

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Friday, 27th September, 1901. Death of the Hon. M. Holmes-Imprest Supply Bill (No. 4). The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. DEATH OF THE HON. M. HOLMES. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- Sir, I am sorry I am obliged to have to again move the Council to express its regret at another one of our body being taken away from us. Every member, I am sure, was exceedingly mournful when he heard that the late Mr. Mathew Holmes had died this morning. Of course, he has been with us for the past few years in a very precarious state of health, and so it is not such a shock as it might otherwise have been ; but it is only fitting to his memory and to ourselves that we should place on record our expression of regret at the termination of a very long and useful life. The honourable gentleman was appointed to this Council in 1866. He served longest in the Council, and, if he should have been selected so long ago as a fitting person to be nominated to this Chamber, it shows what his contemporaries thought of him so long ago as the time he was appointed. He was well known in those days as one of the most energetic and progressive farmers in his own district. I believe, considering the opportunities there then were for scientific farming, and the improving of farming stock of every kind, no man did more for his country than the late Mr. Holmes did, and therefore the colony owes him a great debt of gratitude. As regards his services in this Council, unfortunately my length of service will not go back long enough to recall the times when he was an active member of this Council. I have only known him as one who was fading away, and waiting for the last word, but every communication I ever had with that gentleman was always of the most pleasant and agreeable nature. I can assure his relatives of my sincere sympathy with them in their bereavement, and I am only giving expression to the feelings of the Council generally in speaking in their name. We are all sorry the time has come to pass a resolution of this kind. I therefore beg to move, Sir, That this Council do now adjourn until eight o'clock this evening, as a mark of respect to the memory of the late Hon. Mathew Holmes, M.L.C. I may just state that there is an Imprest Supply Bill coming down this evening, and therefore I am obliged

to call the Council together again to-night. The Hon. Captain BAILLIE .- In supporting the resolution of my honourable friend I may say that myself and one or two others were present in the Council when that late honourable gentleman first took his seat here in 1866, and those gentlemen who were present at that time, and who followed his political career for many years, are aware of the active part the honourable gentleman took in the proceedings of this Council. Always clear-headed and never speaking at random, what he did say was well considered and listened to with respect by other members of the Council. With respect to his family, we are well acquainted with many of them throughout the colony, and I am sure when I express my own sympathy for the relatives of the late honourable gentleman that I am speaking on behalf of every honourable member of this Council who regrets his loss. It is only within the last few years that failing health has precluded him from taking an active part in the proceedings of the Council, but his memory will always cause him to be regarded as one who did good work for the colony. Motion agreed to. The Hon. the SPEAKER left the chair at twenty minutes to three, and resumed at ten minutes past nine. IMPREST SUPPLY BILL (No. 4). This Bill was read the first, the second, and the third time. The Council adjourned at a quarter past nine o'clock p.m.

<page:76>

Friday, 27th September, 1901. First Reading - Levels and Waimate Counties' Boundaries Bill-Mr. Diack's Petition-Death of the Hon. M. Holmes, M.L.C .- Imprest Supply Bill (No. 4)-Railways Classification and Super-annuation-Supply. Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. FIRST READING. Masterton Public Park Management Bill. LEVELS AND WAIMATE COUNTIES' BOUNDARIES BILL. Mr. GRAHAM (Nelson City) brought up the report of the Committee on the Levels and Waimate Counties' Boundaries Alteration Bill, to the effect that the Standing Orders had been complied with, and the Committee recommended that the Bill be allowed to proceed. Mr. RHODES (Ellesmere) said that it was only fair to the member in charge of the Bill that he should inform him that, when the Bill was in Committee, he would move the amendment standing in his name on Supplementary Order Paper No. 47, which was as follows :- " All that area in the Land District of Canterbury known as Lower Pareora Riding of Waimate County. Bounded towards the north-east by Levels County ; towards the south-east by the ocean ; towards the south generally by a line along the middle of the Otaio River from the ocean to a point opposite the road forming the eastern boundary of Section No. 19525; thence towards the north-west generally by a right line to and by that road past Sections Nos. 19525, 16154, 17707, 23809, 20739, and 20755, through Sections Nos. 8132 and 8131, past Sections Nos. 8130, 8129, 8128, and 8127, through Sections Nos. 6226 and 6225, past Sections Nos. 19872, 14704, 19874, and through Sections Nos. 7105 and 3511 to the Pareora River, and thence by a line to

the middle of that river, the boundary of Levels County aforesaid." His reason for moving the amendment was because of representations that had been made by a majority of the residents in the Upper Pareora Riding, who were opposed to the Bill. ## MR. DIACK'S PETITION. Mr. R. MCKENZIE (Motueka) brought up the report of the Railways Committee on the petition of Mr. Diack, and moved, That the report do lie on the table. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) moved, That the petition be sent back to the Railways Committee for reconsideration. The report was to the effect that the claimant had no claim on the Government, and the Committee no recommendation to make. He might inform the House that this was the case of a farmer who was driving across the line near Waikouaiti, and in order to run no risk had waited until after the ordinary trains had passed. While ballast train conveying some empty trucks unexpectedly came along. The men on the ballast train had a clear view for some 150 yards before reaching the sheep, yet they did not blow any signal until within about 20 yards of the sheep, when the train dashed into them. There were about sixteen injured, and fourteen were killed, making a total of thirty sheep. The train went 100 yards beyond the sheep before it was hauled up. He thought, considering all the circumstances of the case, the matter was very serious. If the farmers of the country were to have trains sweeping on to them at odd times it was quite time the settlers should understand the position and Government were given to understand that the farmers would not stand such treatment. He ventured to say that if the railways were privately owned such a thing as this would meet with reprobation at once, and compensation would be enforced, but because the Government owned the railways the settlers were to have their stock slain and yet not to have their claims considered at all. He could assure the Ministers that the Farmers' Union now formed would make the Government "sit up " in such cases as this, when, through the carelessness of their men, damage was done, for, bad the men been on the outlook, was it not possible for the men to haul the train up within 150 yards, seeing that the trucks were empty ? It would have been different if the trucks had been heavily laden, for in that case something might have been said for the department. He would quote from a statement made by Mr. Diack, the farmer who had lost his sheep. It said :- " Perhaps we should give you some idea of how it occurred. On the 17th October, 1900, my sons, together with three other lads, were removing a thousand ewes and lambs from one farm to the other, and to take every precaution of the ordinary trains they waited until the last train before noon had passed-namely, our quarter to eleven. And to their surprise the empty ballast train, unknown of its running, or even the engine whistling, rushed round the corner, which, when measured, gives the driver a clear view of 150 yards from the crossing. The train rushed on at full speed and crashed into the sheep, killing there and then on the spot fourteen, and breaking the legs of six, which had to be destroyed, and eleven died afterwards, besides the lambs that were motherless. Had the driver been on the lookout, or had he given us due warning, the sheep could have been saved. As it was he whistled when he was within 20 yards of the sheep, when the train was brought to a standstill 100 yards past the crossing, which means 250 yards from the time the engine came round the corner until it was pulled up. Do you not think 250 yards is an extraordinary distance to travel with seven empty trucks before it can be stopped? Surely this can be put down for carelessness on the part of the driver." He claimed that farmers had the right to have ordinary protection, and in this case he

<page:77>

even although the Government had protected itself by legal enactment. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister for Railways) said he had no objection to the honourable gentleman doing the best he could in the interests of one of his constituents, but in advocating what he believed to be right it was not fair for him to blame the officials of the department in the way that he had. He felt sure, from what he knew of the matter, that they were not to blame. He had not yet had the opportunity of seeing the evidence taken by the Committee, nor of going into the facts of the case, and until he had done that he would not express an opinion one way or the other whether there was reasonable justification for any monetary consideration. It

appeared from the honourable gentleman's quotation from the letter that a thousand sheep were in charge of three boys. Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- I think six people altogether were in charge. Sir J. G. WARD said he understood him to say they were boys. It would be recognised that the railways were for the benefit of the farmers and the people in general, and trains had to be run whenever the exigencies of the service demanded. Of course, reasonable care was expected to be exercised by those in charge of engines or of stock, and so was it expected of the public. He thought it was rather hard on a great organization like the Farmers' Union- of which he believed himself to be a member- to suppose that they were going to ask the Rail- way Department to agree to paying away large sums of money unless the department was re- sponsible for it. The employés generally from end to end of the colony were men of intelli- gence and careful men, and he would be sur- prised to find that the Committee had not made & recommendation in accordance with the facts. He only rose to say that the matter would be looked into; but to send a petition back to the Committee unless there were fresh facts to adduce was only delaying the final considera tion of the matter. Mr. R. MCKENZIE (Motueka) said it would be of no use sending the petition back to the Committee unless the honourable member had some fresh evidence to place before the Com- mittee. But the honourable member appeared to have no evidence, outside the fact that the sheep were killed. The honourable member was now only taking advantage of this report being brought up to ingratiate himself and curry favour with the Farmers' Union. He was simply doing a little cheap electioneering. This case was not exceptional at all; the negligence, if there was any, was on the part of the persons driving the sheep. The honourable member tried to persuade the Committee that the engine-driver was reading a newspaper at the time of the accident, but he (Mr. Mckenzie) told him at the time that that was an unwar- rantable reflection upon the engine-driver and fireman of the train, unless he could produce substantial evidence to prove it. The honour- able gentleman did not, and probably could not, find any reply to that. He happened to thirty years, and if he had a just claim upon the colony he would be only too willing to assist him in advancing that claim ; but in this case the petitioner had no equitable or moral claim . against the colony at all, as all the apparent carelessness and negligence in the case was on the part of the people driving the sheep. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce) thought the argu- ment just used by the honourable member for Motueka was in favour of referring the ques- tion back to the Committee. He understood the honourable member to say that they had not sufficient evidence. Well, he presumed the honourable member for Waihemo wished to refer it back for the purpose of adducing some further evidence. He (Mr. Allen), from what he heard, believed this man had a good case. He understood that the sheep were going over an ordinary railway-crossing when the mishap occurred. No train was expected at the time, and suddenly a ballast train popped up when these men were crossing with a thousand sheep. Sir J. G. WARD .- Ballast trains must run. Mr. J. ALLEN said there should surely be some exceptional precautions taken on such occasions. It appeared that the sheep were in charge of three of the sons of the farmer and three other persons. That was, six people in charge of the thousand sheep at the railway- crossing. Surely the Minister did not argue that, if a man had lost his sheep through a train not pulling up in time, even though the people in charge of the train saw them, the man had no claim for compensation. He pre- sumed that if the matter were referred back to the Committee evidence could be adduced which might cause the Committee to make a more favourable report. Mr. R. THOMPSON (Marsden) knew nothing about the case, but he was rather surprised at the argument of the Chairman of the Railways Committee. According to his argument, a farmer or a settler who had to drive his stock across railway-crossings had no protection what- ever. He understood this man took the pre- caution of waiting until all the regular trains had passed. Then, while crossing, a ballast train came along and dashed into his stock. He thought it would be only fair in a case like that that the department should make every inquiry, and if the man had suffered loss Sir J. G. WARD had no doubt that had already been done. Mr. R. THOMPSON said, If after inquiry it was found that the stock had been destroyed through

carelessness of the engine-driver, it was only right that some fair and reasonable compensation should be paid. This case, of course, really opened up a very large question affecting settlers all over the colony. Had these settlers gone across the railway-line at a time when the ordinary train was likely to arrive the position would have been different ; but in the present instance an unexpected train arrived, and he thought if an inquiry had not already been held that one should be held, and some reparation should be made.

<page:78>

Committee went most exhaustively into the inquiry, and there was a marvellous discrepancy between the statements made to the Committee as set forth in the petition and the evidence given by the railway officials. The petition stated that thirty sheep were killed. It came out in evidence-at any rate, the railway authorities stated-that about thirteen sheep were killed. After an exhaustive inquiry the Committee had no alternative but to pass a resolution stating that they had no recommendation to make. So far as he personally was concerned, the settler who lost his sheep had his sympathy ; but he knew of a far worse case, where a settler lost a number of sheep some time ago. The case was well known to the member for Franklin. In that case about three hundred sheep were killed at the railway-crossing at Pokeno-one of the most dangerous crossings on the railway-lines in the colony. The Committee went exhaustively into that case, and they brought down a similar report to that which had been presented by the Committee to-day. It was pointed out by Mr. Ronayne, General Manager of Railways, that that man had no legal claim against the colony, that the colony had never paid a claim of a similar nature, and that if they paid a claim of that nature it would be establishing a dangerous precedent. But what did the Railways Committee do in the case of a constituent of the member for Egmont, Mr. David Knight? In that case the train was late, and it came through a cutting without whistling, dashed into this man's trap, and smashed it. That man had received no compensation. He ought to have got compensation. But in the present case the Committee had no evidence to lead them to any other conclusion than that which they had come to. The member for Waihemo did come before the Committee, sometimes very pathetically and sometimes very persuasively. had every sympathy with the petitioner, but on the evidence before the Committee they could only agree to the resolution that the matter be referred to the Government for its favourable consideration. Mr. T. MACKENZIE desired to make a personal explanation. The honourable member for Parnell said that there was no evidence that there were any sheep killed in this case at all. Showing how little the honourable member understood what was going on in Committee, he (Mr. T. Mackenzie) might state that Mr. Ronayne read from the official report that thirteen or fourteen sheep had been killed on the spot. That bore out his statement made before the Committee. That was one point. Now let him come to the Chairman of the Committee. The honourable gentleman 3.0. said that he (Mr. T. Mackenzie) tried to persuade the Committee that the driver was reading from a newspaper, and that he (Mr. Mackenzie) could not make any reply when the honourable gentleman asked him a question. Now, he read the whole letter which he had received from Mr. Diack, and this is what an unusual occurrence to see drivers of fast-running trains reading the daily papers." And, when members of the Committee asked him if he personally made that statement as his own evidence, he said he did not personally vouch for that statement at all, he merely read his communication, and he now appealed to the honourable member for Franklin, Mr. Massey, to say whether that was so or not. Mr. BENNET (Tuapeka) was not aware that there was any of the sheep killed until Mr. Mckenzie had risen to explain that fourteen were killed and more injured; but, as the Minister for Railways had stated that he did not have sufficient information before him as to the circumstances, he could not say what might be done ; but, no doubt, as he said that he was a member of the Farmers' Union, he would see that the farmers got justice. What he (Mr. Bennet) wished to explain was the trouble of getting sheep through narrow crossings. It might take half an hour to get them across the line if the crossing was wet or dirty. He had no doubt that due consideration would be

given to the matter now, and that the Minister would see that justice was done. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) might be allowed to point out that he thought, under all the circumstances, the matter would have to come ultimately up for review by the Railway Department. The recommendation of the Committee and the petition would in due course come before the department. Mr. R. THOMPSON said there was no recommendation. Mr. SEDDON said, Well, all petitions came before the Government, and probably the fact of no recommendation being made would be in its favour. What he wished to call attention to was this : that he scarcely thought it was wise to send this petition back to the Committee. There would be a dispute between the dark and He the red Mackenzies, and the consequences might be serious. From what had been indicated to them, they should not risk a return of the petition to the Committee. At all events, in debating the matter now, they were only losing Even if they did the time of the House. send it back, it would have to be dealt with finally by the Railway Department. No one had seemed to point out that, if people were to do this kind of thing, the conclusion might be arrived at that in certain places they were not to run trains at all, because sheep required to cross the railway-lines. If that held good they would be put in a very peculiar position. What struck him was that if a number of sheep were going to take a quarter of an hour or thirty minutes, as the honourable member for Tuaepeka said, to cross a railway-line, surely ordinary precaution would suggest the sending of one man down the line on each side to see them safely over. He did not think there should be any responsibility on the State. However, it was a matter that required either the Railway Department or some one to investigate. He did not think, as far as the House was concerned, they could do any good with it.

