

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 31 October, 1882.

Estimates of Expenditure (Financial Statement)—New Member (Mr. O'Mara)—Adjournment (Death of Mr. Forster).

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER reported the receipt of message No. 17 from his Excellency the Governor recommending to the consideration of the Assembly the accompanying Estimates of Expenditure for the year 1883, together with the Supplementary Estimates for the year 1882, and previous years.

Mr. JAMES WATSON said that he intended to make his financial statement to-morrow.

NEW MEMBER.

MR. O'MARA.

Thomas Chrysostom O'Mara, Esq., the newly-elected member for Tumut, subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

ADJOURNMENT.

DEATH OF MR. FORSTER.

Sir HENRY PARKES: Since we last met, or rather when we last met, a distinguished man was among us in the full exercise of all his rights as a member of the House and with, apparently, the prospect of long years of life before him, and it is now my painful duty to move, in accordance with what has become the practice of the House, in respect to his memory,—

That this House do now adjourn.

The name of William Forster has been before the public of this country for over thirty years. I think it is thirty years ago, when sitting in the stranger's gallery, I heard Mr. Wentworth in one of his great speeches make a long quotation from one of Mr. Forster's satires. For some considerable time before his entrance into Parliament Mr. Forster was well known and largely appreciated in this country as a writer. I became acquainted with the late honorable member for Gundagai on the very first day of the meeting of the first Parliament, and—though it may surprise many younger members—for several years I lived on the most cordial terms of relationship with him as a member of the House; together with my honorable friend behind me, the Secretary for Lands, we worked together in the

early years of responsible government, and our votes were recorded on the same side in almost every struggle. This cordiality existed for four or five years, and, as far as I am concerned, though it was then interrupted, it was again renewed and existed for some time longer. I therefore have had opportunities to judge of the value of the late honorable member not second to those of any member of the House. I heard his first speech; I shared all his early struggles; I have witnessed nearly all his actions on both sides of the House from the first until the last. Mr. Forster has now passed away across that mysterious dividing line which effaces all personal dissensions, and in watching his figure retiring into the land of shadows we can only—all of us I hope—remember the services which he has rendered to the public, and the good qualities which distinguished him in many respects above all others as a member of the House. Not only was Mr. Forster a contributor to our public political literature of very considerable eminence, but also when he first became a member of the House in the year 1856 he identified himself with the earliest movements for the extension of our political privileges. It is not generally known now-a-days, but it is a fact known to the oldest of us, that he was the real originator of the Electoral Act. It was he who suggested nearly all the most salient provisions of the measure which was afterwards, under the auspices of Mr. Cowper and my honorable friend behind me, passed into law. In like manner he became an early advocate of liberal reform in the education law of the country. In like manner he set himself with all his power in opposition to the granting of aid from the state to the support of religious denominations. In like manner he, in those early days, supported every great principle which lies at the foundation of our present institutions. We all of us know with what intimate acquaintance with the circumstances of the country, with what fearless examination of the public business of Parliament, with what fearless opposition to all abuse, his political career was marked; with what steadiness of purpose he supported any cause which he once espoused; with what fearless vigour he opposed anything which he believed to be wrong; we all recognised these striking and distinguishing

qualities in the late honorable member, and we, all of us I am sure, acknowledge that there can be few higher qualities in a representative of the people in this or in any other land. Mr. Forster has now gone for ever from our ranks, and neither this House nor any other legislature could well afford to lose a member so distinguished by education, so distinguished by practical knowledge of his country, and so distinguished by ability to give effect to what he believed. While we offer our best consolation to his bereaved friends, we must not only deplore his sudden death, which, coming so closely upon the sudden death of another whom we knew so well, is sufficient to bring a shock to every mind; but we must also mourn what is indeed a great public loss and a loss to the representative qualities of this House.

Mr. STUART: It is with no ordinary feelings of sorrow that I rise to second the motion of the Colonial Secretary "that this House do now adjourn," in token of the respect which we bear to the memory of the late honorable and gifted member whose death we must all feel. We are called on to mourn the loss of one who can ill be spared at this particular juncture in the affairs of the country. Although his keen criticism was perhaps too often and too severely levelled against those who were opposed to him, yet even those who most keenly felt the bitter invective or the caustic sarcasm of our late honorable friend will join with us all in acknowledging that in him we lose a man of great ability, a man of culture, a man who could and did make himself heard on every question affecting the public welfare of the colony ever since he first took part in public life. And such being the feelings of even his political foes—of those who during a portion of his lifetime may have been his political foes,—I can hardly express the feelings with which on this side of the House we contemplate the departure of our friend. We feel here that we have lost our brightest ornament, that our greatest champion is laid low, that his voice is now no longer to be heard here echoing the views which may emanate from this side of the House on any public question. We feel that our greatest debater has gone from among us, and that not only we but the whole country also have lost one whom, as I said before, we can ill afford to lose. If this be

