

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said there was also an encampment held at Champion Bay, as well as down here, and this amount was intended to cover the cost of the two encampments.

The vote was then agreed to. Progress reported, and leave given to sit again next day.

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Tuesday, 20th March, 1888.

Water-borer for Yilgarn—Completion of Vasse Jetty—Estimates (Revised), 1888: further consideration—Victoria Public Library Bill: second reading.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at noon.

PRAYERS.

DELAY IN SENDING WATER-BORER TO YILGARN.

MR. SHENTON, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works what was the cause of the delay in forwarding the water-borer to Yilgarn?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said the cause of the delay was the action of the Northam, Newcastle, and York Districts Roads Boards. He had met the Newcastle Board on Saturday week, and they agreed that they would see the Northam and York people with a view to seeing to what extent they would be inclined to go in assisting to get a water supply for Yilgarn. It had been stated that the Newcastle people would subscribe £75 and the York people £300

towards this work. After a delay, it was not until Friday that he had received a telegram stating that none of the Roads Boards would co-operate in the slightest degree in the matter. The borer had been ready for the last ten days, and as the Boards were not prepared to make use of it, the Government had now sent the borer off to the fields.

COMPLETION OF VASSE JETTY.

MR. LAYMAN, in accordance with notice, moved that an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that the sum of £400 be placed upon the Estimates for 1888, for the purpose of completing the construction of the Vasse jetty, now remaining in an unfinished and comparatively useless state. The hon. member said the jetty had cost the colony some thousands of pounds, but was in a great measure of no practical utility; and the expenditure of a few hundreds, as now proposed, would make it one of the most useful structures of the sort in the colony, outside Fremantle or Albany. Therefore he thought it would be wise economy for the House to affirm this resolution, and for the Government to give effect to it. Probably the proposal might be met with the objection that there were no funds; but he thought himself that funds might be provided for such a work as this. Until this jetty was finished, by having a head put to it, it could never serve any purpose of practical utility; therefore, he hoped he should have the support, not only of the Government, but also of the elected members.

CAPTAIN FAWCETT seconded the motion.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the Vasse had many blessings—a glorious climate, a fertile soil, calm water, and a most elegant jetty, for the purpose of promenade and the enjoyment of the sea breeze. So far he was not aware that the trade of the Vasse had ever suffered by reason of the fact that this jetty had not been taken into deeper water. The hon. member must see that there were other claims upon the Government at the present moment which must be regarded as superior to those of the Vasse jetty, upon which, as the hon. member had said, thousands of

pounds had already been spent. He only wished we had a full purse, as we had some two or three years ago, into which we could dip, and supply the various wants of the country; but, unfortunately, the public purse was not like the purse of Fortunatus; and, as hon. members were aware, we had little or nothing left in it at the present moment for such objects as these, and the Government had to be very careful—what some hon. members considered unreasonably careful. He was afraid, even if the hon. member were to carry his motion, there was not much probability that the necessary funds would be forthcoming, there being so many other obligations which the House would wish to see fulfilled. Certainly the claims of this jetty could not take a foremost rank, and, looking at the straightened state of our finances, he hoped the hon. member would see the futility of pressing his motion, at the present time.

MR. PARKER said that in the course of his studies as a marine engineer he had ascertained the fact that it was useless to project a jetty into the sea, unless you provided means for vessels to lie alongside. They had a most handsome marine structure at the Vasse, running about half-a-mile into the sea, into water which was deep enough for the coasting steamers to come alongside, but unfortunately, this jetty had no head to it, and consequently it was useless. He had been informed by the captain of the *Rob Roy* that the sole reason why the steamers did not go alongside the Vasse jetty was this want of a head, for mooring purposes. Therefore, they had a structure which had cost the colony about £4,000 absolutely useless for the want of an expenditure of some £400. If it was at all possible to provide the necessary funds, he hoped that in justice to the trade of the district and the development of that trade, and also in justice to passengers by the steamers, this work would be taken in hand.

MR. SHENTON thought that, out of the £1,000 which had been struck off the vote for the supervision of land grant railways, a sum sufficient to carry out this very necessary work might be provided. He could speak of his own knowledge that the jetty was now simply use-

less for shipping purposes, owing to its having no head, for a berthing place.