<page:79>

he had the greatest possible sympathy with the man who had suffered the loss of his sheep. However, as a member of the Railway Committee, he thought it only right to say there was no evidence to show that there was negligence or carelessness on the part of the men in charge of the train. He objected, however, to the attitude taken up by the Chairman of the Committee, the member for Motueka, who told the House just now that the member for Waihemo brought the matter forward in order to curry favour with the Farmers' Union. Mr. R. MCKENZIE .- I said his speech to-day was for that purpose. Mr. MASSEY said, Quite so. The member for Waihemo had now been a member of the House for a great many years, and long before farmers' unions were thought of or dreamt of. He thought honourable members generally would agree with him in saying that the honourable gentleman had been earnest and energetic in advocating the interests of the farmers, and looking carefully after the business of his constituents. He thought the statement of the Chairman of the Committee was quite uncalled-for. Mr. T. MACKENZIE asked the honourable member for Franklin to state whether that was not so. Mr. MASSEY said the member for Waihemo personally did not put it forward as evidence, but, so far as he could recollect, the honourable member read a letter to the effect that the drivers on this line were in the habit of reading newspapers, and that possibly the driver on this occasion was following the usual custom ; but when asked by the Chairman if he held by that statement Mr. Mackenzie said, " Decidedly not." Mr. T. MACKENZIE said the question was put to him in the Committee by the Chairman as to whether or not he adhered to the statement which was made in the letter regarding drivers reading newspapers, and he said, " No, certainly not," and this Mr. Massey, who was & member of the Committee, and who was present, corroborated. Mr. MEREDITH (Ashley) hoped the House would extend to the honourable member for Waihemo the customary courtesy by allowing the petition to go back to the Committee again. The honourable member for Waihemo had read from a letter he received from the farmer whose sheep had been killed. As many as thirty sheep died from the effects of the train running through them. The member for Parnell stated that the department said only seven sheep were killed, and the honourable member stated almost in the same breath that there was no evidence whatever before the Committee to show that there were any sheep killed at all. Therefore the honourable member for Parnell was not

prepared to accept the statement of the officers of the Railway Department, nor vet the statement of the member for Waihemo. Surely, in the face of that, the House would agree with him that the petition should be sent back to the Committee to enable the farmer, or any other witnesses he thought proper, to Wellington to substantiate the evidence he had given. He had no doubt the honourable member for Waihemo would be able to do so, and give a correct version of the case. He knew what it was to drive a number of sheep across a railway-crossing ; yet, at the same time, every farmer must know that if six competent persons were in charge of a mob of 1,000 sheep, with ordinary care on the part of the engine-driver in charge of a train, seeing sheep at a distance of 150 yards, he had power to slacken off and allow the sheep to be driven either backwards or forwards by those in charge. He thought there must be some neglect on the part of those in charge of the train. Mr. LANG (Waikato) would vote that this petition be referred back to the Committee, not that he hoped it would do a great deal of good, because even if the Committee reversed its decision the remarks of the Premier seemed to indicate that when it came before Cabinet the recommendation of the Committee would have little effect ; but he should vote in that direction as a protest against the way in which the Railway Department treated settlers and others, not only in the matter of the loss of stock in this way, but in regard to loss arising from destruction by fires caused by the railway locomotives. He thought the Railway Department should fairly compensate the sufferers in such cases. He would give an instance : Some time since a settler's fence was destroyed by fire- Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER said he must stop any reference to a question of destruction by fire. Mr. LANG would at once bow to the ruling ; but he was only going to give an instance of how damage had been done to stock. A fire had been caused by the locomotive, which burned down the fence. The cows of the settler then trespassed on the line, were destroyed by the engine, and the settler was fined for having cows on the line. The instance he desired to give had direct reference to the destruction of stock by a railway engine. The honourable member for Parnell had pointed out that this petitioner had no legal claim against the colony. But what reason would there be to petition the House if there was a legal claim ? No reason whatever. It was simply on the ground that there was a moral or just claim, though not a legal one, that a petition was usually presented to the House. Mr. McGUIRE (Hawera), as a member of the Committee, said that from the evidence before them they could have come to no other conclusion than this report submitted. He, however, had no objection to the petition going back to the Committee, more especially if there was fresh evidence to be submitted. The honourable member for Parnell was not quite right as to the number of sheep killed. The Railway Department had gone into the matter, and the General Manager had admitted that thirteen or fourteen had been killed outright, a good deal of damage had been done, and that

<page:80>

of the accident. So far as the evidence went, it showed that the department had done everything that was possible, and they were not to blame; that it was impossible to pull up the train, and that the parties who were driving the sheep had not used the judgment they should have done under the circumstances. They certainly should have sent one of the boys up the hill so that he would be able to report if a train was approaching before attempting to cross the line ; or they should have taken the sheep over the railway in small lots instead of, as it appeared they did, getting the whole of the sheep crowded across the railway. That accounted in a great measure for the accident. He had great sympathy for the unfortunate farmer who suffered this serious loss, but he thought if judgment had been used by the drovers this accident would not have taken place. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) said there was just one remark he would like to make. The Minister for Railways had spoken as if the railways alone should be considered in connection with these matters. The argument the Minister had taken up was that people ought to be on the lookout all the time for extraordinary as well as for ordinary trains. Now, there was another point of view, which was that these roads were for the locomotion of cattle, sheep, and general traffic, and, therefore,

the farmers had the right to take their sheep and cattle along. It was not of necessity their business to take extraordinary means to look out as to when trains were coming, especially if they were not to be expected and were outside the time-table. In this particular case it was admitted, he believed, on both sides, that the ballast train came round a curve, and that the view of the engine-driver was only 150 yards to the crossing. Therefore it must be that the view of the men driving the sheep was only 150 yards along the line, and no men driving the sheep would expect at that time to find an engine and ballast train coming along. He had risen for the purpose of remarking that this matter would, of course, come before the Government for settlement, and he thought, under the circumstances, without going into details, the Government might be generous enough to admit that there was no culpable negligence on the part of the men who were driving the sheep, as they could only see 150 yards along the line, and therefore the Government might, in the special circumstances, treat the claimant generously, and pay a part of the damage that had been done. Mr. SYMES (Egmont) said it was as much the duty of engine-drivers to look ahead as the person in charge of the stock. If it were possible to get on more speed at a crossing it was always done. The drivers, so far as he could see, never attempted to slow down, no matter whether it was a ballast train or not. If it took twenty minutes to take sheep over a crossing it was the fault of the crossing. They were frequently so badly kept that it was almost impossible to get across them. He thought that the Mr. McGuire wanted to get compensation, should not refer the report back ; because, if the Committee reported against that, that was the very reason why the Government would pay it ; whereas if a Committee presented a favourable report and recommended that a sum should be paid, the petitioner would never get it. Sir J. G. WARD said he had been just informed that the gate on the opposite side of this crossing was left closed ; and if that were so the sheep could not get in. The drovers should surely have seen that the gates were open. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) was sorry to hear reflections cast on engine-drivers in the Government service. Engine-driving, he knew from travelling on engines, was not such easy work, and it was by no means easy to stop an engine every few yards. If any class in the community earned their money under difficulties it was engine-drivers. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine) said he was a member of the Railway Committee, but as he had to attend another Committee on this particular occasion he was not present when this matter was being discussed. He was astonished to hear the remarks made by some members of the House that afternoon, more especially by the honourable member for Waikato. He understood that honourable member to say that some man had his cows killed when they were trespassing on the line. Well, it served him jolly well right if he did. What about the travelling public? Were they not to be considered ? When members talked of slowing down at every crossing, they must remember that the trains had to be run to time, and men had to be kept at work to keep the line open. In this particular case, it seemed to him there must have been some gross neglect on the part of this man who was petitioning if he could not get a thousand sheep across the line in safety. It was manifestly unfair both to the drivers and the Railway Committee to ask that this matter should be referred back. He believed they had done ample justice to this case, as they had done to every other. Mr. LANG (Waikato) said the last speaker evidently had only heard a part of what he said. He had explained, in the first place, that the reason these cows were destroyed was owing to the damage by fire caused by a railway-engine, which destroyed the farmer's fence. The cows got out on the line in consequence, they were killed by the engine, and the man was fined. He thought the honourable member for Geraldine would admit that that was hardly fair or just. Mr. FLATMAN might say he was very glad he did not hear what the honourable gentleman did say, otherwise he would have gone for him much harder than he did. Mr. FIELD (Otaki) would like to add a few words to those uttered by honourable members who had defended the engine-drivers. It was within his knowledge that, taking them all through, these men were a most careful, capable,

did their work in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, and he thought, therefore, it was un- generous on the part of certain members to make general charges against them. If this discussion had no other good effect than this, he thought it would do this good -namely, that it would probably bring before the Minister of Railways and the railway authorities the neces- sity for doing away with level crossings. They had been discontinued in Australia, and it was time that they were done away with in this colony. If that reform was carried out, even though it might be done gradually-the most dangerous crossings being dealt with first-it would reduce the number of accidents to a minimum ; and he hoped the time was not far distant when level crossings would be finally re- moved from the railways of the colony. Mr. T. MACKENZIE said that, as the Minister had given him an assurance that he would deal further with the matter, he would not press his motion to a division. Words retained, and the report ordered to lie on the table.

DEATH OF THE HON. M. HOLMES, M.L.C. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- I regret to say that death has been again in our midst, and a very old and respected member of our Parlia- ment-the Hon. Mathew Holmes-has been called to his long home. I desire to move, " That this House do now adjourn till half- past seven o'clock this evening, as a mark of respect to the memory of the late Hon. Mathew Holmes, M.L.C." The late Hon. Mathew Holmes has been a member of the Legislative Council since 1866, and he has done good service to our colony in that capacity. During late years his health has prevented him taking an active part in public life ; but from his arrival in New Zealand up to the time of his illness he was one of those who took a deep interest in the colony, and he endeavoured to do his best to promote its welfare. His name will also be remembered in respect to the improvement of the stock of our colony, because he was the first, I believe, to import from the Mother- country pedigree horses, stock, cattle, and sheep, and in that respect he has done very great service indeed to the colony. It may be said of him-as it may be said of many others of our sturdy pioneers-that they have shown a noble example, that they have proved themselves worthy colonists, and that they have lived to see marked progress made in the colony. Per- sonally, the late Mr. Holmes was affable to all those who were acquainted with him, and he commanded the highest esteem and respect ; and although called away at a ripe age, we sincerely regret his loss, and will ever respect his memory ; and, as a token of respect, I move that the House adjourn until half-past seven o'clock this evening. Mr. J. W. THOMSON (Clutha) .-- Sir, I rise to second the motion proposed by the Premier. It is upwards of forty years since I first knew VOL. CXIX .- 5. five years since he became a member of the Provincial Council of Otago, of which I was then a member. Meeting him in the Council and at meetings of Select Committees, I may say I came to be pretty well acquainted with Mr. Holmes. I may also say that Mr. Holmes was a member of the Provincial Council of Southland, and, as has been said, he has been a member of the Legislative Council since the year 1866. That is a very long time indeed -- 80 long that the present generation know Mr. Holmes only as the Hon. Mathew Holmes. The Premier has stated that Mr. Holmes intro- duced prize stock into Otago. That is well known. He was what we may call a good and enterprising colonist. He introduced, as the Premier has said, prize horses, and prize cattle, and prize sheep. I am aware that some of the best horses we have in Otago can be traced to stock that were introduced by Mr. Holmes in the early sixties. It is only about a fortnight since a motion similar to this one was moved and carried in this House. I mean the motion expressive of the regret we felt at the death of Mr. Scobie Mackenzie. Mr. Mackenzie was in the prime of life, but in the case of Mr. Holmes he had reached a ripe old age, a good many years beyond the three-score years and ten. Still, it is only right that we should express our regret at the death of an old and useful colonist. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister of Lands) .- I would just like to say a word or two, as the late Mr. Holmes lived for a very long time in the dis- trict close to where I live. As has been stated by the previous speakers, the late Mr. Holmes in the early sixties chartered a vessel on his own account in which to bring the nucleus of our prize stock to the colony-that is to say, the first sheep and cattle of pedigree quality that came to Otago ; these were the pioneers of the best Leicesters we have ; and he was the pioneer

importer of some of the best Lincolns in New Zealand, and also of other different breeds of sheep. He also imported into the colony stud Clydesdale horses that had a great reputation, and he repeated these enterprises from time to time until within the last few years. In fact, his stock is known now all over New Zealand as being foremost in the show rings, and their progeny have carried off prizes in all parts of the South Island, and in many places in the North Island as well. He was a very energetic man ; in fact, I may say he laid the foundation for bringing agriculture to a state of perfection in the South by importing not only stock, but grain of various kinds, and, as the shows began to be established he was in the forefront to encourage them, and by showing his stock all over the colony was an object-lesson to the farmers of New Zealand. In fact, I know of no man who has gone to such pains as the late Hon. Mr. Holmes in that direction. He has been a good colonist, a good citizen, and a kind and considerate neighbour, and will be very much missed in the colony. Motion agreed to.

