed to him, the honorable

member for Darling Downs was sent here to advocate a " white Australia." There can be no question as to the opinion of Queensland, or as to the opinion of the Federal representatives of Queensland. All that the supporters of the kanaka traffic are asking for now is time, and they have been asking for that for the last 20 or 30 years. I have been as long, and perhaps a little longer, a resident of Queensland than the honorable member for Brisbane ; and though [ was a very young lad when the honorable member came to the State, I was not without a certain amount of observation. I can remember when the first coolies were introduced for the purpose of being used in cotton-growing. I have seen them engaged in the work in Northern Queensland, and I have seen them buried there without any more ceremony than is observed in burying a dog. I know of what I am speaking just as much as does the honorable member for Brisbane. As to these kanakas being harmless and docile creatures, I would like to read a letter I have received from a gentleman who was an eye witness of the scenes he describes. I wrote to him for this information, knowing that he had been present, and this is what he sent to me -

In June 1884, at the annual race meeting held in Mackay, between 7th and 14th of that month, a fight between kanakas and whites occurred. In reply to your first query, I saw the first missile thrown by a kanaka, who had been refused a drink by one of the barman at the booth ; then a fusillade of bottles came out of the adjacent canefield. Two or three whites got scalp wounds, and were foolish enough to stand and throw the bottles back at the kanakas. After about ten minutes of this kind of work, the whole of the whites, both on foot and horse-back, made out on to the open course, and the kanakas followed them ; and as soon as the blacks were on the open, the whites charged them, the horsemen using their stirrup irons or riding whips, and a large number of kanakas were left lying all about the course wounded ; their brains were oozing out of their heads, and with each dying breath they vomited blood. Leaving that scene, I followed the whites as they broke into Raymond's paddock, and there was a large number of kanakas lying bruised and bleeding amongst the cane, whilst the owner was very near frantic at the way the cane was being knocked down. From there I made my way towards Raymond's house, and there were a couple of white men who had followed a kanaka into the house and pulled him out, and gave him a good hiding, he having thrown a missile at a woman riding along the road. The owner took the names of the two , whites, and they were afterwards summoned and imprisoned for breaking into Raymond's house. Two supposed ringleaders of the kanakas were also arrested, and they were tried and sent to goal for a couple of months. What led to the fight ? For some time previous to the races, the Tanna boys had resolved amongst themselves that they were as good as the white men, and they determined to test the question at the races, viz. , they would have grog the same as the whites, and, when refused, the fun began. Who commenced the riot ? - The kanakas. Were any whites injured ? - Yes. Three were injured sufficiently to require their wounds dressing ; but not seriously. Were any kanakas killed ? - Yes ; saw eight; myself. Besides this, J. McLean, who is now working at the State Nursery, Mackay, carried a large number away to the Kanaka Hospital, and Burton, the undertaker, buried the eight. Was there any inquiry ? - No, not to my knowledge. Everything was hushed up, except that the Government organ, the Mercury, said that three kanakas had been killed, so far as they had been officially informed. The then member for the district, and Minister of Lands, H. Black, got on the top of the booth, with his two children, for safety. I have sent you this very hurried description, and hope you will pardon the erratic way it is written, but if necessary will give you further particulars after the recess.

That description is furnished by an eyewitness who, from his pugnacity, I know must have taken a pretty active part in the fight. Speaking further of the docility of the kanaka, I should like to refer honorable members to the number of undiscovered murders and other crimes which have occurred in Northern Queensland. Up to 1896 no fewer than seventeen murders had been committed, the perpetrators of which had not been traced.

Mr Deakin

- Over how long a period?