MR. SHOLL thought this was a very reasonable request, under the circumstances, the jetty being of no use unless vessels could go alongside it without difficulty and waste of time. But it was only the same old cry, over and over again,—“no funds.” He thought the Government having spent so much money in the construction of this jetty, it would be wise economy to spend a few hundreds more to make it of some practical use.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said this was a very old question. When the £2,000 was voted on the Loan Estimates for the extension of this jetty, he stated that it would require at least £5,000 to carry the jetty into 19ft. of water, which was the depth required to enable the steamers or timber vessels to load alongside, and that it would be useless spending £2,000 upon it, because there would be no head for steamers to moor themselves. The hon. member for the district, however, carried his point, and got his £2,000, stating that, if they got the jetty extended they wouldn't want a head for it at all, at present. Now it appeared that after the expenditure of this £2,000 the jetty was still useless, as he had predicted it would be. When the hon. member, some two years ago, asked him a question on the subject, he then stated that in order to carry the jetty into 19ft. of water it would cost close upon £5,000, and that with the amount voted we should not only not improve the accommodation but rather the reverse, as it was only sufficient to get further into a sand bank, which would have to be bridged over, to make the jetty of any practical use. He at the same time stated that if it was considered advisable to make the expenditure so far as the £2,000 would go, he was prepared to do so, but that he could hold out no hope of its being of any benefit to the jetty. Exactly what he had predicted had happened, and he could only repeat that to make this jetty of any practical use would require at least another £2,000. The amount mentioned in this address (£400) would be of no value whatever. You could not build a head that would be of any use at

all with it, and it would be so much more money sunk in the sea,—in fact it would rather serve to make matters worse than better. Far better wait until the colony was in a position to do the work properly and extend the jetty into deep water. It would be absurd to put a head on the present structure, and have to extend the jetty hereafter.

Mr. MARMION said if the hon. member who had brought forward the motion was in a position to show that the expenditure of this £400 would serve any useful purpose he might be able to carry the House with him. But, in the face of the statement made by the Director of Public Works it appeared to him it would be useless to spend this small sum. He thought it would be unwise and impolitic on the part of the hon. member to press his motion, if the amount asked for was insufficient: it would be better for him to wait until the colony could afford to carry out the work properly, in better times.

Mr. LAYMAN said he had been waiting a long time for these better times, and he was afraid he should have to wait a long time longer. As to steamers not being able to lie alongside the present jetty, he could inform the hon. gentleman that steamers had been alongside, more than once, and they found it advantageous to do so, even without a head. But in order to provide proper berthing accommodation a head was absolutely necessary. As to its requiring another £2,000 to make the jetty of any service, he could only say that it was the opinion of those who had been on the spot all their life time, and who understood the matter, that £400 would be sufficient to answer the purpose. He did not mean that it would be sufficient to make any fancy work of it, but sufficient to provide a substantial piece of work. He could not help thinking that building these jetties piecemeal was a mistake; sufficient funds ought to be provided to complete them at once. The first section of this jetty was built many years ago, and probably it would not last more than another twenty years, so that they would have one part of the jetty worn out while the other parts were in good condition. It had been said it would be better to wait until we had another loan. He

could not see any prospect of our getting another loan at present, and, another thing, when we did get one, we should have something to do with it other than undertake a small work like this. He had hoped to see this small amount granted, which he was quite convinced in his own mind would be sufficient to make a very useful structure of the jetty, quite ample for our present requirements and perhaps for the next hundred years.

Mr. RICHARDSON did not wish to injure the hon. member's chance of having his jetty properly completed, but was rather anxious to help him, and he believed that if the House was satisfied that this £400 would answer the purpose members would readily vote it, if it was possible to find the money. But he rather thought the hon. member was damaging his own cause. If, as the Director of Public Works said, it would cost £2,000 to take the jetty into deep water and render it a really useful structure, it appeared to him that to attempt to put a head on it now, before the jetty was completed would really injure the object which the hon. member had in view. He thought the hon. member had better pause, and see whether he was not standing in his own light. He agreed with him that this jetty ought to be completed. They had heard a great deal about discouraging the importation of potatoes and other produce from other countries; and it was acknowledged that this Vasse district was capable of producing any quantity of potatoes. But one of the first necessities for stimulating the local trade was to provide facilities for placing local produce on board the steamers, and to do this conveniences must be provided for vessels to come alongside the jetty. But, in the face of what the Director of Public Works said, that to do this would cost at least £2,000, he thought it would be very injudicious policy to vote this £400 to commence putting a head on the jetty, before they constructed the whole of its body.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said he would gladly withdraw his opposition to the expenditure of this £400, provided the hon. member for the district was satisfied, as he said he was, that the jetty would not require anything further done to it for the next hundred years. It

would be a saving actually in printing, to have done with this jetty for a hundred years.

The motion, upon being put, was negatived.

ESTIMATES, 1888.

The House went into committee for the further consideration of the Estimates.