<page:82>

This Bill was introduced by Governor's message, and read a first time. On the question that the Bill be read a second time, Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) said he wished to take this opportunity of saying a few words with regard to the treatment of those troopers who had returned from South Africa, and more especially with regard to those who supplied their own horses. When arrangements were being made for sending away the Fourth Contingent one of the conditions was that each trooper should supply his own horse. Mr. SEDDON .- No. Mr. MASSEY said, Well, it was in Auckland, at all events. Mr. FOWLDS .- No, you are wrong. I was on the Committee. Mr. MASSEY said, It might not have been a condition in every case, but there was no doubt of the fact that a great many of the troopers did supply their own horses. The horses were supplied either by the troopers or their friends. It came to the same thing, so far as the Government were concerned. He would admit at once that each trooper went through the form of assigning his horse to the Sovereign, but he ventured to say the impression on the part of every trooper was that if his particular horse lived to the end of the campaign, or until the trooper's term of service had expired, that horse again became the property of the trooper, and he would be free to do what he liked with it. Time went on, and the Fourth Contingent being about to return to the colony, the point was raised in South Africa. The commanding officer then, officially or unofficially, informed the troopers that the horses were being handed over to the Imperial Government as remounts, and that the Government of the colony would receive £28 for each horse, and that every trooper who had supplied his own horse would be paid for the animal. Well, leaving that point, he would come to another. The First and Second Contingents, in coming back to the colony, had been shipped in a vessel called the "Harlech Castle." This vessel went to Melbourne and then to Tasmania, and then back to Sydney to be docked. This, of course, caused delay, entailing a residence of five or six weeks in Australia. The men, after being in South Africa for over twelve months, were anxious to return to their homes and families. A good many objected to the delay. He would quote a letter from one of them,- " Only just think. Fellows who did not want to be hawked about Australia for five or six weeks, but were anxious to get home for the harvest and to their farms; after serving for more than twelve months, voyaging there and back - they had had enough of travelling and sight seeing to last for years. Besides they enlisted to fight in South Africa; they did not enlist to 'process' the streets of Australian towns ; they wanted to get home." Sir J. G. WARD .- Will you lay that on the table ? objection to doing so, or to giving the name of his correspondent. Sir J. G. WARD .- You know you always ask that of us. Mr. MASSEY said, No, he did not. However, there was the position. These men asked the commanding officer for leave to return to the colony, and he (Mr. Massey) believed that had been given after communicating with the Defence Minister in this colony. A number of the men wished to return and did so, but they might judge of their surprise when on being paid here they found the passage-money between Australia and New Zealand deducted from their pay. When these men left the colony they left it amid the blare of trumpets, the beat of drum and the plaudits of an admiring populace.

They had done good service not only to the colony they represented, but to the Empire, while in South Africa, and all were proud of them. But when they came back, how had they been treated? In the meanest and most contemptible manner. Of course, this might be an occasion when the Colonial Treasurer could tell them they ought to practise the strictest economy. That might be so, but he ventured to say that if it were put to the public, and the public had an opportunity of expressing an opinion thereon, the public would say at once that these men ought to be paid. He hoped the Right Hon. the Premier, in his reply on the second reading of the Bill, would inform the House that he intended to pay the men for the horses which they supplied, and also that he intended to return to the men who had come to Australia by the "Harlech Castle" the money deducted from their pay for their passages between Australia and New Zealand. Mr. SEDDON (Minister of Defence) said he was not sorry, but was rather pleased that the honourable member had brought this matter up, because his doing so gave him an opportunity of clearing the atmosphere and giving the facts to the country. The honourable member had mentioned the conditions under which the men had gone. The sixth condition in their agreement was, "It is hereby agreed that the equipment of each Volunteer, and each horse and equipment thereof, shall become and is the property of the Queen in her Colony of New Zealand." The committees formed for the purpose of equipping portions of the contingents, in many instances, found the horses and fully equipped the men in their respective districts. There were some cases in which there was some difficulty in accepting all who applied, and it was an inducement that if they found their own horses they would be selected. A very large number found their own horses, and were consequently selected, and went to South Africa. This was what had occurred in South Africa: Those in charge of Imperial matters there had actually bought some of those horses and paid for them. They had bought and paid for the property of the New Zealand Government. He was not going to raise the question

<page:83>

the Crown, but these cases had happened. In one or two cases spare horses were taken, and in other cases the men bought horses in South Africa. In the latter case, when asked to sign an approval he had done so, and would do so again. This question came up, and we asked Colonel Davies what he knew in respect of it. His (Colonel Davies's) reply was that he never said the men would receive £28 per horse; that he did not know anything officially about it. The only thing that could be done was for those who had sold their horses to apply to the Imperial Government, and if they asked him to give a certificate he would do so, if satisfied the horses were their private property; but he would be very sorry, after a person assigned the property to the Queen, to certify for a private individual to receive moneys improperly taken from the Imperial authorities. He would be sorry to commit the colony to anything of that kind. If the Imperial authorities were acquainted with the fact that the horses were found by the committees, and that some were the individual property of the troopers, but given over as a gift to the Queen, and if, when that fact was before them, they were still prepared to pay the men for the horses, well and good. Mr. MASSEY asked if the New Zealand Government had been paid for the horses that were being handed over? Mr. SEDDON said, No; he would give a most unqualified denial to that. The first he had heard of the matter was when he saw it in print. The Government had never made any claim for the horses, and did not intend to. He repeated that, where the horses had been the property of the young men and were donated to the Queen before they went away, if the Imperial authorities, knowing this, liked to pay for them, theirs was the responsibility; but he could not himself be a party to that, because the property was for the time being vested in the King. He might say further, in respect to this matter, that the Government might be in this position: In some cases where the committee had raised money by subscriptions throughout the districts, the horses would be the property of those committees. Mr. MASSEY.- No; the committees gave them to the men. Mr. SEDDON said, The committees gave them to the Crown. The voluntary contributions of the people were used for the purpose of purchasing horses,

and many persons gave horses, in some cases four or five. Those horses were accordingly the property of the Empire. Then, again, very few of those men took the same horse right through the campaign. They were in some cases furnished with remounts by the Imperial authorities, and in other cases remounts were sent from the colony and paid for here. There were exceptional cases, of course, where some of the horses went right through the campaign. His (Mr. Seddon's) son had his own horse until the week before last. It went through the campaign with him up to that time. The New Zealand were supplied, nor did they intend to make any claim. They had not received, as far as he was aware, anything for horses. In the case of any young man who took his own horse with him, and who had acquired another horse in South Africa, and although he signed the ceding agreement, if the Imperial authorities would pay for them and if he were asked for a certificate, he would not object, if the full facts were known to the Imperial authorities. With regard to the horses that were found in South Africa by the troopers themselves, and were their own private property, that was, of course, a different matter. He hoped that was a satisfactory answer to the honourable gentleman. Mr. MASSEY .- No, it is not. Mr. SEDDON .- Then came the question of the troopers who left in the "Harlech Castle," and who came to the colony by another steamer. Now, what happened was this: The Imperial authorities had arranged for the passage of these troopers to New Zealand. When they arrived in Australia they asked to be allowed to take part in the Commonwealth celebrations. As it was some time before these celebrations would take place he demurred, partly on account of the additional expense, and also because he thought, having been away so long, they should come home. But the pressure was too great, and as they had rendered such valuable service to the colony and to the Empire -- Mr. MASSEY .- Pressure from whom ? Mr. SEDDON .- From the officers and the men themselves--from Australia. Mr. MASSEY .- But the men objected. Mr. SEDDON assured the honourable member that that was not so. Mr. MASSEY asked if it was not a fact that twenty-seven of them did not remain in Australia for the celebrations. Mr. SEDDON would come to that presently. The pressure brought to bear upon the Government was from the officers and the men. The Government absolutely refused the request of the Australian Government. And what did they do ultimately? He was very nearly putting the officer, and the men too, under arrest because they took "French leave." That was what happened ; and when they allowed the steamer to go, and they remained behind, he did not know what to do. He called in to his counsel the Commandant, and there was a telegram, he thought, sent to the Commandant at New South Wales of a very severe type. He then received a communication from Captain Hughes, which caused him to look over the matter and to allow them to remain. Mr. PIRANI .- After the ship had gone. Mr. SEDDON said, Well, the next ship was so close on to the celebrations that to take them away two or three days before, it seemed to him to be a rather harsh proceeding. However, there was the fact that they managed to miss the boat. What happened in this case he now related : The men wanted to come home and leave the rest of the contingent. After communication and under advice, it was decided, that if the men themselves would sign an

<page:84>

well and good. Now, he assured the House that this was done by the men voluntarily, and was not insisted upon so far as the New Zealand Government was concerned at all. There was this fact, that the Imperial authorities had defrayed their passages ; if they came on by any other steamer the charge fell upon our own colony; and to obviate this the officer in charge said, "Well, you can go if you undertake to pay your own passages," and the men accordingly signed an agreement, and gave an order on the shipping companies for the payment of their passages. Naturally, when these orders came to hand from the shipping companies, the amount of the passages was deducted from the men's pay. He challenged the honourable member to show a single case where they had deducted the amount of the passage where the man had not given an order for it. The men could not complain who gave orders for their

passages on the shipping companies, and, of course, the shipping companies sent these orders on to the Government ; and he would like to know what the Government could do except to recognise the orders. The money was due, and had to be paid. The men should not have stopped behind. They ought to have gone by the " Harlech Castle," but they positively refused. Mr. MASSEY said the " Harlech Castle " was in dock. Mr. SEDDON said the "Harlech Castle " went to Melbourne, and the men left her in Melbourne and went overland to Sydney. The initial trouble arose through the men leaving the boat. They wanted, of course, to take part in the Melbourne demonstrations. They were permitted to do it. He could only say, with respect to this matter, that it was like many others : if he was to blame at all, he was to blame solely in being liberal-in allowing the men to have their own way, and going overland to their companions in New 8.0. South Wales. When he agreed that they should go overland it was understood that they should join the "Harlech Castle " there ; but when they got to Sydney it was too close to the celebrations, and they were not inclined to come. Mr. MASSEY said he was speaking of the twenty-seven who came over here. Mr. SEDDON said, First of all, there were parties who wanted to stay behind, and the officers on behalf of the men asked that they should be allowed to stay behind, and because of that unanimous wish he had agreed to their staying. Those who wanted to come home had either to wait for the ship or make other arrangements. They decided to make their own arrangements outside the Government altogether. These men could only come over at their own expense, otherwise it would have meant double cost, as their passages had been paid right through by the Imperial authorities. Mr. MASSEY said the "Harlech Castle " did not come to New Zealand. Mr. SEDDON said, No; but the men had Mr. Seddon ment were not saving this money. If these orders had not come from the shipping company, but had come in the ordinary way, he would not have troubled about it ; but as the orders came to hand he could do nothing else but pay them. He was glad the honourable member had brought the matter up, but he wanted it to be known that the men had made the arrangements outside the Government altogether. The only thing to be done was to take a vote of the House as to whether they were to be refunded the money they had expended. Mr. MASSEY asked if the Premier would put an amount on the estimates ? Mr. SEDDON said he thought the House should be consulted, and perhaps this would please the honourable member. The amount involved was not large, but he might tell him that these young men had had a very narrow escape. Bill read a second time. On the motion, That the Bill be read a third time, Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) said he wished to say a word or two in reference to the point raised by the honourable member for Franklin. He could speak with a certain amount of authority as far as this subject was concerned, as applying to the Provincial District of Wellington. A committee was set up in the district, composed of Lieutenant-Colonel Newall, and Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, Major Owen, and himself, and at the subsequent election of a chairman of that committee the question was discussed as to the qualifications of the men who were to form the Wellington section of the Fourth Contingent. He had the honour cast on him, as chairman of that selection committee of the Fourth Contingent, to examine the whole of the men who came up for selection ; and when he told honourable members that there were something like five hundred men to choose fifty from, it would be understood that the task was not a light one. The committee divided the men into three classes-excellent, very good, and good-and then went through the various questions which they decided should be asked of each of the individuals applying to go to South Africa, and after deciding that a certain number should be put in the class of excellent, they then came to discuss the question of distinguishing or choosing one excellent man against another ; and, in finally deciding the number of men who had to go as the Wellington section of the Fourth Contingent, they took those, all things being equal, who could provide a horse. Mr. SEDDON .- Being classified as " Excellent." Mr. WILFORD said, No, not at all. If they had one hundred men classed as excellent, and fifty of those men were able to find a horse, they gave the fifty who could find a horse, and who were classed as excellent, the preference over the fifty who could find no horse and

who were classed as excellent. He said he was backed up by the rest of the committee, and the whole of those men who were so chosen