<page>6005</page>

Mr WILKINSON

- I cannot say. The inference drawn from this fact is that the kanakas, who resemble each other very closely, rush out of the cane-fields and commit outrages, the authors of which it is thus impossible to trace. Despite all attempts to Christianize him the kanaka is still a savage. We cannot eradicate his savage instincts in one or two generations. I have in my mind a kanaka whom I have known for over 30

years. He is a member of the Salvation Army and beats the drum. He stands in the streets and exhorts the white people to repentance, and thinks that he is better than the Europeans. But he is a savage none the less. During the course of this debate the reason has been given why the white people permit certain low classes of women to inhabit the towns in which these kanakas are congregated. I have not been sparing in my denunciation of the Chinese quarters of Melbourne and Sydney, but there are canker spots in Queensland just as there are elsewhere. Where the kanakas are brought here without their women we may depend upon it that there will be a degree of immorality which we in our civilization do not desire to see perpetuated in Australia. Some honorable members have asked for an extension of the period during which the planters shall be able to employ kanakas, in order that the planters may have an opportunity of accommodating themselves to the new set of circumstances. I admired much of that was said the other day by the honorable member for Wentworth. But he pleads for time. I should like to ask that honorable member, as well as the honorable member for Kooyong and the honorable member for Oxley, whether, if they saw one of their loved ones suffering from a cancer, they would delay the surgical operation which would be necessary to cut the cancer away? Certainly not ! They would permit the operation to be performed, and afterwards by tender nursing would endeavour to heal the wound which the knife had made. That is what the Government propose to do. They desire to cut away this cancerous growth from the sugar industry, and afterwards, by offering practically a bonus for sugar grown by white labour, they hope to heal the wound which has been made. They have no desire to kill the sugar industry, but merely wish to get rid of an evil which threatens the life of the Commonwealth. I am proud that I gave a vote the other night in support of a Government which I know to be earnest in its endeavour to bring about a white Australia. I am not a bit ashamed of that vote. The evils regarding the recruiting traffic have already been referred to. Some honorable members say - " Let us continue the recruiting for five years " ; others plead for an extension to seven years ; and others again favour limiting the period to ten years. I am pleased to admit that the evils of recruiting have been very much diminished of late years. But they have not been entirely abolished, nor can they be. Where many men - some of them utterly unscrupulous - are out upon the ocean plying a trade which brings them gain, we cannot keep them all honest. We may send inspectors to the islands, but we cannot always get honest inspectors. I have in my hand a letter from a man who has been on the " black-birders." He writes-

Looking at this question honestly in the face, one can only come to the conclusion that greed and selfishness are at the bottom of the matter.

The author of this letter is now resident in a sugar district in Southern Queensland. He continues - I have the journal of a gentleman who was three years sailing amongst the South Sea Islands. He was on a religious mission, and he had time to make observations at each island he visited. There was food everywhere in abundance, and, as the weather is nearly always warm, clothes are very little used. The natives require to labour very little. Fishing, or the planting of a few yams, is about all the work they do. Those who come to Queensland may make a little money, but it is of little use in the islands, so that when about to return they generally expend it in clothes and knickknacks for their friends and relations. The question naturally arises, " If the islanders have all they require in their own islands, why do they come to Queensland ? " Is it to improve their position - to take home money with which to buy land and houses ? The thing is absurd. The schooners engaged in this blackbirding carry men who are called recruiters. They make arrangements with the chief for so many men or women, and, of course, the chiefs have to get presents. This a recruiter, is a bit lavish over it when he is sure of a good number. Then the relations have to be provided with presents, and, of course, all the grand tilings which the islanders are to get when they arrive in Queensland are not forgotten, but, of course, the hoe and cane-fields are not mentioned. But, to satisfy those who are not engaged in growing cane in Queensland by kanaka labour, the Queensland Government step in and say that all vessels engaged in this business must carry a Government agent. Simply a farce ! He is supposed to explain to the islanders what they are coming or being brought to Queensland for, and the wages they are to get, &c. Now, the cost of keeping one of these vessels at sea is from £70 to £90 per month, according to size, &o. and no time must be wasted in getting a full ship ; and if the Government agent is in the way there is one way he can be got rid of. The golden key can open a door when others fail, and I suppose human nature is the same on the high seas as on land. Then, as I told you in a previous letter, there are many kanakas in this State, who, when -they left their island homes, did not know what part of the world, they were being brought to. The

old plan was to heave the schooner to, well off the land, get the islanders to come on board for trade, & o. ., throw pig iron into the canoe and sink it, and make all sail away with all those on board.