Postal and Telegraph Department, £39,359 Os. 1d. :

MR. SHENTON said he observed that there was no reduction in this establishment, but rather an increase, although the sum asked for this year was about £3,000 less than the vote for last year. But this was made up by a reduction in the amount asked for the repairs of telegraph lines. It seemed to require an enormous expense to maintain this establishment, and he would ask the Colonial Secretary whether the estimate had been carefully considered. He thought the committee would like some information on the subject, before agreeing to this huge vote.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said that the most careful consideration had been given to this department. It was particularly noticed when the advance vote was taken, and the remarks then made by hon. members had had great weight with him and with the head of the department; and an earnest endeavor had been made to reduce the expenditure on every item, consistently with keeping up the efficiency of the department. Hon. members were aware that the business of the post office was increasing every year. If they looked at the revenue side, they would see that the anticipated receipts for the current year were considerably in excess of the receipts for any past year. Hon. members would see that there were many charges in connection with this department which might reasonably be considered to be outside the proper working of the department. It might be desirable that they should not too hastily consider the sum total of the vote now asked for, inasmuch as it might be deemed desirable to come to other conclusions as regards some of the details. If they looked at the revenue for 1887 they would see that the actual revenue received in

respect of postages and commission on money orders was nearly £2,300 less than the estimated revenue for this year; and he might say that the present head of the department had most closely estimated the probable receipts, and most carefully reviewed the operations of the department in the past, with the view to economising the expenditure, and to reduce, as far as possible, the heavy charge which this department entailed upon the public revenue. But he could not imagine that any advantageous reductions could be made in what he might call the executive or internal branches of the department, by reason of the fact that he was not aware that a single officer now on the strength of the department could be dispensed with, without the public convenience being made to suffer. The ramifications of the department, as shown on the Estimates, extended in every direction, and they had a post office not only in every small hamlet, but, in some instances, they brought these post offices to the very doors of individual settlers, and they became mere family affairs. These institutions had grown up under the fostering care and protection of that House, and they had blossomed to the results that were now before them. As he had already said, wherever there were two or three gathered together, there they would find a post office. The same applied, in a like ratio comparatively, to the telegraph branch of the department. They had telegraph stations all over the colony, many of them yielding very little revenue. For instance there was a telegraph station at a small place called Mandurah, that had been worked for about fourteen months, at a cost of nearly £100, and the receipts received from that branch office was, he believed, something like £1 a month. At Gingin, again, the cost was about the same as at Mandurah, and, though the receipts were a little better, they did not amount to more than £3 a month. There were many others of these little country stations which were maintained at a serious loss to the country, places where they also had postal communication, also at the expense of the country. In the past this department, both in its postal and telegraph branches, was kept up for the convenience of the public, and the public had to pay for it. It was main-

tained at the very lowest scale, compatible with the convenience it afforded. With regard to the cost of working the telegraph department, there was one point which he thought it desirable to remind the committee of. The department had, at its own expense as it were, without making a charge for it, worked the telegraph system in connection with every branch of the public service; that was to say, if the telegrams sent on public service were charged for, at the ordinary rates, the receipts would amount to nearly £4,000 a year. Other departments of the service—it would be invidious were he to single them out—most carefully surcharged every service they did to any other department. But, in the telegraph department, no charge was made against the other departments of the service for the work it did for them. If the department was paid for this work its revenue would, as he had already said, amount to about £4,000 a year more than at present. This was a point that should not be lost sight of, and, as the head of the department had no seat in the House, he had thought it was only right that he should have reminded the House of it. Again, with regard to the postal service. That service, too, was carried on for all the other departments of the Government free of charge. Passing on to the mail services of the colony he thought it was only right that he should draw the attention of the committee to certain facts, although some of these facts might be within the knowledge of hon. members. In the first place there was the very large item of £10,858 for the conveyance of inland mails. These mails were conveyed by private persons at contract rates, or worked by the Government. The inland mails worked by the Government cost £5,658—this was the Royal Mail service; and the mails conveyed by contract cost £5,200 a year. With regard to the former, hon. members were aware that some ten years ago, three services were established and worked by the Government at public expense—one to Albany, one to the Eastern Districts and one to the Southern Districts. Since that time the opening of railway communication between Perth and the Eastern Districts had enabled the Government to do away with the Royal Mail service to

those districts; and the approaching completion of the Beverley-Albany railway would enable them to make arrangements by which the expense of the overland mail service to and from Albany would be considerably reduced. Coaches would have to be kept up to maintain communication with certain points of the railway until the end of the current year; but, while on the one hand the expense would not be increased under the new arrangement, the facilities and convenience to the public would be considerably enhanced. Communication with Albany would then, he trusted, be twice a week, and maintained at no greater cost to the colony than the present fortnightly service. All this, it might be said, was very satisfactory. But there was another inland mail service,—the service to the Southern Districts, to which he wished to invite the attention of the committee. This service was at present worked by the Government, under the arrangement established some ten years ago, and it was worked at a loss of about £2,000 a year. The cost of the service between here and Bunbury and the Vasse amounted to nearly £3,000 a year, and all the Government received from the public in return for the conveyance of mails, passengers, and parcels was slightly over one-third of that amount. The Government, realising this fact, and with a desire to effect economy in every direction, had, in his opinion, rightly called for tenders for the performance of a mail service between Perth and the Southern Districts,—alternative tenders for a service once a week, and for a service twice a week. Hon. members must be aware that we had got frightfully extravagant and luxurious in our notions of late years in many matters, and in nothing more so, he thought, than in connection with our postal and telegraphic services, which, as he had already said, were maintained at a great loss to the revenue. When they came to consider the question of retrenchment, it was not by any wholesale demolition of services that they should attempt to attain that object, but by a gradual curtailment of expenditure where such curtailment might be effected without much inconvenience to the public. Had he been in a position to do so, without