<page:85>

were chosen on the distinct understanding that | pened in the district he represented, namely : their horses belonged to the Crown. There was no such question as handing the horses back, even if the horses lived out the term of the service. It might be that the instance mentioned by the member for Franklin was perfectly correct and true, but there was no such understanding in regard to the Wellington section of this contingent. Mr. R. MCKENZIE (Motueka) just wished to say a word or two in connection with these horses. The Premier's explanation seemed to him to be hardly a satisfactory one, because he knew at least three or four cases in the Nelson district in which troopers supplied their own horses, or bought them with their own money where they had not horses before. In fact, he knew one or two instances in which the men could not fairly well afford it, and in those instances he thought the colony should make the money good to them. An Hon. MEMBER .- They signed an agreement to hand their horses over to the Crown. Mr. R. MCKENZIE said that might be so ; but at that time these young men were so anxious to get away that had their death warrant been put before them they would have signed it to get away. He thought it was no reason that, because of their eagerness to serve the Empire, these young fellows should be asked to contribute towards the cost of the South African war in this way. On the contrary, he thought it should be a recommendation why these men should now be paid. He thought in cases where the horse was their personal property, or had been bought with their own money, in justice, in fair play, the colony ought to return that money. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) said he had to thank the Premier for the promise he had given to refund the passage-money of those troopers who came from South Africa in the " Harlech Castle " and then came over to this colony by other vessels. He hoped provision to that effect would be made on the supplementary estimates. He was quite sure the Premier would not regret the promise he had made, and he was sure, also, the country as a whole would approve of it. He was sorry that, in regard to the matter of troopers' horses, the answer was not so satisfactory. An attempt had been made to take advantage of the fact that the troopers formally handed over their horses to the Sovereign. He did not think any such attempt should be made. He was quite sure, as he said before, that, though the troopers nominally signed the agreement, they believed that if the horses lived through the campaign they would belong to the troopers who supplied them. There was no doubt about that. The Premier had admitted that some troopers were allowed to sell their horses ; and surely the right honourable gentleman would agree with him that the whole of the troopers should be placed in the same position. That was all he asked. So far as the committees were concerned, he might be wrong in regard to the committees in the larger centres, but what he had in his mind was what happened - That a number of young fellows who were anxious to go away with the Fourth Contingent were not possessed of suitable horses, and not financially able to purchase them, but were supplied with horses by small committees who were set up and found the money for the purpose. In these cases the horses became the property of the troopers as much as if they purchased them with their own money ; and he said, in justice to these men, who had done the colony good service, some arrangement ought to be made by which they should be paid for the horses they supplied. Mr. FOWLDS (Auckland City) thought he ought to say a word, because he was closely connected with the movement for sending away the contingent referred to by the member for Franklin. The position in Auckland was very much the same as sketched by the member for Wellington Suburbs. They had hundreds of applications beyond the number they could possibly send, and they had a large number of men who were not only anxious to give their horses, but to contribute towards the cost of equipment if only they could get included. In one case, he believed, \$75 was paid on behalf of a trooper so as to secure his inclusion in the contingent. He believed that if the members of that committee had been anxious to make money they could have made large sums of money from the

donations these men would have given, in addition to giving their horses, so as to be included in the list. Now, these men had got an advantage; they had got something they specially wanted to get before other men, who were equally suited to be sent with the contingent, and therefore he did not think it was fair for them now to ask to be refunded the value of their horses. With reference to the statement made that some of the men had been allowed to sell their horses, he understood that was only in cases where the troopers had bought horses in South Africa, which was an entirely different matter. If there were any cases where men who had given their horses to the committee had been allowed to sell them, then a mistake had been made, and he thought such a mistake should not be continued and extended by allowing the same privilege to others. These men had been willing to give the horses, and more than the horses. An Hon. MEMBER. - You should not take advantage of that. Mr. FOWLDS said, But the men had got what they considered an advantage by going to South Africa in the place of other men who were equally suited, and, having had that advantage, he did not think they had a right to ask for anything more. Mr. BOLLARD (Eden). - The honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Fowlds), who had last spoken, had taken a very straight-laced view of this matter. An Hon. MEMBER. - A proper one. Mr. BOLLARD said it might be the legal view of the matter, but surely some consideration ought to be shown to the men who had risked

<page:86>

received an advantage in being preferred to others who had no horses, he thought that at all events they should not be required, if the horses had survived, to give the price of them to the country. It might be quite the correct thing, as the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs and the Premier had said; but he thought they should be more generous in this matter, and that those whose horses had carried them right through should get some consideration. Though a number of horses had been subscribed for by friends of the troopers, a large number of troopers had found their own horses, though they could ill afford to do so. He thought they ought to be more generous to these men, seeing that they had done such good service to the colony and the Empire, and had kept up the reputation of the colony's troops. He hoped that a reasonable sum would be returned to those men. Mr. HOGG (Masterton) said it was all very well for the honourable member for Eden to say that they ought to be generous, but he thought they ought also to be just-just to the people of the colony. He could, speaking from his own experience, say that quite a number of young men were most anxious to join the contingents, and, as an inducement to the Government to accept them, they were prepared to provide their own horses. Having done so, why should the Government recoup them if they voluntarily left their horses behind? An Hon. MEMBER. - The Government would not allow them to bring them back. Mr. HOGG said there had been no undertaking that they would be brought back. The men were prepared to provide their own horses if the Government would accept their services. It was simply an offer to induce the Defence Department to accept their services and send them to South Africa. They were prepared to provide their own horses; that was the inducement, and, that having been accepted, he could hardly believe that they would, in the face of the well-known facts and circumstances, prosecute such an application as had been made on their behalf. He was satisfied that the manliness and loyalty and unselfishness of our young colonial troopers was entirely underrated by the members that were clamouring for the price of their horseflesh. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce) was amused at the Premier's interpretation of the agreement made with the Fourth and Fifth Contingents. It was very specific and clear. It was as follows: - "It is hereby lastly declared that the equipment of each Volunteer, and each horse and the equipment thereof, used under this agreement is the property of the Queen in her Colony of New Zealand." Not in the Colony of South Africa; and he maintained that under the agreement all the equipment and horses still living should have been brought back to New Zealand or sold. Surely that was so. The Premier, he thought, had not understood the agreement rightly. He had understood, and he had not heard it specified - Mr. Bollard chased by the Imperial

Government at the rate of #28 per head. Mr. SEDDON .- No. Mr. J. ALLEN said, Well, it had been stated, and he had never heard it specifically denied. He knew that members of the Fourth and Fifth Contingents had sold their horses in South Africa. If this agreement was good, how had they come to do so ? He knew a case in which a man who had taken his own horse had been offered a hundred guineas for it, and had not sold it. If some had been allowed to sell their horses, why not others; and why had not the agreement been put in force? There was evidently some confusion about the matter. He knew a case in which a man had taken a horse of his own, and his father had sent him a remount, and paid the cost of it. Mr. SEDDON said that would be the man's own property, and he could sell it. Mr. J. ALLEN said that if the interpretation put by the Premier on the agreement was correct, which he did not think it was, it should be interpreted in a liberal spirit. Those who had taken their horses to serve their country, when the time came for them to return, if the horses were still living, should receive the benefit of that, more especially as some were allowed to receive money for their horses in South Africa. Under any liberal interpretation of the agreement they were entitled to receive some money for their horses, and he thought if the people of New Zealand could express their opinion on the matter they would certainly say the men should be paid for their horses. He did not see that it was right that New Zealand should hand over to the Imperial Government horses and equipment for nothing; nor did he think the Imperial Government expected it. He was quite certain that if any claim were made the Imperial Government would willingly pay it. This was not dealing with the men in a liberal spirit. It was the aftermath of the great patriotic spirit that was displayed when the men were sent away to serve their country. When they came back they found themselves neglected. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) said, Whatever the Premier might say, the general impression of the men who went with the Fourth Contingent when they signed this agreement was that it referred to the campaign only, and that the object of handing over their horses and equipment to the Queen was that there should not be any claim on their part if the horses were killed. Besides, it was clear, notwithstanding what the Premier said, that Colonel Davies had told them, whether officially or not, that the Imperial Government was giving £28 for each horse. There was no doubt that was the impression that the men received. Whether it was official or not he could not say, but he had before him a letter from a returned trooper in which he said, - "I found my horse with the assistance of a few friends, and could have sold him for £30 while in camp in Auckland. I kept him right

<page:87>

through with me, and he is still doing his work with the Seventh Contingent at the front. He is in the hands of Trooper Bradley of the Seventh. Some of the officers and men of the Fourth sold their horses to Imperial officers in South Africa, and received the money there. It does not seem fair to me that they should do that, and those of us who kept our horses right through to get nothing. I could have sold my horse at Klerksdorp last December, but we were told we would receive £28 compensation from the Imperial Government." They did not expect to get paid for the horses as long as they were campaigning, but when they came back and found, as the Premier had stated, and as this letter had stated, that other people had been allowed to sell their horses, it seemed very unfair that those who stuck to their horses should neither be allowed to sell nor bring their horses back. In this case the man took his horse right through the campaign, and it was now serving with the Seventh Contingent, and surely some compensation should be given to that man and others in the same position. Mr. McNAB (Mataura) did not know what the arrangements were in the other parts of the colony, except in so far as the signing of this agreement by the men ; but he knew that in the Provincial District of Otago, where the honourable member for Bruce came from, and the contingents in connection with which he had had a great deal to do, there was not a single man in the contingents that went from Otago, outside some of the officers-who might have purchased extra horses and taken them under special arrangement-that owned his own horse ; nor was there a single man belonging to the Fourth and Fifth Contingents who had the slightest

idea that the question would be raised as to compensation being paid for their horses. Mr. HOGG .- You supplied a lot of the horses. Mr. McNAB said that was apart from 8.30. this question. All the horses got in Otago were supplied to the Crown, and there were cases-there were none in his own district, but there were cases in other parts of Otago- where he believed the committees accepted from men before they selected them the gift of the horses that these men offered. The horses were then handed over to the Crown, and the men were selected. That did not happen in the district with which he was immediately concerned, but he believed it had been done in more than one case. He had had a good deal to do with the sending of men away from his district, and he never heard or saw it printed in the Otago papers that there was any intention whatever of refunding money for the horses. How could they have expected it to have been so, seeing that the Imperial authorities had accepted equipped contingents ? What had the Government of the country got to do with the equipment of contingents? They had nothing to do with it ; and if applications were to be made, surely they would have to be made to the Imperial authorities at whose request these horses were to be provided. Then, in regard to the horses that were killed in South Africa, surely if the men expected to get paid for these horses they would equally be entitled to get paid for those that were destroyed. Mr. MASSEY .- They do not say so. Mr. McNAB said, They would not have said anything in this case if it had not been for the opportunity of getting the subject ventilated in the House, and through members raising the question of getting this money. If they had never received encouragement from some of the public men in this colony the claim would never have been put forward, and it was a great pity this question had ever been raised. He had no doubt, himself that, if representations had been made to the Imperial authorities, and any certificate were required for the horses provided in this colony, the Premier would be glad to give it ; but directly they did this they would have every committee sending in its claims, because the men had no mere right to get a refund in respect of the horses than the committees had. An Hon. MEMBER .- The committees found money, not horses. Mr. McNAB said there was no use in the honourable member telling him what the committees found ; he knew perfectly what they found ; and he thought it was a very great pity that any committee in the colony had allowed men to provide their horses, for the result was that very many men were sent with the contingents simply because they had money to pay for their horses, and the men who had not money to pay for their horses were set aside in their favour. That sort of arrangement ought not to have been tolerated for a single moment. He knew in some parts of the colony all the men were put on the same footing, and if a particular man had offered half a dozen horses he would not have been selected for South Africa if he had not otherwise been competent. Looking at the agreement, the honourable member for Bruce contended that the horses were only the property of the men when they were in New Zealand, and directly they got over the three-miles limit there was a transfer to somebody else. He did not think there was anything of the sort meant by the agreement. He thought the men might be well satisfied with the honour they got in being sent away to represent the colony in South Africa, in having survived the conflict, and in being able to return home to pursue the duties they were pursuing. Mr. WILLIS (Wanganui) was rather surprised that these claims had been brought forward for horses that were left behind in South Africa, because he thought it was distinctly understood-at any rate, it was understood in his own district, which was one of the first to equip and send away upwards of forty men- that the men should find their horses, while the district found the equipments and passage- money for men and horses afterwards. Surely if it was right that the horses should be afterwards paid for, it was right also that the equipment also should be paid for ; and he was sure that when these things were given there was