We know that that was the practice in the old times. Proceeding, the writer says : -

We have islanders here who were brought to this country against their will, when they were quite young lads. They have no wish to return, and if they were sent out of the country it would be as great a hardship to them as it was when they were first brought here.

I have every faith in the author of these statements. From whatever standpoint the kanaka traffic is viewed, it is one that Australia should endeavour to get rid of at the earliest possible moment. Before concluding, I wish to say a word or two in regard to the allegation that it is impossible for white men to do the work which is now being performed by kanakas. 'I have been the guest of a number of Melbourne manufacturers since my arrival in Victoria. Indeed, I have only failed to avail myself of one invitation which was forwarded to me. I visited the Colonial Sugar Refinery works, and there saw men working under worse conditions than prevail in an ill-ventilated coal-mine. I saw men working there attired in loin clothes. The atmosphere was not merely only warm but humid. I have never seen men in the cane-fields of Queensland working under such conditions. Yet we are told that while white men can perform that sort of work, they cannot work in the cane fields. But it is merely a matter of paying a proper wage, and the men will be forthcoming to do the work. Malarial fever, too, is held up as a sort of scarecrow. I remember when malaria was just as rampant about Moreton Bay as it is to-day around the Johnston River. I remember when my father used to suffer from that ever, but to-day he is still alive and can walk out hand in hand with his great grandchildren. Four generations have lived there, although it was said at the period I refer to that white men could not people that district. Honorable members are aware that in the early history of the Botany Bay settlement, it was said that white men could not thrive there. The settlement was upon the verge of famine on two or three occasions, notwithstanding the fact that it had the rich virgin soil of a continent at its back. It was simply because the people did not try to avail themselves of the advantages which nature had placed at their disposal that they were reduced to such dire extremity. So it is with the planters of Queensland to-day. So long as humanity is cheaper than machinery, humanity will be used. So long as human beings can be procured at a cheaper rate than machinery the planters will not bother about machinery. Necessity is the mother of invention. If we create the necessity, the machinery will come all the quicker. I am perfectly satisfied - as was pointed out by the honorable and learned member for Indi - that just as the cotton gin was introduced in America, so some machine will be invented for the trashing of cane if that trashing be necessary. I know that in the Southern States of America, a machine revolving at a very high rate of speed brushes the cotton. If dry leaf gets into the cotton, there is a machine in use that will separate it from the cotton. Surely that is a much more difficult operation than the trashing of cane in the canefields. The people of Australia have declared - and no part of this continent has done so more emphatically than Queensland - that the Commonwealth shall be white. In order that no one shall suffer, the people have willingly said that if it costs more to produce sugar by white labour they are prepared to pay more for it. The proposals of the Government are eminently fair. In addition to the duty to be imposed on sugar coming into the Commonwealth, they propose to offer a bonus of £2 per ton to those who employ white labour in the industry as against that from the Polynesian Islands, India, China, Japan, and Java. I do not know that I would be justified at this late hour in taking up the time of the House further, but I should like to thank those honorable members, who represent constituencies other than electorates in the State of Queensland, for their advocacy of this measure and their support of the policy of a white Australia. The people of Queensland realize, perhaps more than those of any other State, what the cry means, and I refuse to believe that there is any part of my native country which cannot be peopled and populated by men as good as those who occupy the more temperate portions of the continent. I have travelled from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Wilson's Promontory, but I have not yet seen any part of Australia where the white man could not accommodate himself to the circumstances and surroundings in which he has to work. I have seen white men working on the arid plains of the west, in the jungles along the coast, and in the tropics, and as far as my observation goes they have not degenerated. The honorable member for Kooyong says that the men who do this work may be able to stand it themselves, but that their children will show signs of race deterioration. We can go to these places, however, and see, the children of the second and third generation showing no signs of deterioration.



