

## Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 21st December, 1891.

Resignation of Mr. Scott, Member for Perth—Separation of Telephone and Postal Departments—Message: Provision for the salary of a Third Judge—Boyanup-Minninup Railway: third reading—General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Boyanup-Busselton Railway: third reading—Game Bill: in committee—Sharks Bay Pearl Shell Fishery Bill: in committee—Settled Lands Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7:30 p.m.

## PRAYERS.

## RESIGNATION OF MR. SCOTT.

THE SPEAKER informed the House that since the adjournment he had received the resignation of Mr. Scott, the member for Perth, and, as the House was now in session, it was necessary that a resolution should be passed by the House, declaring the seat vacant, before he could issue a writ.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) gave notice that he would next day move a resolution declaring the seat vacant.

## SEPARATION OF THE TELEPHONE FROM THE POSTAL DEPARTMENT.

MR. QUINLAN: I beg to move, sir, the resolution standing in my name—"That, in the interests of the colony, and for the better conducting of the telephone service, it is desirable that the Telephone and Postal Departments should be separated." In support of the motion there are a few facts which I may as well state to the House, with the view of gaining the support which I feel my motion is worthy of. The fact is, the Telephone Department, as it is at present conducted, is a disgrace to the colony—(THE PREMIER: Oh, oh!)—and the onus of the blame for this unsatisfactory state of things now falls on the Postal Department, which I claim is one of the worst-paid and best-conducted services under the Government. Therefore I think that not only with the view of placing the telephone service on a better footing and remedying the existing evil, but also with the view of fixing the blame upon the right shoulders, we ought to separate the two departments, and see if we cannot get a telephone service that will be worthy of the colony instead of being a positive

disgrace to it, as it is now. It is notorious that to business men it is a complete nuisance; and the Government are answerable for no end of cursing and swearing, owing to the wretched way in which the service is conducted. You may ring for hours sometimes and get no satisfaction. To show that my charges are not without good foundation, if you want to learn anybody else's business or anybody's secrets, you have only to "get on" the telephone and keep your ear to it, and you will hear everything that passes through it. That is my experience, and I have no doubt that others who have the telephone on their premises will bear me out. If you wish it, you can hear everybody's business but your own; and this, I submit, shows a great carelessness in the system of working the service. I think it is only just that this important matter, about which one hears complaints every day, should be brought under the notice of this House and the Government, for I am sure the Government can scarcely be aware of the wretched state of things now existing, and I am sure it only requires to be brought to their notice to have it remedied. Therefore I trust that the wording of my motion will be carried out, and that they will make the Telephone Department an entirely separate service from the Postal and Telegraph Departments. I have not myself officially complained to the Postmaster General of the existing state of things, because I have heard of so many others complaining, and I thought I would use my opportunity in the right place, in this House, which I thought would be the best place for calling attention to the disgraceful conduct of this Telephone Department. It may be said that it is the instruments that are at fault, but we all know that most bad tradesmen blame their tools. I am not prepared to say whether the gentleman in charge of the Telephone Department is competent to fill the position; we shall be able to find that out better when the department is separated from the Postal Department, and this officer is on his own bottom. We shall then be in a position to put the blame on the right shoulders, instead of as at present on the shoulders of the Postal Department, a department which I claim is a credit to the colony. There are now, I believe, roughly speak-

ing, about 300 subscribers to the telephone, which at an average of £10 each means a revenue of £3,000 a year; and I feel confident that if the present state of things were improved, the number of subscribers would be doubled and the revenue correspondingly increased. People who would otherwise be ready to become subscribers are afraid of doing so now, because of the complaints they hear on all sides as to the way in which the service is worked. I trust that the members of the House will give my motion their support. I have not asked anyone to second it, but the evil complained of is so prominently before the eyes of members who have anything to do with the telephone that I trust they will show the Government that they consider the resolution a desirable one in the interests of the public.

MR. A. FORREST: I have much pleasure in seconding the motion. I will not go so far as the hon. member for West Perth in accusing the department, but I think that some alteration should be made, more especially in the working of the line between Perth and Fremantle. I do not think we have much cause to complain of the Perth service. Perhaps it may be a little inconvenient sometimes, but in the other colonies I think the inconvenience is more than it is here.