seriously inconveniencing the public, he should have liked by one stroke of the pen to have effected many retrenchments in this portion of the public service which he felt perfectly certain were warrantable. But he had been unable to do so, being held in by agreements and contracts already in force, and which could not be withdrawn, without the assent of that House. However, it must be apparent that we could not continue these extravagancies for ever. These mail services were established at a time when we had little or no communication by rail or by steamboat. At that time the steamers only called at the Southern ports once a month or so, whereas now there were steamers running up and down the coast weekly—he might almost say daily. He therefore maintained that the time had arrived for economising the expenditure in connection with these inland mail services, and, although the committee was now asked to make provision on the same scale as at present, until the end of the current year, it would be his duty, and he should make it his duty and an obligation—if necessarily it was forced upon him—to reduce, and largely reduce, these large votes that had been granted in the past for the maintenance of the inland mails throughout the colony. With regard to the conveyance of foreign mails, for which a sum of £5,000 was here asked, a very advantageous arrangement for this colony had been made under the new contract with the “P. & O.” and the “Orient” companies, for the conveyance of our sea-borne mails. He was not aware that it was necessary that he should enter at the present moment into the details of that arrangement; he trusted the results of it would be made apparent at another session of the Council. Although the sum asked for appeared large, he fully anticipated, if God spared him, being able to show the House next session that material savings might be effected in the future, under the new contract entered into. The other evening a question was asked with regard to the goldfield mail service in the Kimberley district. This service had been conducted at a very heavy expense to the colony for some time past. The estimated cost of the service, under the provisions under

which it was started, was no less than £1,500 a year, and when he informed the committee that, according to the latest information reported to him, the number of residents on these goldfields was only 167, hon. members would see that it cost the country annually about £9 each for transporting the letters of these residents monthly. They all knew the difficulties which the mail service in that district had to contend with, and they all wished those difficulties were removed. He was sure there was not a member of that committee who would not join him in the hope that the development of these Kimberley goldfields might be such, in the near future, that we might expect to have daily communication between them and the coast by rail. But, in the meantime, it could not be considered fair nor just, in the present condition of the fields and the small number of residents, that the whole colony should be taxed to the extent of this large amount for the conveyance of their mails, more especially as steps were now being taken to extend telegraphic communication to these goldfields. A proposal had been made, which, however, could not be entered into until the termination of the first half of this year, for the reason that communication was unfrequent, and it was impossible to disintegrate the service already established; but a proposal, which was now included in the vote here asked for, under the head of “Goldfields mail service,” was that a sum of £600 shall be paid for a police patrol service, instead of the present extravagant mail service, at a cost of £1,500 a year. The mails under the new arrangement would not be delivered so frequently, but they would be delivered with periodical regularity, both from Derby and Wyndham; and he could not but think that in the present straitened state of our finances, hon. members would agree that the Government were not justified in asking for such a large sum as £125 a month for a mail service to these goldfields, with their present sparse population of 167 souls, more especially, as he had already pointed out, when the country was committed to a very large expenditure in providing telegraph communication with the fields, both from Derby and Wyndham. He did not think any hon. member would wish to see them burning the

candle at both ends, and that whilst on the one hand they were about to expend tens of thousands in establishing a through telegraph service, for this small population, they should also expend a large sum in maintaining a postal service, at the expense of the country. If hon. members wished for any further information with regard to the working of the Postal and Telegraph Department—a department in which the public were probably more deeply concerned than in any other branch of the administration—he should be happy to furnish it, with the means at his command.

MR. SHENTON said he had listened with much attention and interest to the information supplied them by the Colonial Secretary, and he was glad that he had elicited this information. He noticed in going through the Estimates for this department that as regards several items of expenditure there was an increase upon the amount voted last year. He could not understand why there should be these increases, in the face of the desire that had been expressed for retrenchment in every department of the public service. Although the head of the department, with some flourish of trumpets, said he would be able to increase the hours of service, and the public facilities, without increasing the expenditure, they found that in the Estimates now laid before them the Government asked for an increase of salaries, in the Perth establishment alone, amounting to £700. This was a large amount, and he could hardly understand it, in the face of the desire for retrenchment. He was quite willing to admit that they had received greater facilities of late at Perth as regards their letters, but they had anticipated these increased facilities without having to pay this large price for them. If his memory served him correctly, one of the advantages which they had been led to expect from the duplication of the Albany line would be the saving of expense, but the Estimates now before them did not disclose any saving, but, on the contrary a very considerable increase, both in the postal and telegraph branches, especially at the head office. He also noticed that £1,700 was asked for telegraph repairs. This was a large amount, seeing that out of last year's vote a sum of £1,322 had been carried to Suspense