Mr Mahon

- What did Dr. Ahearn say about the third generation ?

Mr WILKINSON

- I do not take that gentleman as an authority against my own observations.

Mr Higgins

- Is the honorable member of the second or third generation ?

Mr WILKINSON

- I am of the third. I am not big physically, but I am one of a family of fifteen, several member's of which are over six feet high ; and we are all Queensland natives. There is no reason, so far as I can see, why white people should degenerate if they only take care of themselves, and work under proper conditions. It has been pointed out that the hardest work of the cane-fields is done in the coolest months of the year--

Mr Page

- Statistics show that the white men are not deteriorating.

Mr WILKINSON

- That is so. If, instead of working in the heat of the day, those engaged in the industry were to adopt the system in force in some parts of Europe, and work in the cool of the morning and the evening, they would avoid the great heat which is supposed to be the chief objection to the employment of white men in these localities. Having regard to the assistance which it is going to receive from the Commonwealth Parliament, there is no reason whatever why this industry should be destroyed because of the abolition of kanaka labour. I am sure we are going to give it that assistance, and that the industry will survive the passing of this measure. There is no country which does not possess some territory which cannot be utilized. I have no desire to see the sugar industry of Queensland injured, but, if it came to be a question between its abolition and its perpetuation at the cost of a white Australia, I should say - "Away with the industry, even if it represents seventy millions instead of seven millions of capital." Every country has its deserts, its mountain ranges, and its swamps, and if any portion of Queensland territory is found to be unfit for occupation by white races let it remain as it is. That is the position I take up, for the poet's lines are as true to-day as when they were written -

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

If we admit races to our country which will contaminate the blood that has peopled the world, which has come forth from the northern parts of Europe, and from Great Britain particularly, to cultivate and gladden the waste places of the earth - if we allow any deterioration in that blood - then, I say that, even though wealth may accumulate, our race may well decay.

Debate (on motion of Mr. Higgins) adjourned.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

In Committee

(Consideration of Senate's amendments) :

Motion proposed -

That the committee agree to the Senate's amendments in amendments Nos. 2 and 8.

<page>6007</page>

Attorney-General

Mr DEAKIN

. - I have already explained these amendments. The first alters the date on which the Bill shall come into operation from the 1st October to 1st December next, and the second alters the age at which telegraph messengers shall cease to be employed in the department from seventeen to eighteen years.

Mr MAUGER

- I am not going to offer any opposition to the motion, but I think it is a very great pity that the change from seventeen to eighteen years has been made. These youths will be employed in the department until they are eighteen years of age, and it will then be too late for them to learn any trade. While I do not want to hinder the passing of this measure, I think this amendment is an indication that honorable members of another place are not aware of the seriousness of their proposal.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion proposed -

That the committee agree to the Senate's amendment in amendment No. 13.

Mr DEAKIN

- I think, as we are to object to some amendments, we ought to press for the reconsideration of this matter, which omits paragraph (b) in sub-clause (2) of clause 26, as passed by us. The paragraph deals with newspaper supplements, and was debated by us at great length. As honorable members will recollect, the question relates entirely to the letterpress of these supplements, and the provision, as finally modified by us, was that the letterpress should be set up within the Commonwealth. In view of the importance of the discussion here, I think we should ask the Senate to reconsider its decision.

Mr MAHON

- With all respect, I should like to ask the Attorney-General how often he is able to change his mind in a day ? When he spoke on this subject two hours ago he actually proposed that the committee should accept the amendment made by another place.

Mr Deakin

- No.

Mr MAHON

- Does the honorable and learned member deny that that is so ?

Mr Deakin

- Yes.

Mr Crouch

- The Attorney-General only set out what the amendments were. I did not understand him to say that we should accept this amendment.