the feeling of the country, of this House generally, and of this side of the House in particular, I can hardly trust myself to give utterance to the feelings with which I myself am animated on this occasion, for I have lost besides a political associate one who was a constant and an ardent friend. I have lost one who was an able and wise counsellor at all times; and one with whom I have been called on particularly of late to enter into the closest friendship. Those whose knowledge of William Forster was confined to his public appearance or to his political bearing in the House knew him but half; and that not his better half; it is reserved for those who, like myself and some others here within the House, and many outside, to bear testimony to his many social qualities. It is reserved to those for whom in the depth of real friendship his inner mind was opened to see how much greater a man he was in many respects than would be imagined from the outward appearance of the man. His inner soul revealed itself very often in those hours of social intercourse and friendship in a way that could hardly have been expected by those whose knowledge of him was confined to his public appearance. It was then that my honorable friend showed in the highest degree and to the fullest extent the cultured intellect, gentlemanly bearing, and true magnanimity, and the other high social impulses of his mind; it was then that one admired many of the fine traits of his character which in other circumstances might have been passed without notice. I feel that in an especial degree I am called on to mourn the departure of one who had endeared himself to me in this peculiar manner. A mere acquaintance with him during many years had ripened into an intimate knowledge and friendship when I sat on that side of the House a supporter of the Government of which the present Minister for Lands was the head, and of which government the late Mr. Forster was a bright ornament during the time he held office as Colonial Treasurer. That friendship has continued ever since without the slightest interruption. I was in constant correspondence with him during the time that he held office as Agent-General; and during the visit which I made to England I could not refrain from remarking—although I had not cordially approved of the appointment at the time it was made

[*Sir Henry Parkes.*

—I could not refrain from remarking and bearing witness to the great powers of mind and the immense ability which he brought to bear on all the subjects which came under his notice in the higher departments of the office which he was called upon to fill. He never lost sight of one fact, namely, that this colony was the chief of the Australian colonies, and that it had a right to be continually represented in the best manner before the public in the mother country. Since his return to the colony our friendship has continued. We have sat here side by side, working together for what we believed to be the common good, but now we are separated by the stern hand of death. I can say no more than that while we as a public body, and as the representatives of the colony, have to mourn the death of this man—this great man,—because, with all his peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, he was a great man—we have few who could follow in his footsteps,—I say that, while we mourn his departure from amongst us, our sympathies ought to go forth to his widow and children and other relatives, who have known him, not simply as we have known him, as the true patriot, but as one in every way worthy of their veneration and love.

Question proposed.

Mr. McELHONE : I do not think that honorable members on either side of the House will dispute one word which has been said by the Colonial Secretary or by the leader of the Opposition ; but we have something more to do than to mourn the death of one of the members of this House, even though that member be the most independent, and certainly the most fearless, man who has entered these walls. We have to see that the public business is carried on. It is somewhat unfortunate that so soon after the death of the late Mr. Stephen Campbell Brown we should suffer the loss of Mr. William Forster. We know that a gentleman who has been prominently connected with the public business of this country for many years—Sir Alfred Stephen—has given notice of a motion in the Upper House to the effect that that House should not in future adjourn on the occasion of the death of any of their members. It is obvious that the practice is calculated to lead to great inconvenience. On the present occasion the honorable member for Glen Innes has on

the paper a motion of a very important character ; and on the present, as on the last occasion when we adjourned, the adjournment will in no way interfere with the progress of Government business. When we last adjourned on a similar occasion, the honorable member for Redfern (Mr. Fremelin) had on the paper a motion to the effect that the Government should set apart a site for the carrying on of noxious trades. In consequence of the adjournment of the House that motion has been put back, and cannot be reached for many weeks to come. If the Government will give up to-morrow night for the transaction of the business which appears on to-night's paper, I shall not oppose the motion for adjournment ; but if they will not give to the House such an assurance I shall certainly call for a division, even though I sit alone. I have always been opposed to the adjournment of the House on such occasions ; and the Colonial Secretary himself, if I have correctly understood him, has been always opposed to the practice. The adjournment can do no good to the late member for Gundagai, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is a sham on the part of some honorable members to wish that the House should adjourn. When the Colonial Secretary moved the adjournment of the House on the occasion of the death of the late Stephen Campbell Brown I understood him to say that he was opposed to the practice ; but he does not hesitate to move the adjournment of the House on the present occasion. I yield to no one in the respect which I have felt for the honorable member for Gundagai. I have always given the honorable member credit for being the most honest, the most fearless, and the most independent member in our midst. I remember particularly that on one occasion Mr. William Forster and Mr. William Macleay were the only gentlemen who were honest and fearless enough to oppose the Colonial Secretary. I have quite as much sympathy with the relatives and friends of the honorable member for Gundagai as have other members of the House ; but it seems to me that no good whatever can come of this adjournment. The practice is liable at all times to create confusion in the progress of business, and the sooner we abolish it the better. I intend to give notice of a motion to that effect for Tuesday next.