Account, and he thought the committee ought to have some explanation as to how it was proposed to expend so much as £3,000 in telegraph repairs. There was also an increase of £200 in the vote for the maintenance of stations on the Roebourne-Derby telegraph line, which he should like some explanation of. He agreed with much that had been said by the Colonial Secretary as to the enormous cost of the mail and telegraph service to the colony. He thought people in the country districts might well be satisfied with fewer mails, especially when they had also had the telegraph. At present, as the Colonial Secretary had said, we were burning the candle at both ends. He thought, with the Colonial Secretary, that the Legislature must sooner or later reduce this expenditure, in districts possessing telegraph communication. He would give every facility, commensurate with the means of the colony, to outlying districts beyond the reach of the telegraph, in the way of postal communication. He was glad to hear that it was expected that before the end of the current year the mails to Albany would be conveyed to a great extent by the Southern Railway, and he would suggest that pending the completion of the line, and through communication being established, that the gaps be covered by means of a light cart, for the conveyance of letters, leaving newspapers and the heavier portion of the mails to follow by another conveyance. This arrangement would reduce the cost of maintaining the Royal Mail service. With regard to the Bunbury and Vasse service, he had always considered it an expensive luxury, seeing that telegraphic communication existed between here and those districts, and the frequent communication by steamer. Regard being had to the number of people served, he thought the cost of this mail service was extravagant. He agreed also with the Colonial Secretary that the present cost of the conveyance of mails to the Kimberley goldfields was most excessive, when they were told that the whole population served by this service did not number more than 160 or 170. In addition to the cost of the mail service, he noticed under the head of "Police," an item of £1,700, which included the transport of rations for these goldfields.

It appeared to him that the expenditure in this part of the colony was something enormous.

MR. VENN said it was very refreshing to hear the hon. member for Toodyay haranguing about the extravagance of the cost of the mail service in the country districts. The hon. member was no doubt an authority on many matters, but he was no great authority, in his (Mr. Venn's) opinion, as to the requirements of the Southern Districts in the way of mail services, nor had the hon. member evidently much sympathy with the settlers of those districts. He had been surprised, himself, to hear the speech they had just listened to from the head of the Government; it was not worthy of the hon. gentleman in any way whatever, and, for his own part, he had felt very indignant in listening to it. One would think that the hon. gentleman was altogether opposed to the settlement of the country, and prepared to do all he could to obstruct it, by depriving the settlers of the only little conveniences they had to connect them with the centres of civilisation. If they deprived the settlers of their mail services, they severed the only link that kept them in touch with the metropolis; and he had been surprised and pained to listen to the hon. gentleman's remarks on this subject. As to the population of the Southern Districts and the proportionate cost of the mail service, he did not think the hon. member for Toodyay knew what he was talking about. Taking the population of the Canning, and all along to the Vasse, and comparing it with the population of the York and Beverley Districts, and calculating the cost of maintaining railway communication with those districts as compared with the cost of the Southern Districts mail service, he thought the comparison was altogether in favor of the latter, which served a population of about 5,000 or 6,000. Yet the cost to the country did not exceed £2,000 a year—a meagre, paltry sum compared with the convenience afforded to the public. The Government, it was said, now proposed to abolish the present mail service, and let it by contract, which the Colonial Secretary expected would save the country a large sum of money. If so, all he could say was there must have been gross mis-

management somewhere, and it was a right down scandalous disgrace to the Government. As to the steamers, what benefit were the steamers to the settlers residing in the country? They only carried mails and passengers from one port to another. They did not serve the convenience of the people residing all along the intervening country, the producing districts, in any way. The hon. member for Toodyay stated that where there was telegraph communication there was no necessity for a mail service. Of what use was the telegraph to the settlers between Perth and Pinjarrah, and, again, all the way between Pinjarrah and Bunbury, where there were no intervening stations? What benefit was it to the Bridgetown settlers to see a telegraph wire running through their district? None whatever; and, if the Government were going to deprive country people of their mails, of what use was it for the Commissioner of Crown Lands to talk about opening up agricultural areas? Did he expect people to take up selections in these areas, if they were to have no postal facilities or means of communication with the centres of population. If this was the policy which the Government had in view, the sooner people left the colony the better. If they could not afford to let them have these little conveniences of civilisation, then Western Australia must be in a very poor state indeed. He should have been ashamed, if he had been at the head of the Government, to have delivered such a speech. Then again as to the Albany mail service—what about the settlers who would be in no way served by the railway? Were they going to completely shut out these people from the benefit of mail communication? What benefit or advantage would it be to all these people to know that the citizens of Perth were able to get their mails twice a week? He thought it was absolutely incumbent upon the Government to consider the wants of these outlying settlers. As to the cost of maintaining some of these country post offices and telegraph offices, he thought it was unfair to quote a little outside place like Mandurah or Gingin. It was never expected that these little country places would pay; the object in view was to afford these pioneers some little advantages which