Mr MAHON

- The Attorney-General distinctly referred to the honorable member for Bourke, who, it will be remembered, moved this amendment to the clause when it was originally before us. He said the honorable member would have no objection to forego this amendment now, and he indicated, so far as it was possible to do so, without committing himself absolutely, that the Government did not intend to ask the committee to dissent from the action of the Senate in this matter.

Mr Deakin

- I indicated that if the committee was prepared to take the whole of the amendments without criticism, and adopt them, I should offer no objection, but not otherwise.

Mr MAHON

- The Attorney-General appears to be willing to swallow anything, and he thinks the committee has an equally capacious windpipe. I am certainly not going to let this matter pass without a protest. I disagreed with the Government proposal before, as a protectionist dodge. After three or four weeks' consideration, I repeat that this is a protectionist dodge, which will do the Government no good, nor will it help the parties concerned. The Attorney-General is always willing apparently to do everything he possibly can to impose some little protection on the unfortunate people of this Commonwealth. When this matter was being debated by us on a former occasion he actually consented to an amendment, suggested by the honorable member for Bland, that supplements printed from matrices set up by linotype should not be deemed a supplement to a newspaper for the purposes of this measure. It is a difficult matter to explain to honorable members who do not understand the technique of the printing trade, but when I pointed out that we do not print from matrices, but from the stereotyped plates cast from them, the proposal was reluctantly withdrawn. I hope honorable members will coincide with the amendment made by the Senate. I shall divide the committee on this question, if necessary, for I think we ought to have a little respect for the mature judgment of legislators in another place.

Mr Mauger

- That will be recorded against the honorable member.

<page>6008</page>

Mr MAHON

- We have to concede something to them. They have conceded a good deal to us. We need not accept their objections to the use of the words "seditious" and "blasphemous," and I feel sure that such a lover of liberty as the honorable member for Melbourne Ports would not do so. If it could have been foreseen that the honorable member was to be elected for Melbourne Ports, what a splendid sarcasm that man must have possessed who named that electorate, for it is now represented by an honorable member who does

not want a port. He thinks apparently that a harbor is one of the mistakes of Providence, and would erect a barrier across every port in Australia. I hope the committee will see fit to respect the judgment of the Senate, who have conceded many things to us, and have shown a very good spirit towards this branch of the Legislature.

Mr THOMAS

-I think the Government may give way on this point, as a little later on we shall have an opportunity of dealing with the subject of blasphemy, and we may then reasonably ask the Senate to agree with us.

Mr WATSON

- Notwithstanding the statements of the honorable member for Coolgardie, who seems to always become very much irritated at the mere mention of protection, I hope the Government will stand by the former decision of this committee. I do not see that there is any force in the argument that we should give way to the Senate.

Mr. SYDNEY

SMITH (Macquarie). I hope the Government will not insist upon any alteration in the clause as amended by the Senate. When this matter was discussed in the committee previously, the question of free-trade and protection was unnecessarily raised by the Government supporters. It was not right to introduce an amendment importing the fiscal issue into a purely machinery Bill of this sort. The Attorney-General led honorable members to believe that he would accede to the Senate's amendment upon our amendment, and many honorable members have left the chamber believing that no difficulty would be raised in regard to it. For that reason alone I think the Government ought to give way in this matter.

Question put. The committee divided -

Ayes..... 21

Noes..... 20

Majority..... 1

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion proposed -

That the committee insist upon its amendment, No. 6, disagreed to by the Senate.

Mr DEAKIN

- I propose to ask the Senate to reconsider this matter, because, although they do not consider it necessary to insert the words proposed by us, the provision is found in all the State Acts, and if it is not included in this Bill there may be considerable doubt as to whether the restrictions now provided for can be any longer imposed. It is desirable that the States should not be placed under any disability in attempting to prevent papers containing undesirable advertisements from being transmitted through the post.

Motion agreed to.

Motion proposed -

That the committee does not insist upon its amendments Nos. 58, 59, 62, 87, 88, and 89 disagreed to by the Senate.