[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.] I have explained to the head of the department that what we want is some alteration in the service between here and Fremantle, which is certainly very unsatisfactory. For my own part, if I am in a hurry, I prefer to send telegrams, for if you ring up the telephone you are generally told that the line is engaged. I think if the Government would do something to improve the facilities for telephone communication between Perth and Fremantle, it might go a long way towards meeting the case. I think the Railway Department and the newspapers should have lines of their own, for I believe they keep the lines for hours now, and there is no chance of other people getting connected; and I hope the Government will take such action as may be necessary to give improved facilities for those who use the telephone between here and Fremantle. No doubt it would be better if at the head of the Telephone Department there was an officer specially devoted to that

service, but whether it would be better to separate the Department from the Postal and Telegraph Departments is another matter. In the other colonies the telephone is generally under the same official head as the postal and telegraph service, the Postmaster General being the officer responsible. I believe it is the same here; and, if the head of the department thinks any of the officers are unfit, I suppose he could get that changed. I believe myself that this officer has too much to do; it is impossible for a man to be travelling all over the colony, between here and Albany, and look after the Telephone Department as well.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): In regard to the motion before the House, I can only say that I do not think the separation of the two Departments would have the effect which the hon. member desires. Nor do I see any reason for separating them. They are not separate departments in any other colony of Australia that I know of; and it seems to me that the Telephone and the Telegraph and Postal Departments can be worked very well together,—certainly the Telephone and the Telegraph Departments. In this colony, as members are aware, they are under the official control of the Postmaster General, who exercises a general superintendence over these departments, but there is also a Superintendent of Telegraphs and Telephones, who, by statute, has the management of these two departments. Members know very well that the telephone is a very delicate and sensitive instrument, and being so is liable to get out of order. As for overhearing what other subscribers say now and then, I believe that is the case everywhere. It is impossible to have the wires so far separated as to avoid that occasionally. I use the telephone, I believe, more than anyone in this House, and I have no reason to complain. Sometimes there is a difficulty in "getting on" to the person you wish to speak to, but I very seldom have any great cause for complaint, and I use it daily, hourly, and at times very often in an hour. It may be said perhaps that I have facilities for keeping it in order which others have not; but I may say that I have not had to send for the instrument fitter for a month or two. When there are a great many people connected, and

many of them want to use the telephone at the same time, there must necessarily be some delay. I have used the telephone in London, and I know that our service here is far superior to what it is there, the reason I suppose being that the wires are more numerous there and the difficulties greater in keeping them apart. I believe that an extra fitter or two employed to look after the instruments more closely than at present would be an advantage, and I will take care that that want is supplied. As to the telephone being a "complete nuisance," and "a disgrace to the colony," I do not believe that that is the case.

MR. QUINLAN: I say it is.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): If the hon. member were to use the telephone in the other colonies or in London, he would find greater cause for complaint. Everywhere, in fact, there is the same complaint from some people about the telephone being a nuisance and not working well; but, as I have said, it is a very delicate instrument and soon gets out of order, and although it is a very necessary adjunct of our civilisation, it is occasionally no doubt a source of trouble and annoyance. But it is the same all over the world. The telephone between here and Fremantle is, I believe, a great trouble to subscribers; I have myself found it so. But that can be remedied by adding a new wire or two; and I will see what can be done in the matter. I had reason to expect that that would have been remedied before now. As to the Railway Department and the newspapers monopolising the line, the railway stations have their own separate wire; and so has the *Inquirer* newspaper. I have no doubt that other newspapers do use the line a great deal in obtaining their news. Everyone is very ready to complain if they cannot be put "on" at once, when they want to; but once they are put "on" they are in no hurry to give way to others; they do not care how long they keep others waiting. Where so many want to use the same wire, of course some delay and annoyance must arise. I can only promise the House this: I will take notice of what has been said, and see how far it can be remedied. I believe it can be remedied to some extent in the way I have indicated. As to any annoyance caused by the instru-

ments getting out of order, that can be remedied by having an extra fitter or two, and I will see that this is done.

MR. TRAYLEN: I can quite sympathise with the mover and the seconder of the resolution, and everyone who has to use the telephone must sympathise with them, because the difficulties in the way of its use are numerous, and they often crop up to our annoyance. The Premier was good enough to say that he occasionally found a difficulty in getting "on" to the person he wanted to communicate with; but the greater difficulty I find is to get "off." If having been put on to one subscriber, you want to speak to another directly afterwards, you are generally a long time before you succeed; if you ring, you only ring up the first one, time after time. That has been my experience. I would suggest to the Premier, if he will allow me to do so, that the circulation of some fresh regulations would very much help the subject under discussion. Many of the newer subscribers have no copy of the instructions that were supplied with the instruments in the first instance, and I believe this leads to confusion at the operating office. At the same time I think that we who do obey the instructions might have a little more attention paid to us than we sometimes do get.

Motion put and negatived.

#### MESSAGE: PROVISION FOR THE SALARY OF A THIRD JUDGE.

THE SPEAKER notified the receipt of the following Message from His Excellency the Administrator:—"In accordance with the requirements of section 67 of the Constitution Act, the Administrator recommends to the Assembly that an appropriation be made out of the consolidated revenue for the purposes of a Bill to apply the annual sum of £900 for the salary of an additional judge of the Supreme Court.—Government House, 21st December, 1891."