Sir HENRY PARKES, in reply: The honorable member who has just sat down I am sure must see that I am simply acting as the mouthpiece of the House. It is not a matter of individual opinion with me, as I explained on another occasion, and as must be apparent to all. With regard to the request the honorable member makes of the Government, I need only point out to him that if I consented to any condition of the kind, irrespective of the urgency of Government business, I should take away all the honor of the adjournment, which ought to be spontaneous, unqualified, and unconditional on the part of the House; and for me to make any bargain would be worse than not moving the motion at all. Seeing, therefore, that it is out of my power to neutralise the effect of my own motion, and that if I could do so it would take away the honor the House intends to the departed, I hope the honorable member will forego his intention to divide the House.

Question put, whereupon a division was called for with the following result:—

Ayes	52	} Majority, 49.
Noes	3	

AYES.

Mr. R. P. Abbott,	Mr. McLaughlin,
Mr. Andrews,	Mr. Melville,
Mr. Bodel,	Mr. O'Mara,
Mr. Burns,	Sir Henry Parkes,
Mr. Cameron,	Mr. Pilcher,
Mr. G. Campbell,	Mr. Poole,
Mr. Carter,	Mr. Proctor,
Mr. William Clarke,	Mr. Reid,
Mr. Copeland,	Dr. Renwick,
Mr. Davies,	Sir John Robertson,
Mr. Day,	Mr. Roseby,
Mr. Douglas,	Dr. Ross,
Mr. Farnell,	Mr. Ryrie,
Mr. Fawcett,	Mr. Slattery,
Mr. W. J. Foster,	Mr. S. Smith,
Mr. Garrard,	Mr. Stuart,
Mr. Garrett,	Mr. Suttor,
Mr. Garvan,	Mr. Teece,
Mr. Heydon,	Mr. James Watson,
Mr. Hezlet,	Mr. Wisdom,
Mr. Jacob,	Mr. Withers,
Mr. Kidd,	Mr. Wright,
Mr. Lackey,	Mr. Young,
Mr. Levien,	
Mr. Levin,	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr. G. A. Lloyd,	Mr. E. Barton,
Mr. Martin,	Mr. Pigott.

NOES.

Mr. J. P. Abbott.	<i>Tellers,</i>
	Mr. Fergusson,
	Mr. McElhone.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 5 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 1 November, 1882.

Explanation—First Readings—Mining Act further Amendment Bill (second reading)—Criminal Law Amendment Bill (second reading).

The PRESIDENT took the chair.

EXPLANATION.

Mr. A. CAMPBELL said that he must ask leave to explain that an erroneous answer was given this day week to a question asked by the honorable member, Mr. Piddington, in reference to the loan fund. It appeared that the clerk whose duty it was to prepare the answer made a mistake as to which loan was intended. The answer given, therefore, was incorrect; it applied to the loan of 1881 instead of to the last loan. The correct answer was that there was no balance of the loan of 1881 remaining unexpended, as the whole of the proceeds were absorbed by an advance to the general loan fund pending the sale of the debentures. He hoped that his honorable friend and the House would accept this explanation, as the mistake had occurred simply through inadvertence by a clerk.

Mr. PIDDINGTON must disclaim any idea of his being at all accountable for this gross mistake. His question specified the loan of May, 1881; but the reply referred to the loan contracted this year. The Postmaster-General had stated that the error arose from the neglect of a Treasury official; and he could only express a hope that when he had occasion again to ask a question in regard to public moneys such a gross mistake would not occur. The honorable gentleman had informed us that the loan contracted eighteen months ago was now all expended, notwithstanding our vast and increasing revenue!

FIRST READINGS.

The following bills were received from the Legislative Assembly, and read the first time:—

Wharfage and Tonnage Rates Acts Amendment Bill.

Watering-places and Reserves Bill.