<page>6009</page>

Mr DEAKIN

- Attention has been called to the fact that in dealing with trees, clause 126 as amended allows either the Postmaster-General or any offices to exercise authority. As a further safeguard, I am willing to agree, on behalf of the Postmaster-General, that the regulations which may be made in this matter shall provide that the officer shall not be an officer of any less rank than an inspector. By that means we get the safeguard of a high officer, and ample time is allowed to a municipality or public body, who consider their rights affected, to bring their case before the Postmaster-General. Heretofore, officers have dealt with trees at their pleasure, but now notice will have to be given, and a consultation is required.

Mr ISAACS

- I do not gather whether the Attorney-General is asking us to agree to the omission of the words "unlawfully or maliciously" in clause 126.

Mr Deakin

- That is what I am asking.

Mr ISAACS

- Is that not very dangerous ?

Mr DEAKIN

- No. I find that in this city and elsewhere the question of the destruction of telegraph lines is very important. In the moving of buildings and large quantities of furniture in the city, it is the constant practice of carriers to drive deliberately along, to the destruction of the lower lines, and the cost and trouble involved is extreme.

Mr Higgins

- Is there any penalty?

Mr Watson

- By a proviso inserted in this committee, it is made an indictable offence.

Mr DEAKIN

- I find that according to the clause, any person who commits a breach of the provision is guilty of an indictable offence, and liable to imprisonment, provided that, if it appear to a justice of the peace, on the examination of the person charged, that it is not expedient in the ends of justice that it shall be prosecuted as an indictable offence, the case may be heard and determined in a summary way, and the penalty is not to exceed ?25.

Mr Isaacs

- What is the "examination" of a man charged with the offence?

Mr DEAKIN

- I suppose that is intended to refer to the statement made by the person charged. I am assured that this is a constant matter of practical difficulty, and unless some such threat is held over those who have the management of vehicles of. height in and around our great cities, it will be impossible to prevent a repetition of these offences.

Motion agreed to.

Reported, that the committee had agreed to some and disagreed with others of the Senate's amendments.

Resolved

(on motion of

Mr. Deakin)

-

That the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General, and the Minister for Home Affairs be appointed a committee to draw up a reason for not agreeing to the amendments made by the Senate on amendments Nos. 16, 19, and 20 of the House of Representatives.

Mr. DEAKIN

brought up the following reason :

As to the Senate's amendments to amendments Nos. 16, 19, and 20 - Because of the difficulty of defining " sedition."

Reported adopted.

MOTION OF WANT OF CONFIDENCE

Mr REID

-I hope I shall have the indulgence of the House in giving notice of motion at a time when it is out of order to do so. I postponed giving notice in the interests of public business, and now, with the concurrence of the House, I beg to give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move -

That this House cannot accept the financial and Tariff proposals submitted by the Government - (I. )

Because they would place the finances of the Commonwealth and the States upon an unsound and extravagant basis ;

because they fail to adjust the burdens of taxation and the advantages of the free list in an equitable manner, revealing a marked tendency, which this House regrets to observe, to press upon necessities of life and appliances used in our farming, mining, and pastoral industries more heavily than they do upon many articles of luxury ; (III.) because they would in their operation destroy the stability of the revenue, by making imposts for national purposes a source of undue profit to a few individuals, and a few favoured industries, at the expense of the whole community.

That the foregoing resolution be conveyed by address to His Excellency the Governor-General.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Motion of Want of Confidence

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Under any circumstances, such a notice of motion as that just presented would render it necessary for me to move the adjournment of the House. I am glad, however, that the right honorable gentleman has taken a course which enables me to concur with him in saving the loss of a day. I trust that the debate on this motion - which, of course, is entitled to full discussion - will be concluded next week, so that, whatever the result may be, we may proceed with the business of the country.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

<page>6010</page>

15:55:00

House adjourned at 3. 55 p.m.