<page:88>

any return for it. The horses were given as a free gift, and as soon as they were given each one was branded with an arrow on the hoof to show that it had been handed over to the Government. He was surprised that this had been brought up, and he believed that the majority of those who had made a

present of horses would be ashamed that this question had been brought up in the House. He did not believe that those who gave the horses wished it, but that it was done by those who thought that it would be a popular thing to advocate that the horses should be paid for. If a man who had not been in action was paid for his horse, then surely it would be right that a man who had been in action and had his horse shot should be paid for his horse also. He hoped this question would be dropped, for he was sure he was speaking for the great majority of those in his own district who had given horses, and also for the majority of those in the same position throughout the colony, when he said that they had no intention of getting any return for their generosity when they made the gift of horses to the Government. Mr. FISHER (Wellington City) said the member for Wanganui said these horses were a gift, and that a gift was a gift. Also, an agreement was an agreement, and a contract was a contract. He knew many first-class men who were selected because they were first-class men, but they had to stand back to make way for inferior men, because the inferior man was in a position to offer a horse as an inducement to take him. Very well, that was a contract. The horse, by agreement, was declared to be the property of the Queen. The men were selected and went to South Africa; but the horses no longer belonged to them, they were the property of the Queen. Now that the whole thing was over some of them saw a chance to get something for the horse. They ought to remember that in the first place it was the horse that was selected, and not the man. If it had not been for the horse they would not have been selected at all. He repeated that some of the best men in New Zealand who wished to go to South Africa did not go because they were not in a position to offer a horse as a free gift to the Queen. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER (Napier) said that the adverse remarks of the last speaker referred to the whole of the colony, and he wished to say that his remarks about excellent men being refused because they were not in a position to supply a horse did not apply to the East Coast - they did not apply to Gisborne and Hawke's Bay. He considered the claim was absolutely contemptible, and for the troopers of his part of the district he could say there was not a single man from Woodville to the East Coast who had returned who would claim the value of his horse. When they collected funds in Hawke's Bay the district stood out as a bright particular star in its liberality : only one province gave more than Hawke's Bay. In an hour and a half he himself collected £1,250, Mr. Willis lectured. Not a single man was refused because he had no horse of his own, because there was a committee who chose the horses, and the committee paid for them. They paid £92 a head for equipping the men, and it was never anticipated that they would get a quid pro quo of any kind. It was all regarded as a gift to the colony and the Empire. The people in Hawke's Bay had no connection with the political cry. He had no doubt some members were trying to make political capital with a political object. Mr. MASSEY rose to a point of order. Was it in order for the honourable member to impute motives in the way he was doing in his speech ? Mr. DEPUTY - SPEAKER ruled that the honourable member was in order. Mr. A. L. D. FRASER said, Perhaps he should not have said what he did. However, he simply wished to have it put on record that on the East Coast it was a clear understanding that the men and horses were equipped at the expense of the district, and it was never anticipated that any return would be made to the district by the colony. He could not help realising that the logical deduction of the member for Wanganui must have impressed itself on honourable members - that was, that because a man's horse lived through the campaign he was to be paid for it, but that the unfortunate man who had his horse shot under him, and who had in consequence to walk fifty or sixty miles to camp, was to get no payment at all. Mr. FISHER wished to make a personal explanation. He had made no reference whatever to the men or to the horses of the East Coast, nor did he say anything in reference to that district. But it was well understood that the district produced better horses than men. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) did not think the remarks of the honourable member for Napier should be allowed to go unchallenged. When the honourable gentleman rose to politically "stouch" the opponents of the Ministry he was as fierce as a canary. Now, it was all very well for the honourable member to attribute motives to those he was

associated with, and whom he probably knew better than he knew members on this side of the House, but, when the honourable gentleman began to attribute motives to members whom he might say the honourable gentleman was hardly in the same street with so far as political honesty and political purity were concerned, he rather overstepped the line that every member ought to toe. The honourable gentleman tried to be very funny when he quoted from the Government black-book against members of his own party, a course he not uncommonly pursues when the Ministry think they need rounding up. The honourable member might do that in regard to those who were on the same side of the House as he is, but there were members on this side of the House who would not allow the honourable gentleman to impute motives of political dishonesty to the member for Franklin without contradiction. If there was a man in this House who did not resort to political tricks

<page:89>

both sides of the House would admit that member was the member for Franklin. And if the honourable member for Franklin chose to champion the cause of a certain section of the community that was his lookout. The honourable member had done it fairly, openly, and honestly, and he did not think they could expect anything more. Now, the member for Wanganui, as an argument against the concession asked for, referred to the purity of the motives of members of the contingent from his own district, and repudiated the idea of any of them desiring to be paid for their horses. He could give the honourable member now the name of a man from his district who did want to be paid for the horse he had sent over there from Wanganui; and he dared say if members went amongst the returned troopers in Wanganui they would find them just as anxious to get as much of their own again as they were in any other part of the colony. In regard to Hawke's Bay, he must admit, and everybody who knew anything about it admitted, that on this question they were noted for their liberality - and, mind, the liberality came chiefly from supporters of the Opposition; there was no question of political motives there. Those who acted so promptly and judiciously in Hawke's Bay deserved every credit for the liberality and the care exercised in the selection of men and of horses - qualities not inferior to those shown in any other part of the colony. There was no one who wished to take away from that part of the colony the kudos which they deserved. They were impartial in their selection, and nothing but the fitness of the men and horses was allowed to creep into that selection. At the same time there were parts of the colony where the men had not such a generous public to buy their horses and equip them, and they thought, and with justice, that if the Government were paid for these horses - the Premier told them now that they were not, and he would accept the Premier's statement, but the statement had been published and not denied before that night - the men who gave the horses very naturally thought if the Government were paid for them they at least deserved some recompense for the service which they had rendered. It was a good thing to get the explanation from the Premier in this public manner, and to allow the public to judge for themselves as to what was the correct course. But he did not think it was a proper thing, and he hoped the House would not often descend to such a level, that every time a member got up to voice a grievance it was to be said he was actuated by contemptible motives. Members might just as well accuse the honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Napier) in his advocacy of the San Francisco mail-service of being actuated by the fact that he came from Auckland. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said he was glad that at last members were coming back to the business. The business before the House was the Imprest Supply Bill. They wanted later on to get on to the estimates, and he was sorry the not, however, complain. The honourable member for Franklin, in bringing the matter forward, had been labouring under a misapprehension, which misapprehension had arisen from the fact that they had seen in the newspapers a statement that the Government were receiving £28 per head for the horses. The honourable member had also been informed that some troopers had sold their horses in South Africa. Mr. MASSEY - You said so. Mr. SEDDON said he had told them that he had known of one or two cases where certificates had been

obtained, and also that they were sold under exceptional circumstances. Of course, if there had been a private sale of Government horses to the officers, or if some- thing had been given in exchange for them, that was a matter between the parties, and had been a transaction made under a misapprehen- sion on the part of the sellers who were mem- bers of our contingents and of the officers of the Imperial troops, who certainly would not have bought them had they known that the horses already belonged to the King ; so, as he had said, these transactions must have arisen from mis- apprehension. But what he wanted to put to the House was that underlying this question the honour of the colony was at stake. They had sent Home to the Imperial authorities an intimation that they had equipped and defrayed the cost-landed free to the Empire in South Africa-these very contingents. If, therefore, having announced that, subsequently either the Government or anybody else made a claim for horses, they would be detracting from the gift, if, either individually, collectively, or as a Govern- ment, moneys were received for that which had been presented to the Empire. That was the side of the question he wished to put to honour- able members. He hoped the public mind would be disabused, and that we should not be judged by our kindred and condemned for having made a present and then subsequently made a claim for payment for the ho ses which had been part of the presentation. He might ask again, under that head, Who had paid the freight of those horses? That cost had been defrayed either by the Imperial Government or the New Zealand Government, and that, of course, added to the value of the horse in South Africa. The average price for the horses they had sold as remounts to the Im- perial authorities in New Zealand had been from £19 to £20, and the last, he believed, averaged £23. That was in the colony ; but he wished it to be clearly understood that in no case where a horse had been sent ordinarily with a contingent was it the property of the person who went with the contingent, be he trooper or officer. The honourable member for Bruce was, he thought, rather unfair, because he had not quoted section 2, which was as follows :- "The Volunteer shall embark with the corps. at [Name of port] on such date as he may be directed, and proceed on active service in South Africa to such port or place as he may be re- quired by any military authority on behalf of the Queen."

<page:90>

land was the property of the Queen ; section 2 said that they went by direction of the Queen ; and consequently there was no doubt that they fully understood that the property they assigned was the property of the Queen in New Zea- land ; and it had to be so before the Queen could send it away. It was sent away as the property of Her Majesty, and it remained so unless she elected to relieve herself of that property. Mr J. ALLEN .- What about the Fifth Contingent ? Mr. SEDDON said the Fifth Contingent were Imperially equipped, and everything was paid for by the Imperial authorities-horses and everything. There might have been spare horses taken ; he had known officers who took spare horses, and he had known cases where friends had sent out horses to South Africa, and where horses had been bought in South Africa. In those cases he would give a certifi- cate for sale to the Imperial authorities, but on no other ground. He hoped the feeling would not become general, and there would not be any disappointment; and he hoped no im- proper claims would be made, because if claims were made now it would detract from what had been done by the colony and had been accepted by our kindred at Home. It must not be for- gotten that they had very heavy claims on them. An Hon. MEMBER .- What was done with the horses left behind ? Mr. SEDDON said any trooper on leaving would hand his horse over to the remount -officer. It was well known that there was an agreement between the Australian Colonies and New Zealand that no horses or cattle should be allowed to enter any colony from South #cc-zero Africa. An Hon. MEMBER .- The men did not know that. Mr. SEDDON said he thought they did. It was generally known that the horses could not come back, and he had regretted the fact, be- cause after a man had had his horse with him through a campaign of this sort he naturally became attached to it ; but owing to the danger from rinderpest it had been inadvisable to relax the regulations. He was sorry any re- marks should have been

made tending to create ill-feeling. It had been said by the honourable member for Wellington City (Mr. Fisher) that the best men had not gone to South Africa. That was a reflection on the men that went; and it was evident that the best men had not gone -as the honourable gentleman and the member for Palmerston were still in the colony. He hoped they had heard the last of 9.0. this question. He might say that, in respect to rifles, there also appeared to be a misapprehension on the part of some of the men. It was said that after the arrival of the men at Beira they were told the rifles were to be their own property. Well, the officer commanding, upon whose authority this was stated to be, had officially intimated to him that he had said nothing whatever about it, nor could Mr. Seddon currency. So it was in respect to this \$28 for the horses. It had no doubt been mooted in South Africa that the men would be paid for the horses, and hence the misapprehension. Under this agreement those horses were the property of the Crown. If some of the officers in South Africa had sold their horses, there must have been some special circumstances attending the sale; and no doubt there were isolated cases where the horses were private property where a sale could have been made. As he had said before, if any case came before him he would have inquiry made, and if it were proved that the horses were absolutely private property and were not assigned to the Crown, then he would give the certificates, not otherwise. Bill read a third time.

RAILWAY CLASSIFICATION AND SUPERANNUATION. On the motion for going into Committee of Supply, Mr. BOLLARD (Eden) said he had the following amendment to move: That it is desirable that the House should formulate proposals for the further classification and superannuation of the railway servants, in order that the necessary provision may be made on this year's estimates. He thought every honourable member would agree that the railway servants were much underpaid. Let them take the Stationmasters of every grade, for instance, and compare the salaries they received with the salaries received by the Post-Office officials of the same grade, and it would be seen there was a great difference in favour of the Post-Office officials. Now, he held that Stationmasters, like all other railway servants, had great responsibilities cast upon them. Life and death was in their hands, because if they made a mistake it might cause serious loss of life ; and even if there was little damage done they, at any rate, would be put back seven or eight years in the matter of promotion, if not dismissed altogether. He did not wish it to be understood that he was arguing that the Post Office officials were overpaid, but he said that in order to do justice to the railway servants, more especially the railway Stationmasters and clerks, they should at least be brought up to the same standard in the matter of salary as the Post Office officials. Now, these men had been promised for years that a new classification list would be brought down by the Government, and that their salaries would be increased. Judging from the answers to the questions on this subject given by Ministers in the House, there was very little likelihood of the railway servants having a new classification list this session. He hoped the Government would take the matter seriously into their consideration, and bring down a classification list and a superannuation scheme for the railway servants. At one time, some twelve or thirteen years ago, railway servants who were retired or who met with an accident got compensation. That had been done away with, and railway

<page:91>

entered the service within the last twelve years, at all events, get no retiring allowance. He did not wish to delay going into Supply, but would simply move his amendment. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) desired to say something in reference to the amendment moved by the honourable member for Eden, and he felt called upon to make perhaps a little longer speech upon it than otherwise would be necessary, because the district he represented was immediately concerned in the introduction of a superannuation scheme, the Petone Railway Workshops being situated in his district. Some time ago the Government introduced a classification scheme by which the employés of the railway workshops were classified. They were divided into distinct classes, with distinct wages set opposite their individual class or grade ; and, later on, it being found by experience, and after seeing its working for some time, that the grading was

not all that was desired, the Government proposed to introduce an amendment of the Classification Act, with the desire of improving and making smoother the anomalies which were found to be existing. Last session he had a distinct promise from the Minister for Railways that a superannuation scheme, and a Bill dealing with a railway superannuation scheme, would be introduced to the House ; and he wished to say, in answer to the honourable member for Eden, that he knew of his own knowledge that at the present time the closest consideration and greatest care and attention were being given to that branch of the subject by the Minister for Railways. Honourable members would realise better far than he could tell them, and members especially who had held seats in the House for some years could realise better than himself, that during the session the time of a Minister was not his own - he was busy from morning until night. He had on more than a dozen occasions, both by petitions and deputations, waited on the Minister for Railways, urging on him the advisability of at any rate bringing down a superannuation scheme, with the idea of enabling the people employed in the railway workshops to consider it. Now, this was not the time or the place for discussing in full the details of a scheme, and he regretted that the honourable member for Eden had taken this opportunity of introducing debatable matter. He thought it would have been better if the honourable member for Eden had simply put the case before the Minister for Railways as he (Mr. Wilford) had done for his constituency, and had urged upon the Minister the advisability of bringing forward this scheme as quickly as possible, in order that the House might discuss the terms or the forms proposed in the measure. Now, he had himself suggested respectfully to the Minister for Railways a certain form of superannuation scheme, which he thought should be embodied in the form of Bill to be brought down and considered by members of the House ; and he was perfectly well aware that, apart from the classification proposed by deavouring for some weeks past to get passed by Cabinet a scheme which would be submitted to the workshops men for approval. He had a distinct promise from the Minister that as soon as the Bill was drafted, the form of the Bill would be submitted to honourable members, in order that members might call together the executive of the railway employés in their districts to discuss the scheme. An Hon. MEMBER .- Why those members, and not all the members ? Mr. WILFORD said he did not mean that only those members who represented railway workshops districts were to be provided with the Bill, but that all members were to get it ; but he meant that those members representing the workshops districts should be placed at once in the possession of the details of the scheme. He recognised that the member for Eden was interested in this matter, and was looking for the same thing as was he (Mr. Wilford), but he should have first made himself conversant with the fact that a scheme was really before Cabinet. He did not know whether the member for Eden had second sight, or had eyes at the back of his head, but it was a curious thing that there was a deputation from the railway employés in the gallery waiting to ask the Minister for Railways to bring forward the very thing that he was advocating. He wanted, however, to suggest to the Minister that, in addition to the scheme, he should also consider the question of what was known as the "permanent casuals " of this colony. These men never would be permanent, and although they had been in the Civil Service or the workshops for a number of years they would not be entitled to such a superannuation scheme as was suggested, nor would they be entitled to the benefits of that particular Bill. He believed that after a man had been in the employ of the railway for a term of years he should be entitled to the benefit of the measure. After they had dealt with the question of superannuation they also had to deal with the question of classification, and, although the Minister for Railways had received a lot of credit for his classification of the labour of the Railway service, he had yet got to deal with the labouring portion of the workshops employés in each district. They might have a classification of holders-up, of lifters, of boiler-makers, of carpenters, or of any other grade or class ; but at the present time they had practically three classes of labourers-a most ridiculous thing. They were supposed to have first-class, second-class, and third-class labourers, and though these three classes were graded differently they were doing practically the same work. In Petone,

though there were many labourers, there were only three or four men who were classed first-class labourers. Recently, in regard to an increase of pay made to the workmen, a notice was posted up in the shops showing the payments to be given to the different grades in the service, and among the increases there was a small one of so much per day to the first-class labourers. The labourers, when they