were enjoyed by the inhabitants of more populous centres. In districts which were served by a railway, he could quite understand the necessity for retrenchment, but, in districts which depended entirely upon these mail coaches for means of conveyance, he was certain of this: that if the Government contemplated any severe retrenchment, it would create a very bad feeling in the country, and people would be disgusted with the colony. He hoped the Government would not accept any contract for the Southern Districts mail service that did not provide the same conveniences for the public, both as regards travelling and the conveyance of the mails, as were now provided. This contract system was tried some years ago, and it had to be abandoned, and he should be sorry to see any attempt made to revert to it. The Government were now conducting this service with credit to themselves, and great convenience to the people of the district; and the public would have great cause for complaint if this convenience were curtailed.

MR. SHENTON said as to the population of the Southern Districts comparing in number with the population of the Eastern Districts, he found on reference to the census for last year that the total population of the Southern Districts—including the Murray, Sussex, and Wellington Districts—was only 3,950, whereas in the Eastern Districts they had between 5,000 and 6,000.

MR. VENN: And what does it cost the colony to provide those districts with railway communication?

MR. SHENTON said the saving effected by the abolition of the Royal Mail service went a great way towards the cost of the maintenance of the railway.

MR. LAYMAN expressed his surprise at the attitude of the hon. member for Toodyay in this matter; he thought the hon. member was altogether astray on this occasion. The hon. member cavilled at the few hundred pounds which this mail service cost the colony, but he overlooked what the railway service in other districts cost the colony. If the people in the Southern districts had the same railway facilities as other districts had, they would not require this mail coach

service. What did the Royal Mail service to York cost the country before they had a railway? A great deal more than the Southern service.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): The hon. member is wrong. The Eastern Districts service always paid its expenses, but the Southern Districts service has always been run at a loss, and was so still—a great loss.

MR. LAYMAN said he could not understand that. The Colonial Secretary had told them that afternoon that the Government endeavored to carry a mail service to everyone's door. He did not think that applied to the Southern districts at any rate. The hon. gentleman must have had the Northern districts in his eye. Whatever the members for the North asked for they got, not only as regards mail services, but everything else; and he thought himself the Government had made some ridiculous concessions to the Northern districts of the colony. He thought if the Government intended to cut off the little convenience afforded by the present mail service to the people of the South it would be most unfair to the residents of that part of the colony, and he hoped they would pause before doing so.

MR. RICHARDSON said the reason why the Northern districts got what they asked for was because they were so modest in their requests. At the same time he thought it would be an unwise policy of retrenchment to deprive the settlers of the Southern districts of their present mail service. The steamers did not in any way fulfil the object of this overland mail service. They simply connected the two ends; and the intermediate portions of the country were not served by the steamers at all, which afforded no convenience to the settlers in the interior. He thought these settlers would have cause of complaint, and consider that their lines had fallen in very unpleasant places, if they found they could not get their letters delivered to them, as at present. Even according to the figures of the hon. member for Toodyay the population of these districts amounted to about one-tenth of the whole population of the colony, and it was a

most scattered population, deprived of any railway communication; and, if the colony could not afford to give them this mail service, the colony must be in a very poor state indeed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said it was not the mail service that they intended to do away with, but those magnificent four-in-hand coaches that went prancing and careering through this half-deserted country twice a week, to the envy of every other district, picking up a pound of butter here and another pound of butter there for conveyance to the metropolis. It was not proposed to demolish the mail service, but simply to call for tenders, and afford the settlers of the district an opportunity of earning an honest livelihood, by carrying the mails, which they might do with a pair of active horses and a buggy. In this way a great saving would be effected to the colony.

CAPTAIN FAWCETT said it was not a pound of butter here and a pound of butter there that these mail coaches carried. As a rule the coach was overladen, and goods had often to be left on the road for two or three weeks before they could be taken on. He thought it would be a great mistake to discontinue the present service. To his mind, instead of the mail coach running twice a week, it ought to run three times a week; it would not make much difference in the cost. He could assure hon. members that the arrival of these coaches at Pinjarrah was quite an exciting event—about the only excitement which the residents had; and he thought it was paltry to propose to reduce the conveniences which they afforded to the travelling public. If the service did not pay it was the fault of the Government; they ought to have better horses, and see that they were better fed and looked after, and that better accommodation was provided for passengers. The people of the Southern Districts had to pay their share towards the cost of keeping up the railways in the other parts of the colony, and why should they be deprived of their mail coach, which was their only means of conveyance, even although it did cost the country a few hundreds a year. He thought it would create a very bad feeling indeed, if this service were abolished and

an indifferent one substituted in its place, affording little or no convenience to the settlers.