On the motion of THE COLONIAL TREASURER, the consideration of His Excellency's Message was made an Order of the Day for January 5th, 1892.

#### GAME BILL.

The House went into committee on this bill.

Clauses 1 to 3:

Agreed to without discussion.

Clause 4—Power to Governor to proclaim—(a) close season for native game; (b) reserves; (c) what game to be strictly preserved:

MR. DE HAMEL moved to add the following sub-clause to this section: "(d.) That for a period of four years, terminating on the 30th day of April, 1896, no kangaroo shall be coursed, shot or otherwise killed or destroyed in any portion of the colony South of an imaginary line running due East from Geraldton to the South Australian border." He said it was very generally felt down in the South, and he believed in most other parts of the colony, that the kangaroo was really being killed out, and that a very valuable article of food was being rapidly and ruthlessly destroyed for the sake of the skins, which at present realised a very high price; and it was felt that something ought to be done for the protection and preservation of this native game. One idea had been that we should have a close season for the kangaroo. He had given very great attention to this subject during the last two years, and had spoken to some of the oldest kangaroo hunters in the colony, and questioned them very closely indeed as to whether a close season for any part of the year would be likely to effect what was desired, namely the protection of the kangaroo. What he found from these old hunters was this—and he thought these facts would show members that a close season at present would not answer the purpose in view: it would not prevent the destruction of the kangaroo, or allow it to increase in number sufficiently—he found from the evidence, not of one but of several of these old hunters, that the young kangaroo formed actually on the teat itself, about the month of October; that they got off the teat about the month of February; that they remained in the pouch until August or September; and that after leaving the pouch, they continued suckling for another six months; so that a year elapsed before the young kangaroo was really able to look after itself. That being the case, it appeared that the mother was engaged all the year round in looking after her young; so that to declare a close season at present for one part of the year only, would not answer the purpose. What

was wanted was complete protection for a number of years, so that their numbers might have an opportunity of increasing. He proposed four years, but if the committee considered that was too long the period might be reduced to three years. The feeling for the protection of the kangaroo down South was very strong indeed, and he hoped members would not oppose this new sub-section.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said that as a rule laws were made to be perpetual, or at any rate not to answer merely for a short term, and then cease to operate. The effect of this sub-section would be that in May, 1896, we should have to make a new law again, as the proposed law would then have run its course. He thought that sub-section b would answer the purpose which the hon. member had in view. That section empowered the Governor at any time to declare reserves for native game in any part of the colony, and within those reserves no kangaroos could be shot or destroyed, nor any other native game specified in the proclamation. His objection to the proposed clause was that it was too wide in its application. It would be ridiculous—in fact, it would be almost worse than ridiculous—to think that within this immense territory people living in the bush should not be allowed to shoot a kangaroo. Many people used it as a source of food, and a very good source it was too; and it would be absurd to absolutely prohibit anyone killing a kangaroo in any part of the colony included within this imaginary line. He understood the main objection was to the wholesale slaughter of kangaroos for the sake of their skins, and he believed there had been an immense slaughter during the last few years. His hon. friend the member for the Williams told them the other day that over a million had been destroyed in his district. He was not prepared to say that this had been a very great loss to the country; these kangaroos eat as much grass as sheep, and perhaps more; and he had heard from many persons that the carrying capacity of the land in that district had very much improved in consequence of the destruction of these marsupials. He thought, however, there was no wish to see the kangaroo entirely exterminated, and he believed the power

given under sub-section *b* would answer every purpose. In any case, if the committee approved of the new clause, he trusted that some provision would be made so that people would not be prohibited from killing kangaroos for meat.

**MR. A. FORREST:** What about the natives?

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** Yes; that was another point. It would never do to prohibit the natives from killing a kangaroo.

**MR. DE HAMEL** said he would allow natives to kill.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest)** said the hon. member had better say so in his clause, or we should have natives arrested for providing themselves with a necessary article of subsistence.

**MR. PIESSE**, while anxious to see some measure introduced for the protection of the kangaroo, thought the proposed clause went too far. He thought people might be allowed to kill kangaroos for food. Although some good might perhaps ensue from the destruction of the kangaroo in some portions of the colony, he thought it would be a grievous pity to have it exterminated altogether. But if the present rate of destruction went on, as it had been going on for some years past, there would not be a kangaroo in some of the Southern portions of the colony in a short time. Probably if a reserve were declared under sub-section *b*, it might meet the case. He was afraid that to strictly carry out the provisions of the law would entail a large amount of police supervision, and, unless we had some reasonable and easily worked clause, he did not see how we were going to protect this game as we would wish to do.

