

- Mr. Batkin.* 59. Would not the £84,000 mentioned in the present Indemnity Bill have been properly charged against the Reserve Account so extended to about £150,000?—Yes.
- 2nd Aug., 1875. 60. *Mr. Johnston.*] Since the clauses of the Public Revenues Act have been read, I notice that the reserve could only be made to the extent of the existing liabilities. Was the Treasury of opinion, on the 30th June, 1874, that liabilities existed to the extent of £150,000?—The Reserve Account has to be made up by the department concerned, and that department has to furnish to the Treasury the statement of its liabilities.
61. You have said that if an oversight had not taken place the department could have had a reserve larger by £100,000?—Yes.
62. What makes you think so if you have no knowledge of the liabilities which alone create the Reserve Fund?—I know that in the natural course of things it must be so. The accounts of the Agent-General are always three months in arrear.

TUESDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 1875.

MR. BATKIN, Secretary to the Treasury: Examination continued.

- Mr. Batkin.* 3rd Aug., 1875. *Mr. Batkin.*] I should like to say, in reference to the question put to me yesterday, as to whether or not it was the duty of the Treasury to make itself acquainted with the balances available, particularly those balances of the immigration vote, that I assumed, when I informed Sir Julius Vogel what the unexpended balances on the immigration vote were, that he himself would take steps to ascertain whether they were available, and that if they were not available he would, before the close of the session, take steps to make them so, by introducing a clause for the purpose into the Immigration and Public Works Act of that year.
63. *Mr. T. Kelly.*] If the Treasury had been aware that the supposed unexpended balance of £240,000 furnished to the Immigration Minister in 1874 was not available for immigration, would you have considered it your duty to point that out to the Minister at the time the return was furnished?—Not strictly my duty as Secretary to the Treasury.
64. Even if you had known there was no balance available for expenditure?—If I had supposed that Sir Julius Vogel was calculating upon my informing him, of course I should have done so; but it is no part of the duty of an officer of the Treasury to see that ways and means required by different departments are available.
65. You admit that at the time you were not aware that the money was not available?—Yes, I was not aware of it.
66. Now, suppose that you had known it was not available, would you have considered it your duty to inform Sir Julius Vogel of the fact?—Yes; but I should have done so with some diffidence perhaps. I might have considered that I was rather interfering by going into a question which really did not concern me. It was the duty of the Under Secretary for Immigration to see that the money was available. I did mention to Sir Julius Vogel, before the session of 1873 commenced, that his appropriations terminated on 31st December, 1873, but it was really no part of my duty to do so.
67. Previous to the delivery of the Financial Statement, it would naturally be considered that Sir Julius Vogel's object in asking for the return would be that he wished to ascertain what amount of money was available for expenditure?—I had no idea what his object was in asking for the return originally.
68. Would you have considered that it was your duty to give that information to the Minister for Immigration if you had known?—If I had known the balance was not available, and that he was proceeding under the supposition that it was available, I should certainly have considered it my duty to inform him.
69. *Sir F. D. Bell.*] Would you have considered it your duty, or merely a matter of favour to the Minister?—I should not have considered it strictly my duty to interfere in the matter at all.
70. *The Chairman.*] If you knew that a Minister was labouring under a misapprehension, would you allow him to remain under that misapprehension, rather than give him the benefit of your knowledge?—No, I should tell him what I thought was right.
71. *Mr. Kelly.*] The reason why you did not point out to the Minister that the money was not available was that you took it for granted that the £240,000 was available for expenditure?—The reason was that I found the Immigration Minister in conference with his Under Secretary on the subject of ways and means, and I thought they would take steps to ascertain what moneys were available.
72. You consider that the responsibility rested with them?—Yes.
73. But at the same time you were not aware that the balance was not available?—No.
74. And if you had known the true state of affairs, you would have pointed it out?—Probably I should have done so; but I do not consider that it would have been my duty, when I found them considering ways and means.
75. *Mr. Shephard.*] It was clear to your mind that these balances were calculated upon by Sir Julius Vogel as part of his available ways and means for the ensuing year?—Yes. It was clear to my mind that Sir Julius Vogel calculated upon them as being available, or that he himself would take care to make them available before the close of the session.
76. Apart from technical departmental duty, does it not occur to you that it is the duty of the chief officers of any Government to prevent, by all means in their power (consistent with respect to the Minister), their chiefs from erroneously estimating ways and means?—Certainly, it is the duty of Treasury Officers, if they see Ministers falling into error, to point it out to them.
77. *Mr. Pearce.*] What is the latest period when this reserve can be made in your books?—It has to be made immediately after the close of the financial year, and laid before the House.
78. It requires to be laid on the table ten days after the meeting of Parliament, and, if that is not done, it cannot be recognized afterwards except by a new vote?—That is a necessary condition if the terms of the Act are not complied with.