<page:92>

posted upon the wall of their workshop, pointed out to him (Mr. Wilford) that as far as Petone was concerned, although there was a considerable number of labourers in those shops, there were only two or three who would come within the definition of first-class labourers, and who would get the benefit of the increase. That, then, was a distinction which should be swept away altogether. The distinction between first - class and second - class labourers should be done away with. He believed the second - class and third - class labourers were actually doing the same work side by side. When the Minister undertook the extra classification of the railway-men, and the amendment of the present Classification Act, he should also undertake to sweep away the so-called differences that existed between the labourers in the different departments of the colony. He hoped the Minister would bring down the superannuation scheme, and he trusted the Premier would give the honourable gentleman such help as would enable him to circulate that scheme, and also to provide for the classification of the whole of the labourers at a very early date. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) said the speech which had just been delivered by the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs made it almost necessary that other members of the House who represented districts where railway servants were numerous should speak, otherwise he should not have spoken on this occasion, recognising that the member for Eden desired merely to get a resolution affirmed which might have passed without any discussion but for the speech delivered by the last honourable gentleman. He did not know what the secret was that prompted the honourable gentleman, in view of a motion of this kind, to traverse the whole question of railway classification ; but probably the secret lay in the statement he made that somewhere in the galleries there was a deputation from the Petone Workshops. If it had not been for that fact and the honourable member's desire that the deputation from the Petone Workshops should be able to see the paces of their honourable member when he was performing, he doubted very much whether the speech just delivered would have been given to the House. If those members who represented the large workshop districts were not to speak on this occasion it might be deemed that the honourable gentleman who represented the Petone shops was the only member of the House who had been taking any interest in connection with the matter of railway classification ; and yet he ventured to think that the whole of the members of the House who during the last few days have been receiving telegrams and letters from railway servants had been urging the Minister for Railways, and not only during the last few days had this happened but repeatedly during the session. A number of members had from time to time brought the matter under the notice of the Minister for Railways, and from Mr. Wilford the matter would be pushed forward as fast as possible. Everybody recognised that the changes in respect to the classification, and especially as to bringing in the superannuation scheme for so gigantic a service as the Railway Department, was a most delicate and intricate matter, and he thought that those honourable members who would seek to rush the Minister in connection with this matter were not acting wisely, or prudently, or on business principles. He was not disposed to do that ; but, seeing what was said by the member for Wellington Suburbs, he ventured to say this : that honourable members would be aware of the fact that a few evenings ago a number of gentlemen connected with the Railway service met several members, and, as a result of the interview, a deputation of members was organized which would have waited on the Minister last night had he been able to receive them. It was again arranged to meet the Minister to-day if an opportunity presented itself, but to-day the Minister, with the utmost courtesy, had asked them to put it off for a day or two in order that he might be able to give a decisive answer as to what could be done this session. As he had said, he was

not going to discuss the principles underlying the classification scheme ; he would wait until the scheme had come down, and when it came down, if it were desirable that amendments should be made in it, he would be quite prepared to suggest that those amendments should be made, provided that they were practicable, and such as the finances of the colony would justify. He agreed with what the member for Eden had said, that in a large number of cases Stationmasters were paid at distinctly lower rates than those holding similar positions in other departments of the public service were paid. At the same time there was the large element of finance to be considered in connection with this matter, and, while members were desirous that the Govern- ment should undertake the question of dealing with the classification and superannuation, they were not desirous in doing that that they should bring the finance of the colony into difficulty. All they asked was that fair ar- rangements should be made as far as was prudent, and as far as the finances of the colony allowed, with a view of putting railway servants on a satisfactory footing. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) rose to a point of order. The amendment in its present form provided for provision being made on the estimates this session. Any question of that kind must come by a respectful address to his Excellency the Governor. An Hon. MEMBER .- It is too late to raise that point of order. Mr. SEDDON said, No; he could raise it at any time. He was about to suggest to the honourable member that the first part of the amendment, that affirming the desirability that certain provision should be made for further classification-that it be taken to that point : because the Government had long ago decided on a scheme, and the Minister for Railways. had stated in answer to a question some days

<page:93>

and he thought he had stated in his reply that the matter was before the Actuary of the In- surance Department. An Hon. MEMBER .- Do you accept the first part ? Mr. SEDDON said, Certainly ; and the Go- vernment said so in the Governor's Speech, and his colleague had had the matter in hand for some time past. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce) said he would like the point of order settled. It did not deal directly with the estimates, but purported to get the opinion of the House on a question ; but, if settled in the affirmative, it would still be in the power of the Crown only to place any sum on the estimates. If the Bills were carried into law it is true due provision would have to be made in the supplementary estimates. That was not making or suggesting any provision in the supplementary estimates, but that legisla- tion should be brought down. That legislation, if it came down and was passed by the House, or, if it involved further Supply, that Supply, would have to be made in the supplementary estimates. Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER said the question raised by the Premier was whether this was in crder. His opinion was that the latter part of the resolution was not in order, because it directed that the necessary provision should be made on this year's estimates in order to give effect to the former part of the resolution ; and the House could not direct His Excellency the Governor to make any recommendation. There- fore that part of the motion which contained the words "in order that the necessary pro- vision should be made on this year's esti- mates," was out of order. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said he did not want to take any advantage of the Speaker's ruling, and therefore he would not object to the honourable gentleman striking out the latter portion of his resolution, and then they could allow the first part to go on the voices, and let the House get on with the estimates. Mr. BOLLARD (Eden) said he had no desire to embarrass the Government in this matter. He was quite willing to withdraw the latter part of his resolution, although the Premier would pardon him for saying that if the Govern- ment formulated a scheme they could get over the latter difficulty easy enough. All he de- sired was this: that the Government should bring down some scheme of classification and superannuation that would be satisfactory. He had been induced to move this because of the reply he got from the Minister for Railways the other day, which was not, to his mind, satis- factory. He thought he understood the Hon. the Minister to say that there were so many difficulties in the way that it was doubtful whether he could bring down a scheme this session. Now, he was satisfied the Minister for Railways wished to do what he could in this matter, and he believed the honourable gentle- man

recognised that the men in the Railway service were underpaid. However, he begged to withdraw the latter portion of his resolution. drawn. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister for Railways) was very sorry the honourable member had thought it necessary to move this resolution. He would endeavour to explain the position, and then, he thought, honourable members and those whom the classification and superannuation scheme more closely concerned would realise that the honourable gentleman in the course he had taken was really not furthering that which the Government and many honourable members were desirous of giving effect to. Now, when the honourable member moved the resolution and talked about a scheme being prepared, he might tell him that he had prepared a scheme long ago, and had also drafted a Bill ; but at the same time he could say that the whole subject was a very difficult one. There were many things to be considered. Mr. BOLLARD said it was three years ago since this matter was first mooted. Sir J. G. WARD said, Yes ; and the honourable member would be surprised to know that, since he had had control as responsible head of the department, amongst other things, he had been working steadily at this scheme during the whole time ; and, in addition, the matter had been before the Cabinet on more than one occasion. Necessarily, where so many men were concerned, it was a difficult and intricate scheme, one which required the most mature consideration on the part of the Government. Before he could come down and submit to the House a scheme which he believed to be on right lines his colleagues had, of course, to agree, and until they were perfectly satisfied that the financial proposals his Bill contained, and which were required to give effect to it, were feasible he could not move any faster than he was doing. Members must know that when dealing with a matter like this it was not for one year, but was affecting men in the service for all time, and the scheme was therefore not such as would need to be amended or interfered with in its main features. Honourable members must realise that, no matter how anxious they were in regard to this matter- and he was very anxious to have it done -it was not a light thing to deal with, and, when the attempt was made that the Government should have their hand forced, he wished to say it was absolutely unnecessary. He could tell the honourable member the Government had had the whole scheme under consideration for many months, in addition to which, as he said, he had some time since a Bill embodying the whole scheme drafted, and it was from the causes he had explained that the whole scheme as embodied in his Bill had not been circulated long ago for the information of honourable members and those more directly concerned in the Railway Department. In a matter such as this the honour- 9.30. able member would realise that, as the responsible Minister of the department, he had, in conjunction with his responsible officers, to go into the whole of the schemes that applied

<page:94>

superannuation or anything equivalent to it had been provided, and that had already been done. Apart altogether from the responsibility that the State itself would have to incur in connection with such a scheme, the whole of the railway servants were directly concerned, because they would, under his proposals, be contributors towards it. Therefore before the Government, after it came down with their proposals, attempted to force them through they must be satisfied that the proposals were not only fair to those immediately affected, but to the country as a whole, and at the same time that it would make due provision for the railway servants. He was quite satisfied himself that this could be done, and done effectually. They were all agreed that some system was absolutely essential for making a superannuation provision for those who, from old age or other causes, had to go out of the Railway service, and this would yearly become more marked as the service was growing older and older. He recognised that himself, as he was sure the head of the Government and every member of the Government also recognised it. He would not submit a scheme unless one the effects of which would be permanent, lasting, and satisfactory to those concerned. He believed the scheme he had ready would do that. If honourable members had the information which he had collated from all the countries of the world that

had provided superannuation schemes, they would realise the stupendous difficulty there was in the way of propounding a practicable scheme—one that would be permanent, and that would protect the interests of the men and the families concerned. Therefore, it was not unreasonable to say that men who had such grave responsibilities upon their shoulders were not going to allow themselves by any pressure to be forced to submit a scheme before they were satisfied that the finances of the scheme were such as would carry it safely and successfully on, so that its continuity would be unassailable in years to come. Any one might devise and bring down a scheme that would last for a year or two, and then would require to be amended, or even break down, or perhaps, if bad times came, would absorb the moneys that had been paid into it. When men were required to pay their hard-earned money into a fund to assist in building up a superannuation scheme, then a permanent scheme must be provided. As he said, he fully believed the scheme now ready met all those purposes, but he fully recognised that others as well as himself had responsibilities, and had to be considered. Only the previous evening the honourable member for Riccarton and the honourable member for Otaki had asked him to receive a deputation upon this question between ten o'clock and half past ten ; but as he had had a very heavy time all day on the estimates, and was to return to them immediately after the half-hour adjournment, he had asked that this deputation should be postponed, so that the honourable member who had to-night moved the resolution would see that other Sir J. G. Ward see that matter pushed forward. Mr. BOLLARD .- I am glad to hear it. Sir J. G. WARD said they were all anxious to have the scheme pushed forward. He had himself been at work on the scheme ever since he had been Minister for Railways, and if honourable members would look at the speeches delivered by the Right Hon. the Premier in October, 1899, they would find, in connection with the classification scheme to which he referred, that he had fully expressed an opinion in favour of it. The Government all along had been anxious to bring this about, but when they did so it must be done effectively. He would suggest to those members who were anxious to have a superannuation scheme and a classification scheme that there were others who were equally anxious with themselves ; but it must be remembered that there were great responsibilities on the shoulders of the Government in connection with the matter. He was desirous of bringing down the scheme at the earliest moment, and in such a form as to meet the necessities of the service by making provision for the future of the staff in a suitable and practicable way. They were determined to do that so soon as they could see their way ; and, having said that, he thought the honourable member would realise that his attempt to create the impression that the Government wanted driving in the matter was absolutely without foundation. Mr. BOLLARD .- There is no harm in stirring you up a bit. Sir J. G. WARD said there was no need for stirring the Government up about it. He was himself as earnest and anxious about it as any member of the House could be ; and, in addition to that, he had been working upon it. The scheme had been actuarially examined twice—once last year and again this year. There was necessarily great diversity of opinion as far as actuarial investigation into big schemes such as this were concerned—there was great difference of opinion as to what the working-out would be in years to come. Such a scheme would have to apply to the whole Railway service. If it were made to apply to one section of it only it might be comparatively easy ; but we had a large growing service, and it was not only those employed to-day but those who would be employed in the future that had to be considered. Regarding an amendment of the classification, the Government had already made provision to the extent of £20,000 a year in respect to some branches of the Railway Service, and it was recognised that there were men in other branches of the service who were not sufficiently paid; but when the Government dealt with the matter it should be recognised that it must be dealt with on broad principles, and so that no injustice should be done to any branch of the service. He trusted the honourable member, having this assurance from himself as the responsible Minister in charge of the department, would recognise that this important matter was not nor had it been in any way neglected; and when the proposals did

