

SATURDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1883.

*Present*: Mr. Moss (Chairman), Hon. Major Atkinson, Mr. Barron, Mr. Dargaville, Hon. Mr. Dick, Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Peacock, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Wright.

The Committee considered the following draft report:—

The Committee, having received from the Treasury a reference, dated the 25th July, 1883, referring to them "The Public Revenues Act, 1882," in order that the Committee might consider "whether any, and if so, what amendments it may be desirable to suggest to the House, especially with regard to imprests," report—

1. That they have examined the Controller and Auditor-General, whose evidence is attached. The Committee regret that, in consequence of the late period at which the investigation was begun, and of the other duties devolving upon them, they have been unable to give the subject full consideration. They therefore confine themselves to reporting their opinion as to the means of guarding against the expenditure of further money beyond two months after the Appropriation Act has expired, in order to secure that Parliament shall be called together within that time.

2. The ninth section of the Act of 1882 provides that the Colonial Treasurer may, until a new Appropriation Act is passed, "issue and pay" moneys during two months after the Appropriation Act of the previous year has expired. The Appropriation Act of 1882-83 expired on the 31st March, 1883. On the 31st May the Controller and Auditor-General issued £192,150 to the Paymaster-General under protest. He was aware that it could not be required for the past month's services, but considered that he had no legal power to refuse. The money then became an imprest in the hands of the Paymaster-General, and was used by him to make payment till Parliament (which met on the 14th June) had granted a new supply.

3. The Committee are of opinion that a slight addition to "The Public Revenues Act, 1882," prohibiting the Colonial Treasurer or any imprestee from paying public money after the 31st May, would meet the case, and would secure the meeting of Parliament, which the Committee take to be the main purpose of the provision referred to.

4. The Controller, in his evidence, refers to the difficulty and annoyance caused to the Audit Office by the provision in the Land Act limiting the payment of travelling expenses for members of Land Boards "to the expenses actually incurred." The Audit Office refuses, under this provision, to pay any account for travelling expenses unless the account is accompanied by sub-vouchers for the small sums of which such expenses largely consist. Members of Waste Lands Boards object to this, and have been in the habit of commuting the charge at 20s. per day. The amounts are then paid, on the authority of the Ministers, out of unauthorized expenditure, and included in the Appropriation Act of the following year.

5. The same difficulty and annoyance are experienced by the Audit Office in dealing with the travelling expenses of members of Parliament engaged on Royal or other Commissions, and whose travelling expenses are also limited by the same Act to expenses "actually incurred."

6. The Committee recommend that authority should be obtained to commute such expenses for a fixed sum of 20s. per day, in addition to money paid for coach, railway, steamship, or other passenger fares; such commutation, in the case of members of Waste Lands Boards, not to exceed days for each sitting of the Board.

On the motion of Mr. Wright, *Resolved*, That the consideration of clause 1 be postponed.

Clause 2 put and carried.

On the motion of Mr. Montgomery, *Resolved*, That after the word "that," in the first line of clause 3, the words "to remove doubts" be inserted.

On the motion of Mr. Montgomery, *Resolved*, That the words "a slight addition to, in the first line of clause 3, be struck out, in order to insert the words "an amendment of."

Motion made, That the words "31st May," in line three of clause 3, be omitted, in order to insert the words "30th June.—(*Mr. Wright*.)

Question put, That "30th June" be substituted for "31st May."

The Committee divided.

*Ayes*: Hon. Major Atkinson, Hon. Mr. Dick, Mr. Peacock, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Wright.

*Noes*: Mr. Barron, Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Montgomery.

Motion therefore carried.

On motion of Mr. Wright, *Resolved*, That all words after "case," in the third line of clause 3, to the end of the clause, be left out.

Question put, That clause 3 as amended be agreed to.—Carried.

Clause 4 put and carried.

Clause 5. The Chairman, before reading this clause, inserted the following words after "commissions": "who are debarred by the Disqualification Act from receiving remuneration of any kind for their services."

Clause 5 as read put and carried.

On motion of Mr. Wright, *Resolved*, That all words after "exceed," in the fourth line of clause 6, be omitted, in order to insert the words, "twenty shillings for each day that the Board sits."

Motion made, That all the words after "consideration," in the fourth line of clause 1, to the end of the clause, be struck out.

Question put, That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question.

The Committee divided.

*Ayes*: Mr. Barron, Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Montgomery.

*Noes*: Hon. Major Atkinson, Hon. Mr. Dick, Mr. Peacock, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Wright.

Motion therefore carried.

Motion made and question put, That the report as amended be adopted.

The Committee divided.