MR. A. FORREST thought the Government should not make any sweeping changes in the present mail arrangements until they were in a position to remodel the whole service, when the Southern Railway was completed. As to the goldfields service, they all knew that the arrangement when first entered into by the Government, before the success of the goldfields had been assured, was regarded as an extravagant arrangement; but, now, when it was acknowledged that the goldfields were a success, and they showed their faith in them by constructing a telegraph line to them at a cost of some £60,000, it did seem absurd to talk of cutting down the paltry vote for a mail service. He thought it would be a mistake to do so, and he was sure it would be a hardship. There were a large number of people going there now, and a large amount of capital was invested there, and these people naturally expected to be able to get their mails. The Colonial Secretary had told them that the population of the district only numbered 167—

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): I said on the goldfields.

MR. A. FORREST said he was credibly informed that the population of the district was not less than 2,000, while the number of sheep in the district was close upon 100,000, and the number of cattle about 20,000. He thought it was a wrong policy to cut down the mail services in any portion of the colony. Country people naturally looked forward to these little conveniences, and, so long as the public were prepared to pay for them, he did not see why they should be deprived of them.

MR. SHOLL said he was not in favor of cutting down the mail services, more especially in the outlying districts, where he thought every facility should be given to the settlers, even although it did cost the revenue something. They found settlers and miners, as the case might be, going into the interior, trying to develop the country; and it was to the interest of the country that regular communication should be kept up between these outlying

settlements and the centres of population. He would point out that these mail services were not kept up for the convenience of the settlers in the country alone, but also for the convenience of their correspondents in town. He failed to see why the Government should wish to cut off the mail services in these outlying settlements, when no such spirit of economy guided them as regards mail conveniences nearer the centres of population. For instance, he was informed that there was a mail once a week to Grove Farm, just for the convenience of one family, and that a little further on there was a mail to another homestead—both places being close to a township. But, in some of our outlying settlements, people had to ride 50 miles for their letters, and were glad to do so. Surely we could afford to keep up the present mail services in these outlying districts.

MR. MARMION said the reason of the heavy cost of the Southern mail service was the amount of coaching done. He did not see why coaching should come under the head of mails at all. Personally, he was an advocate for telegraphs, mails, and railways, to every place where they were required; he did not care whether they paid directly or not, for he believed they would pay indirectly. But as regards this Southern mail service he did not see why the postal department should keep a 4-horse coach, when the mails might be carried possibly by a pack horse, or at any rate a light vehicle, and the cost very considerably reduced. If coaching was required let the business be done by private enterprise; he did not see why they should call upon the Government to embark in the stage coach business.

MR. LAYMAN said it must be borne in mind that the expenditure incurred in connection with this Southern mail service was not for the benefit of the Southern districts alone. By rights, only one half of it ought to be charged to these districts, and the remainder to the residents of the towns, who kept up a correspondence with them. He thought it would be found that a great many more letters and papers passed between here and the Southern districts than between here and the Eastern districts.

MR. A. FORREST asked what pro-

vision had been made for providing telegraph operators on the line between Roebourne and Derby, the contract for which expired on the 31st instant,—and they had been told by the Director of Public Works that there was no reason to suppose that the line would not be completed within contract time.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said he consulted those who ought to know what provision it would be necessary to make in connection with the line referred to, and the result of his investigation had led him to the conclusion that the requirements of the case would be met out of the item "Maintenance of Stations on Roebourne-Derby telegraph line, £700."

MR. MARMION said it was no use shutting their eyes to the fact that this line would not be opened for months yet, or probably this year; and, as it was a matter of the utmost importance that the line should be opened as soon as possible, he hoped the whole thing would be looked into very closely, and that if there had been any gross carelessness or negligence on the part of the contractor, the penalty would be enforced.

MR. SHENTON, referring to the item "Telegraph lines, repairs, £1,700," said he found on reference to the Suspense Account that there was an unexpended balance, on the 1st of January, of £1,302 from the vote for last year, which surely ought to be sufficient for the requirements of the current year, without this fresh vote. We had just duplicated the line to Albany, and there was not likely to be any great expenditure required on that line. In addition to this item for repairs, we were paying the salaries of 16 linemen, which made the cost of keeping these lines in repair something enormous. It appeared to him that this estimate altogether had been framed on a most extravagant scale, and a great deal more so than the colony could afford at the present time.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the hon. member was perfectly right in his facts, but perfectly wrong in his supposition; he was right as to the amount carried to Suspense Account but wrong in supposing that this amount would be sufficient for the upkeep and repairs of the telegraph lines

during the current year. Unless these lines were maintained in good working order they simply became useless.