<page:95>

would be approached with a desire to make the scheme one that would be of great and lasting benefit. If such a scheme were introduced and submitted to the Railway employees and for the consideration of members, it would possibly give rise to a great deal of criticism, and he hoped for favourable criticism. The scheme was of a comprehensive character, and was in the interests of the service ; but the matter should not be hurried. This being so, he trusted the honourable member would realise that his best course would be to withdraw the resolution, having given expression to his views, and would trust the Government, as soon as they could see their way, to submit such proposals as would be in the best interests of the service and of the colony. If the resolution was not withdrawn he would support it, as it went in the same direction as he had all along been working for. Mr. HUTCHESON (Wellington City) was quite sure that whatever could be done in this matter was being done and would be done by the Minister. He felt quite certain his knowledge of these matters would stand him in good stead. Several honourable members, actuated by the representations of constituents, had made representations to the Minister and had put questions on the Order Paper. On last Thursday's Order Paper there were no less than four, as follows :- (1.) " Mr. Hutcheson to ask the Minister for Railways, Whether it is his intention this session to bring in a Bill amending the Classification Act now in force ? " (2.) " Mr. Fisher to ask the Minister for Railways, Whether the Government intend to pass the railway superannuation scheme and the amendment of the Classification Act this session ? " (3.) " Mr. Barclay to ask the Government, When the Government Railway Servants Superannuation and Classification Acts may be expected to be circulated ? " (4.) "Mr. Bollard to ask the Minister for Railways, When he intends to bring down the Railway Classification Bill promised by him last session ? " The member for the Wellington Suburbs did not do his business in the light of day, but by the back-stairs, which was more effective from his point of view. Mr. WILFORD .- Always personal. Mr. HUTCHESON said the honourable gentleman had himself to thank for it. When any one spoke in criticism of his words he usually interjected "Buncombe, buncombe." Probably the honourable member had not heard the origin of that word "buncombe." He would tell the honourable member. A small and obscure constituency in the United States had as its representative a self-sufficient bore. Nobody would listen to him, and when his fellow - members protested against his twaddle he said, "I am not addressing you ; I am talking to the electors of Buncombe," just as the honourable member told the House a few minutes ago he was talking to his constituents in the galleries. Now, any casual visitor in the House to-night, watching the proceedings, would imagine that the member for Buncombe took an active, not to say a leading, part in the business of the House, and that he was always there. He generally managed to put in an appearance for a short time on Wednesday night, when there was a late train for his constituents to come and see him perform. But the rest of the time he was at Court work or Dix's, and, forsooth, he now wanted to assume the proprietary rights of this Classification Act. What right had the honourable member over the railway legislation any more than any other member of the House? He said there was a deputation of his constituents down there for the special purpose of seeing about these things. Imagine the Minister for Railways so harassed by overwork that he could not within reasonable time see a deputation of members of the House on the subject, yet the honourable member could bring in a deputation of his constituents and settle it right off the reel. Fortunately, the forms of the House allowed every member an equal right to speak on every question that came before the House, and he was not going to sit by without protest and hear the cool and selfish suggestion made that the Minister should take into his confidence four members of the House, because, by chance, they happened to represent constituencies in which the workshops were situated. This Classification Act, he presumed, would affect more than the employees in the workshops. The Stationmasters, for instance, were notoriously underpaid. Sir J. G. WARD .- It applies to the whole of the service. Mr. HUTCHESON was exceedingly glad to hear the Minister acknowledge it. He felt sure that one of his troubles in connection with the drafting of a fair

Classification Act was to mete out even-handed justice to all branches of the department. He had reason, however, to mark his disapproval of the selfish propositions that only one or two members of the House had any interest in railway affairs. Mr. WILFORD wished to make a personal explanation. The honourable member for Wellington City (Mr. Hutcheson) was personal, as he always was. Mr. DEPUTY - SPEAKER must ask the honourable member not to indulge in any remarks outside what is necessary to make his personal explanation. Mr. WILFORD said the honourable member made a statement that he (Mr. Wilford) was in the House when there was a late train so that his constituents might be present. His constituents were in the gallery of the House every night. He (Mr. Wilford), in attending to his constituents, was often away from the House. As many as eighteen times in a day he had to leave the Chamber to see constituents. The honourable member had said he was sometimes at Dix's. He admitted that he had been there, and had seen many a farce played there, and many a corner-man in that minstrel circle, and

<page:96>

have the greatest pleasure in recommending him for the position of corner-man without his even blacking his face. Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER said, In making a personal explanation the honourable member must see that those words should not be applied, and he would ask him to withdraw them. Mr. WILFORD withdrew the words that " he would make a good corner-man without blacking his face." Mr. FRASER said this was not a withdrawal. What the honourable member had said was really an insult to the Chair. Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER said the honourable member had unreservedly withdrawn the objectionable remark. Mr. WILFORD said he unreservedly withdrew the remark that the honourable member would make a corner-man without blacking his face. Mr. HUTCHESON had very sharp ears, and the honourable member did not take his cue from his leader. He said, "He could not." That was the disingenuousness-that " he could not make a corner-man "; and these were the ethics of Parliament, as shown by the leader of the House. Mr. SEDDON said the honourable member was doing him a great injustice. Mr. HUTCHESON had heard it. Mr. SEDDON said the honourable member could not hear it, because he (Mr. Seddon) never said that at all. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) said it appeared to him that on this question Ministers were setting up the position that the proper method for members of Parliament to make representations to Ministers was not on the floor of the House, but by deputation. Now, that sort of backstairs influence Sir J. G. WARD asked for leave to explain. It was not a deputation. What was said was that a number of members of Parliament wished to interview him on the matter. Mr. PIRANI said that what he wanted to point out was that one of the reasons the Minister urged for objecting to the motion being brought forward was that a deputation of members was to wait on him last night. An Hon. MEMBER .- NO. Mr. PIRANI said the Minister urged as a reason against the moving of this matter that a deputation of members was to wait on him in reference to the matter. Now, he said the Minister ought to discourage as much as possible private deputations of members, and to encourage the open expression in this House of members' opinions on any question. On the 2nd July last a very full expression of opinion was given by Ministers in the Governor's Speech as to the necessity for a super annuation scheme and an amendment of the railway classification. That was about three months ago. Could any one tell him why, when the end of the session was approaching, there was no scheme available, except to certain members of the House who used backstairs influence ? Mr. Wilford his Bill. Mr. PIRANI said the Minister had had it ready all along, because the member for the Suburbs said he had seen it. Mr. WILFORD .- No; discussed it. Mr. PIRANI said the honourable member did not exactly say he had seen it, but he said he had evidence to prove its existence. But they knew that the Minister had a scheme prepared for months past, and that the Minister himself was fully prepared to do justice between those railway servants who were suffering most under the present classification, especially Stationmasters and other officers, and they were quite prepared to take the Minister's assurance that he himself fully intended dealing with the matter. But there was a question of finance involved, and they knew that, however much the Minister for

Railways might desire to do justice to a certain section of the railway employés, it was impossible for him to do that unless the Colonial Treasurer also was as anxious as the Minister for Railways ; and he might be permitted to express his doubts as to the existence of any agreement on this point. Therefore it was a proper thing, especially at that late period of the session, that this matter should be brought before the House, and that members should show the Ministry as a whole that they were as fully prepared to support such a scheme as was the Minister for Railways himself. If that was the case, he did not see that there should be the objection that there was to members of the House voicing their views on this question in as public a manner as possible. It was a pity that schemes of this sort were always brought on at the end of the session. They had trouble in connection with the postal classification and the original railway classification because of this dilatoriness, and they were apparently going to have the same trouble now ; that was, that if members were not prepared to swallow holus-bolus the scheme brought down by the Minister it would be withdrawn. Consequently, very much that was objectionable was supported, and members were blamed with having voted against amendments in the Bill, while their votes had been cast in that way not because they did not think those amendments were just, but because the Minister had said that if any amendment was made in the Bill he would drop the Bill altogether. That was an unfair position for members to be put in. The most paying department in the public service of the colony was undoubtedly the Railway Department. Very large and very liberal concessions were annually given to the people who used the railways, and it was not a right thing that year after year they should have this postponement of justice to the railway officers who suffer most under the existing classification scheme. Undoubtedly a very large proportion of the railway servants were very fairly dealt with under the classification scheme, but that only the more accentuated

<page:97>

the position of those who were not under the scheme; and he felt sure the Minister himself would be one of the first to admit that they were not fairly dealt with in comparison with other employés of the same rank in the Civil Service. Therefore he did not think the Minister should take exception to those members who were anxious to give him support and assistance. Accordingly he did not think the Minister should complain that members of the Opposition should take this occasion to urge upon the Government the necessity of bringing down this scheme as soon as possible, in order that it might be fairly considered. Some members seemed to arrogate to themselves the sole right to legislate for the railway servants ; but if those members of the House who had railway workshops in their constituencies were disfranchised from dealing with such questions as this it would be very much better for the railway servants themselves—that is, the railway servants who were worth their salt. They had got a new cry in Parliament—namely, that certain members in the House represented the railway servants. Did anybody ever hear such nonsense? No honourable member had a right to represent the railway servants as a class. They came there to represent their constituents, and, with their constituents, the people of the colony. If they were going to cast their vote in a direction which was not a fair and right one simply because a large number of their constituents belonged to a certain class, then it was political log-rolling of the worst kind. He did not think members of Parliament were willing to do that, 32106019788261 but that if a classification scheme were brought down in time members would consider it temperately and give the Minister every assistance they could to see it brought into law ; and, even if they were opposed to him politically, they would be as pleased to congratulate him on his good work as though they were his own supporters. Mr. LANG (Waikato) wished to urge on the Minister for Railways the necessity of going on with this scheme at once. The classification scheme had been anxiously looked forward to by all the men in the service for years past. He would not go into the merits of the question, because it was a matter that was admitted on all sides of the House to be a proper thing. The Minister had said that members were in favour of it, and had been asking for it ; but he regretted that the Minister, when speaking, did not

indicate, and clearly, whether he intended to bring down the Bill this session. The Minister should tell the House plainly whether he intended to go on with it this session. Mr. FISHER (Wellington City) said that questions regarding superannuation and classification were put to the Minister for Railways in four separate ways on one day recently, and the answer given by the Minister for Railways was that his scheme for superannuation and classification had been prepared for some time, and that it merely awaited the assent of the Cabinet. He hardly understood, therefore, what necessity there was for proposing such an amendment. The Government had expressed VOL. CXIX .- 6. no unwillingness to lay the scheme of the Minister for Railways before the House. It was only with them, he thought, a matter of asking for time to devote proper consideration to such a large scheme as this was. He was not in the House when the Minister spoke, but he assumed that the honourable gentleman did not say any more than he said in answer to the questions put to him the other day. Sir J. G. WARD said he said more. Mr. FISHER would like to know whether the Minister supported or opposed the amendment. Sir J. G. WARD said the Ministry had not opposed it. Amendment as amended agreed to, and motion agreed to; and the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply. SUPPLY. CLASS III .- COLONIAL TREASURER'S DEPARTMENT. Treasury Department, £7,819. Mr. SEDDON (Colonial Treasurer) said he intended to make a new departure. As they were allowed only a certain number of speeches, he would begin at once and give to the Committee the fullest information regarding the staff and working-expenses. The amount voted last year was £7,662, and the amount expended £7,384. This showed a saving of £288. He made that statement to emphasize the fact that care and economy had been exercised. The increase this year comprised increase of salaries £240, and there were three new cadets, making the total increase £495. The increases were : Secretary to the Treasury, £50; Accountant, £25; clerk in charge, £20; one clerk £15 and five clerks £10 each ; five cadets, £10; and messenger, 1s. per diem, which had been approved by the House. The binder was also increased 5s. a week. The Secretary had been twenty-eight years in the service, and the Accountant twenty - four years in the Treasury and eleven in other departments, making thirty-five years. The clerk in charge had been twenty years in the service. These, he thought, were the full particulars, and honourable members would see that the proposals were reasonable in the extreme. Exception might be taken to increasing the Secretary's salary by £50, making the salary £850; but when he told members that last year there had passed through this man's hands £20,000,000, or, rather, that he was responsible for that amount, and when they compared his salary, even with the increase that he was paid, with those in other colonies for men holding a similar position, they would see that they were a long way from giving what was paid elsewhere. The Inspector of Lunatic Asylums got £1,200. The financial head of the colony was the Secretary to the Treasury, and, considering his responsibility and services, his salary ought to be equal to that of others who had nothing like the same responsibilities. An Hon. MEMBER .- What is the position worth in other colonies ?

<page:98>

New South Wales to an officer holding a far less responsible position. The officer was competent, and the amount paid was reasonable. He could tell the House that thousands had been saved to the colony in respect to financial operations through this officer. In regard to the second officer and the increase of £25, he did not consider anything required to be said. Mr. MEREDITH (Ashley) moved to reduce the item "Secretary to the Treasury," et cetera, by £50. Considering that £117 for a clerk and 7s. 6d. a day for a messenger was considered a living-wage, surely £750 ought to be enough for this officer. He had no fault to find with him : he knew him to be an excellent officer, well qualified for the position. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccanton) asked whether this officer had received any other sum by way of a bonus, or any other addition to his salary. Mr. SEDDON said he did not think so. \- Mr. G. W. RUSSELL said he intended to support the amendment. As compared with the salaries of others in the service, this officer was getting one of the highest salaries of heads of departments. He was, for instance, getting £100 a

year more than the Secretary of the Post Office, who had 2,061 officers under him. The Committee divided on the question, "That the item be reduced by £50." AYES, 25. Smith, G. J. Arnold Herries Hogg Symes Atkinson Hornsby Bollard Tanner Massey Thompson, R. Collins Mackenzie, T. Thomson, J. W. Ell Monk Fowlds Tellers. Gilfedder Parata Meredith Pirani Graham Russell, G. W. Rhodes Haselden NOES, 30. Allen, E. G. Mills Heke O'Meara Barclay Houston Bennet Hutcheson Seddon Kaihau Carroll Stevens Ward Colvin Lang Wilford Duncan Lawry Field Willis. Lethbridge Fisher McGowan Tellers. Hall Mckenzie, R. Carncross Fraser, A. L. D. Hall-Jones McLachlan Hardy Majority against, 5. Amendment negatived. Vote, £7,819, agreed to. Vote, Friendly Societies Registry Office, £1,380, agreed to. Old-age Pensions Office, £2,780. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) asked if the Minister would give particulars of the items included in "Contingencies, £300." Mr. SEDDON (Colonial Treasurer) said the old-age pensions "contingencies" expended last year amounted to £117, not £300, and the items were as follows :-

Cleaning offices ..	16
16 10 0 8 Cloth baths for copying	1 2
Furniture for offices	3 21 6
Gas	9 3 48 8 4
Messengers	0 17
Mimeograph, &c.	0
Overtime to postal officers	28 14 0
Petty payments ..	7 3 4
Rent of offices	3 38 4
Telephone charges	0 2 0 . . .
Valuation fee	0 1 1 . . .
Printing	1 15 0 . . .
5 16 Travelling-expenses	0 . .