**MR. CANNING** could not quite appreciate the distinction sought to be made between that part of the colony South of the imaginary line and that part North of it. The proposal of the hon. member of Albany did credit to his humanitarian feelings, and no doubt it might be said that the kangaroo was useful as meat, but not so much so, or generally so, as sheep; and it was known that thousands of sheep were sacrificed through the pasture consumed by these marsupials. As was known, in the other colonies they threatened at one time to become as great a pest as the rabbit, and

recourse was had to means of extirpating them that partook very much of the nature of dreadful butchery. Thousands and tens of thousands were driven into huge enclosures, and there destroyed. As for shooting kangaroos, there was no more inhumanity in shooting a kangaroo than in shooting any other game, and he did not see why any unnecessary restriction should be placed upon it. He thought the clause in the bill would be quite sufficient protection for the time being; his only fear was that, even with that amount of protection, these marsupials would increase very considerably, and he should certainly be opposed to having a close season declared for four years.

**MR. COOKWORTHY** thought that anyone acquainted with the settlers of the Southern districts, and especially the smaller ones, must know that the kangaroo was an article of food with them, and largely used; and if this amendment were made law they would suffer great hardship. There was not the slightest doubt that when the kangaroo got very scarce, people would not go to the trouble of organising expeditions for the purpose of hunting them. In the very nature of things, when they became few and far between, they would be left alone. Should they show any serious sign of diminution, this bill gave ample power to the Governor, by proclamation, to declare a close season, quite sufficient to prevent the extirpation of the kangaroo.

**MR. QUINLAN** said he did not know much about the Southern districts, but he knew that in the Eastern districts kangaroo hunting had caused much loss to settlers. These hunters did not stop at kangaroos, but also shot horses and cattle, which was a very serious matter to the squatters and farmers. Not only did they kill, but they allowed the carcasses to remain on the runs, which attracted a still greater pest in the shape of the native dog, which caused considerably more destruction of sheep than the kangaroo. He should like to see some provision introduced that, while to some extent preserving the kangaroo, still allowed farmers and also the aboriginal natives to kill them for food only, and not for their skins. He thought this would meet what was required in the interests of the colony; and to this ex-

tent he thought the kangaroo was worthy of protection.

MR. A. FORREST said that for many years the settlers had been trying to get rid of the kangaroo altogether on some stations—they had even been paying so much a head for killing them; and now that kangaroo skin was becoming valuable, they were asked to put a stop to destroying them at all, for four years, or, in other words, place the kangaroo in his old position, and let it become a nuisance. Everyone knew that these animals consumed as much grass as sheep, and he should imagine that even the hon. member for Albany must admit that sheep were more valuable to the colony than kangaroos. He would not be at all sorry himself to see the kangaroo exterminated altogether, but he should be very sorry to say the same about sheep. Although a considerable amount of revenue had been derived during the last few years from the exportation of kangaroo skins, he thought that the class of people, chiefly young men, who were engaged in that work would be more profitably, for the colony (though perhaps not for themselves), employed in some other industries. He thought it would answer every purpose if the Government declared reserves, as proposed in the bill; and he hoped the House would not listen to the hon. member for Albany's proposal, which, he was sure, would cause great dissatisfaction among a large number of people outside. No one would go so far as to stop the aboriginal natives from shooting kangaroos, and the result would be that the natives would be employed by the whites to do the same thing, and there would still be the same slaughter going on.

MR. PIESSE said as to the young men who were now engaged in kangaroo hunting, his desire was to see them engaged in other industries more beneficial to the colony, such as agricultural pursuits; and this was one of the objects in view in prohibiting the destruction of kangaroos, which would withdraw a number of these young men from kangaroo hunting and induce them to turn their attention to the cultivation of the soil and farming pursuits.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) thought that members, generally, would agree that the bill as it stood would

answer all necessary purposes. It gave ample power to the Governor to declare reserves in any part of the colony, for the protection of the kangaroo or any other native game; and if any hon. member made representations to the Governor on the subject, no doubt reserves would be made in that particular locality.

MR. HASSELL said that in the district which he represented, there was a large area of land over which the kangaroo was amply protected by the nature of the country, which was too thickly timbered for them to be hunted with success. He thought the bill brought in by the Government was quite sufficient, and he should support it as it stood.

New sub-section put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

The remaining clauses were agreed to without comment.

*Schedules:*

MR. R. F. SHOLL moved that "cormorant or shag" be struck out of the list of birds in respect of which a close season might be declared. This bird was neither useful nor ornamental, and it caused a great deal of destruction among fish in the river.

Amendment agreed to.

MR. PATERSON moved that the "laughing jackass" be added to the list. He referred to the small species of that name found at the North-West, which he thought ought to be protected.

Agreed to.

Schedules, as amended, put and passed.

Preamble and title agreed to.

Bill reported.

#### SHARKS BAY FISHERY BILL.

This bill passed through committee *sub silentio*.

#### SETTLED LAND BILL.

This bill was agreed to in committee without comment.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9:30 p.m.