MR. SCOTT said the Colonial Secretary himself was evidently of opinion that the cost of inland mail services was extravagant; if so, why should they not take the present opportunity of reducing the vote? He did not think any member wished to curtail the conveniences now afforded the settlers as regards the actual conveyance of their mails; the desire of the House was to provide them with these conveniences as economically as possible. In order to do that, it surely was not necessary that we should keep up a coaching establishment, and send the country settlers their letters in a spanking four-in-hand team, at a cost to the colony of £2,000 a year. He thought this might be done for much less, and he would move that the item "Conveyance of Inland Mails, £10,858 9s.," be reduced by £1,858 9s. Unless we endeavored to economise where economy was practicable, we should find ourselves at the end of the year in a worse position financially than at present; not because the material condition of the colony would be worse, but in view of fresh liabilities which would probably have to be incurred in the development of the country's resources between this and then. He could clearly see that emergencies might arise in which it would be wise for us to provide for a larger surplus balance than was at present contemplated.

MR. SHOLL said he certainly could not support the amendment just proposed. If they cut down the mail services in one part of the colony they should do it in other parts as well; they could not fairly do otherwise. He thought it was really false economy to interfere with the working of the postal department, so as to cripple it.

MR. RICHARDSON thought it was the duty of the mover of the amendment to point out more specifically in what direction he proposed this reduction to take place, and state which particular mail service was to be crippled.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. C. N. Warton) said, fortunately for the committee, they had in this particular vote more particulars and details than

they had in any other vote on the Estimates. The cost of the inland mail service, it would be observed, was divided into two heads; a sum of £5,200 was required to meet the cost of the contract service, and £5,658 9s. was required for the Royal Mail service. Now it was evident that the proposed reduction must operate upon this latter sum, as the contract service could not be touched; and he would point out that it was a tremendous reduction to cut off £1,858 9s. from a vote of £5,658 9s., without indicating in what direction the reduction was to be made.

MR. A. FORREST did not think hon. members knew enough about this department to take a leap in the dark like this. They must cripple some portion of the inland mail service, and he thought they would be taking upon themselves a very serious responsibility in interfering with the conveyance of mails in this haphazard way.

MR. MARMION pointed out that some three years ago the Government had a proposal from Mr. Potter to take over these mail services, and the matter was brought before House, with the result that a resolution was adopted to the following effect: "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that arrangements should be made to conduct by contract the Perth, Bunbury, and Vasse mail service, for a term of five years, provided that the fair value of the horses and plant at present in use by the Government in connection with the said service can be procured, and that a considerable saving over present cost can thereby be effected, and that an efficient service be secured: tenders to be publicly called for the performance of the service" (*Hansard*, Vol. X., p. 284). It would be seen from this that less than three years ago the Government had power to deal with this mail service, and to call for tenders for the performance of the service—showing that there was a feeling on the part of the majority of hon. members, three years ago, that this mail service was being conducted at an extravagant cost, and that possibly a more economical service might be obtained, by contract.

On the motion of Mr. SHENTON, progress was reported; leave being given to sit again next day.

VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY BILL.

The motion for the second reading of this bill (*Vide p. 165 ante*) was agreed to, without discussion.

The House adjourned at half-past four o'clock, p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

Wednesday, 21st March, 1888.

Esperance Bay and Hampton Plains Railway—Warehouse Rent at Fremantle—Water Supply for Perth—Repair of Pensioners' Barracks at Perth—Expurgated paragraph in Governor's despatch to Secretary of State, re Responsible Government—Provisions to be introduced in Constitution Bill (Mr. Hensman's resolutions)—Aborigines Estimates, 1888—Immigration Estimates, 1888—Estimates (Revised), 1888: further consideration of—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

ESPERANCE BAY AND HAMPTON PLAINS RAILWAY.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, asked the Colonial Secretary if it was the intention of the Government to re-introduce the proposals made by Messrs. Stone and Burt, on behalf of an English syndicate, for the construction of a railway between Esperance Bay and Hampton Plains.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said that, in the earlier part of the present session, on the 4th January, the hon. member himself brought forward these proposals, which were negatived by the House.

WAREHOUSE RENT (CUSTOMS) FREMANTLE.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, asked the Colonial Secretary to lay on the table a return showing how the vote under the head of Contingencies, in the Customs Department, "Rent of Warehouses, £150," was spent,—to whom the amounts were paid, and for what purpose.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) laid the return asked for on the table.

WATER SUPPLY FOR THE CITY OF PERTH.

MR. PARKER, in accordance with notice, asked the Colonial Secretary whether the Government proposed to take any—and, if so, what—steps with a view of providing the city of Perth with an abundant supply of good water?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) replied: On the 18th August last the Council resolved to defer the whole question of Water Supply till the next session, and recommended that in the meantime the Government should place itself in communication with the Municipal Councils of Perth and Fremantle, so that those representative bodies might advise as to the best course to pursue. An address was presented accordingly to His Excellency, and the Municipal Councils communicated with; their replies have been placed on the table.

REPAIR OF PENSIONERS BARRACKS, PERTH.

MR. SHENTON asked the Director of Public Works whether it was the intention of the Government to repair the damage to the Police Barracks caused by the late fire?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said it was not the intention of the Government to spend any money on the building at present.