£176 11 10 He might say, with respect to this matter, that the only thing that called for anxiety was that he was of opinion there were a number of persons who were obtaining certificates which they should not obtain, and it was his intention, as soon as the session was over, to make changes in respect to the control of this department. He thought, himself, they ought to have some one present to represent the Government when the claims were being heard. This was more particularly necessary because they found people in receipt of pensions had died who had large sums in the bank, and in some instances they had made transfers of money, and in other cases they had made transfers of property to their relatives. There were cases of that kind coming under his notice. With respect to the administration, with the altered law there would have to be a change. He intended to make a change in this matter after the session, and a large saving would result from it. Mr. G. J. SMITH (Christchurch City) asked if he was to understand that the Government were going to be represented at the hearing of these claims in future by a member of the legal profession ? Mr. SEDDON said, Yes. Mr. G. J. SMITH said, While that was wise, he thought at the same time instructions should be issued that legal technicalities should not be put forward against the claimants, otherwise they would find that legal gentlemen going into the Court to represent the Government would strain every point to prevent a person going on the pension fund. Now, he was sure that was not the wish or intention of the House. He also wanted to ask the Premier a question about one item he read out in the contingencies vote. He understood the honourable gentleman to read, "Overtime, £28 14s." On what principle was that paid ? because he knew that in several of the Government departments men were working overtime without any payment whatever, and he wanted to find on what principle overtime was paid for in certain departments, while in other departments it was not. Mr. SEDDON said his representation, 11.0. of course, would not be lawyer representation at all. It would be a representation by some responsible person-in his opinion, the Deputy Registrar. As soon as the application had been lodged they should have some one to

<page:99>

paid. that was not for officers in his own department at all. It was a payment for services rendered by the Postal Department, who, after they had finished their own work, had to do work in connection with the pensions. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) said that if the responsibility of watching the claims was put upon the Registrar there would be a good deal of expense to the country in the matter of mileage, because it had to be remembered that every single claim in the colony came under review once a year. He would urge upon the Premier the necessity of trying to find some simple plan whereby either the police sergeant or some other official should perform this duty, so that there would be no increase in the old-age pensions administration, because the higher that was, so much less would there be for the old-age

pensioners themselves. Mr. TANNER (Avon) did not share the opinion of the Premier that there were any large number of claims which would prove to be inadmissible on closer investigation. A Magistrate who had had a great deal of experience with this matter had told him that, in his opinion, the percentage of fraud would not rank to more than 1 per cent., and he would hardly have considered himself justified in putting it at that amount. With regard to claimants suppressing the fact that they had money in the bank unknown to the Magistrate who investigated the claim, he might say that the bulk of the small savings of this colony were invested in the Post-Office Savings-Bank, which was absolutely under the control of the Government, and though he shared the opinion that the utmost privacy should be insisted on in regard to the depositors, he thought it a matter that should be considered by the House whether it would not be advisable, where the names of claimants for old-age pensions were identical with the depositors in the Savings-Bank, that inquiry should be made. With regard to the transfer of freehold property and the evading of the regulations by bogus mortgages, he thought that if some method could be devised for safeguarding the Consolidated Fund from these impositions it would be to the advantage of the House, the advantage of the country, and to the credit of the management. Mr. HUTCHESON (Wellington City) said the prevention of frauds would pay for the cost of investigation; and there was no doubt that a good many cases of fraud did exist. No provision had been made in the case of a person who had made himself indigent. Mr. SEDDON said he had an amendment which he should propose, providing that one of the questions to be considered was whether the applicant had divested himself or herself of property within the preceding five years with a view of coming on to the old-age pensions fund. Mr. ATKINSON (Wellington City) was inclined to make the somewhat novel objection that the amount ought to be very much increased. The sum appeared to be ridiculously inadequate for the administration of the department, and parsimony was very bad economy. so haphazard and so lax that the Magistrates and Registrars had no better opportunity of judging the matter than had the man in the street ; and perhaps not as good, as people would talk more freely on these subjects in the street than they were likely to do in the presence of officials. He would like to know how it was that forfeited instalments became a debit. Mr. SEDDON said these instalments had been paid, by the authority of the Minister, after the limit of time had been past, and before the amending Act had come into force. Mr. GUINNESS (Grey) had not an opportunity of saying anything in regard to the old-age pensions scheme. He did not think there was anything like the amount of fraud that some members seemed to think existed in regard to obtaining pensions. The amount of the pension was too small, and ought to be increased from 6s. 11d. per week to 10s. per week. If the Premier could see his way to increase the amount to 10s. he thought it would be a fair sum, and would then be a reasonable amount to keep body and soul together. It might be necessary, in order to prevent anything like suspicion being cast on old-age pensioners, to provide further safeguards. He would suggest to the Premier to allow the Deputy Registrar to appoint a substitute in places where he, being non-resident, would not know all the circumstances in connection with applicants' pensions. At present the old-age pension was simply a charitable dole, and the whole principle was not what it ought to be. The certificate for an old-age pension, instead of being, as it was now, a certificate that the holder had no means, ought to be an honour to a citizen, and that could only be done by making the system universal ; and he hoped to see the day when legislation would make the old-age pension universal. Mr. FIELD (Otaki) said he thought, with regard to frauds committed by applicants, 1 per cent. would be somewhat near the mark as the proportion of fraudulent cases. This, at any rate, was shown by the evidence of the Wellington Magistrate. It was undesirable that lawyers should be employed except in cases of extreme difficulty, and he thought it would be a proper thing for the Magistrate to say when they should be employed. Another point that required attention was whether the pension-list should be published. It was within his knowledge that many old persons entitled to pensions refrained from applying because of consequent publication of their names. With regard to the collection of information, though he fully

recognised the objection to the employment of the police to do this work, he still thought that they were, from their position and the local knowledge they possessed, the best officers for the work ; and, in any case, it must be remembered that the police were already employed to perform a number of Civil duties, such as the collection of statistics, and so forth. Mr. ELL (Christchurch City) said that considerable care should be exercised to prevent fraud, or injury would be done.

<page:100>

the old-age pensions was only what they had foretold the Premier it would be when the Act was passing through the House. One of the worst features of it was the indifference which it had infused into the minds of well-to-do children in regard to the welfare of their parents. He knew some sons who were receiving very large incomes, and yet they felt it no discredit to throw their parents as a burden on the State, even though the self-denial practised by the parents had helped them into affluence. This system was taking away the sense of responsibility, and he thought that was highly undesirable. It was no use Stipendiary Magistrates saying there was only 1 per cent. who did this. There was no officer upon whom systematic deception was so often practised as upon the Stipendiary Magistrate. The associated citizen knew more about the financial condition of the applicants than the Stipendiary Magistrate. There was only one way in which they could have an honest old-age pensions scheme, and that was to give it to all. The moment they began to individualise and to be invidious, or to make an inquisitorial examination of people's affairs, the dishonest claimants would lay themselves out to deceive the Government and the country, and for that reason it was exercising an immoral and degrading influence over the country. If he were inclined to be dishonest, and kept clear of land, he could send his money, even if he had £10,000, over to Australia and draw his pension here. Let the Government come down with an honest straight-forward policy and make it a universal pension, or else let them get all the Post Office officials and Justices of the Peace in the country to report to the Government who were the needy poor, and he believed they would come much nearer the mark than they did at the present time. Then, along with the Stipendiary Magistrates as a Court of inquiry, they would be able to get accuracy of information about the deserving poor. He was anxious that the poor should be treated well. At present this old-age pension was only a charitable dole, and not a pension at all, and therefore it was called by a false name. If it was to be charitable aid, let the poor be relieved according to their needs ; but what was wanted was a universal pension, to which every one would contribute while he had the power to earn money for his own support. It was claimed when the scheme was initiated it would reduce the charitable aid. It had not done so to any appreciable amount. Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City) said the salaries of the Deputy Registrars in Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin were only £75 each, and in Dunedin the Deputy Registrar, who only got about 4s. a day for his work, was kept going almost from one end of the year to the other. In his opinion, therefore, the Deputy Registrar in Dunedin, at all events, was not adequately remunerated, and some addition ought to be made to his salary. Vote, #2,780, agreed to. Vote, Land - and Income-tax Department, £21,576, agreed to. Mr. PIRANI moved to strike out the item "Salary of Registrar of Consols." He regretted to say that the Premier, in dealing with this officer in another part of the estimates, knowingly or through ignorance misled the House in regard to the salary paid to the Secretary to the Treasury in New South Wales, who, he said, received \$1,500. He was only £580 out, for the actual salary paid was £920. The principal Under-Secretary in New South Wales only got a little over \$1,000. It was also to be remembered that in New South Wales the officer occupying this position had three times as much money passing through his hands as this officer in New Zealand. In Victoria, where there was twice the revenue of New Zealand, the salary of £620 was paid for the position. Those were the salaries paid by the Governments before federation came into force. Personally, he did not think they ought to consider what was paid in the other colonies, but what the colony could afford was the sole consideration that should influence them. But, independent of that, this position of Registrar of Consols was a

purely ornamental one, and the work pertaining to it should come as a regular part of the work of the department. Mr. SEDDON hoped the honourable member would not press the amendment, for it would look like persecution of an officer. It had just been decided not to reduce his salary in the main estimate by £50, and now this was an attempt to arrive at the same thing in another way. That was not fair, more particularly as this officer was one of the most deserving in the colony, and one who had most important duties to perform. The honourable member did not tell the Committee that in New South Wales they had a Public Service Board, and he thought the junior on that Board got £1,500, and the head of the Board \$2,000 a year. Those officers had not more responsibility than the head of the Treasury here. They had to remember there was the financing of our loans, and it was no exaggeration to say that there was \$20,000,000 of money last year under the supervision and control of the Secretary of the Treasury. He was one of the best officers in the Civil Service. The officer in charge of the Land-tax and Income-tax Department and Advances to Settlers Department got \$900 a year. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) said, if the Premier wished to introduce a true reform he would have a Civil Service Board appointed. Even if he paid a good man \$2,000 a year as the head of that Board it would be the means of a great saving to the colony. A few years ago the Civil Service in New South Wales was in the same confusion as the Civil Service was here. There were good men in the service, but they had to carry inferior ones on their backs. After the Board was appointed, the cost of the service in New South Wales had been reduced by \$300,000 per annum, and more satisfaction was given to the Civil Service, because the officers knew that efficiency was appreciated and well paid. Besides freeing the Government from the undignified position in which

<page:101>

vote. there never would be a good Civil Service in this country while the Ministers would retain the function of making appointments. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) approved of the suggestion for a Civil Service Board. If only it would relieve the tension on members at the present time it would do a great deal. He was himself a Labour Bureau pure and simple, from morning to night, and he would approve of the introduction of a Civil Service Board if it would save members from the worry and anxiety of receiving innumerable applicants for positions in the public service. He did not wish to object to his constituents coming to him; on the contrary, he was always glad to assist those who had placed him in the honourable position he to-day occupied. Mr. COLLINS (Christchurch City) would support the amendment. He did not question the efficiency of the officer, but they had just passed a salary of £800 for him, and he did not think they should be asked for this extra £50. There was no use of comparing this colony with New South Wales in a matter of this kind; the latter was larger and more populous, and could afford to pay larger salaries. He did not know exactly what duties attached to the office of Registrar of Consols, but they could not be very onerous. Mr. HORNSBY (Wairarapa) said the colony might or might not be in a position to pay large salaries of this kind, but where were they going to stop? He would vote for the amendment. Mr. SEDDON said they must take into consideration the ability of the colony to pay. In 1886-87 the salary for this same office was £850 a year. The class of work done now and the amount of responsibility as compared with the state of things then was worth a salary of \$1,000. There were officers who had not the same responsibility and who had not been so long in the service, and they were drawing £200 and \$300 a year more. Seeing that they had already, by a majority of five, practically agreed to the increase of this officer's salary by £50, to take off that increase in another way now would be wrong. Mr. PIRANI (Palmerston) said that in 1892, which was five years after the time referred to by the Premier, the salary paid to this officer was £650, so that there had been an increase of \$200 in his salary since 1892. He would guarantee there were no other officers in the service who had got an increase of £200 since Mr. COLLINS (Christchurch City) did not think the arguments of the Premier were conclusive in this matter. The fact that in 1887 \$4150 was paid for this office was no reason why they should be paying the same

amount now. Their revenue might be greater, but every year the demands were growing. In these estimates almost every officer had his salary increased, and the greatest increases were in the higher salaries. Never before had the estimates been subjected to so close a scrutiny as they had close scrutiny disclosed the fact that, year after year, these high salaries were being increased. And where was it to stop ? . Members knew how difficult it was to get the salaries of the messengers or the lower officials increased, and, in his opinion, these increases ought to work up from the bottom instead of commencing at the top. The Committee divided on the question, "That the item be struck out." AYES, 19. Atkinson Hornsby Symes Bollard Tanner Massey Ell Meredith Thomson, J. W. Gilfedder Monk Tellers. Graham Parata Haselden Russell, G. W. Collins Herries Pirani. Smith, G. J. NOES, 26. Allen, E. G. Fraser, A. L. D. Mills Napier Barclay Fraser, W. Hall O'Meara Bennet Hall-Jones Carncross Seddon Carroll Heke Thompson, R. Colvin Kaihau Ward. Field McGowan Tellers. Fisher McKenzie, R. Lawry Fowlds McLachlan Wilford. Majority against, 7. Item retained. Vote, £10,869, agreed to. Progress reported. The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes to one o'clock a.m. #