

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 3 JUNE 1869

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 3 June, 1869.

Small Debts Courts Act of 1867 Amendment Bill.—Petition of Mr. Turner.—Local Government.

SMALL DEBTS COURTS ACT OF 1867
AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of Mr. THOMPSON, that the above Bill do now pass,

Mr. WALSH objected, on the ground that the Bill had undergone alterations in committee which no honorable member knew to be duly made in the Bill before them, as the Bill had not been printed, and so the House was asked to commit an absurdity—to pass a Bill which they had not seen.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that the course adopted was usual, but he did not know that the practice was a good one. The House relied upon the integrity of the clerk to make corrections, and to see that the amendments made in committee on a Bill, had been duly inserted before its third reading. If there were any doubts in the present case, a copy of the Bill should be had, but there had been no departure from the usual practice.

The SPEAKER said the Attorney-General was perfectly right in the view he took. That had been the practice always.

Mr. PALMER said the practice was a bad one, and was shewn to be so by what happened with the Polynesian Laborers Bill. In that case, a clause struck out in committee, by this House, had been re-inserted in the

other House, and the House had passed the Bill without the knowledge of any that the clause had been re-inserted. That showed the practice to be bad.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the case was not a parallel, because alterations and new clauses made in the other House were always distinctly shown, by type, in the Bills sent down to the Assembly.

Mr. PALMER said it was an error of the clerk, for the clause never passed in the other House.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that that did not present a parallel to the present case, but arose from some omission or neglect of the clerks or officers of the other House. They did not know what passed there.

Mr. PALMER said the case was parallel to this extent, that the clerk should have seen that the mistake was not made.

The SPEAKER said the third reading of Bills was usually set down to the day following committal, so that it was scarcely possible to be secure against error.

Mr. WALSH said that he had some recollection of mistakes committed during the sitting of the committee on the last Land Bill, which were subsequently corrected, and that the amendments had to be printed, and the Bill re-committed. That was a proper course. Unless Bills were printed, and laid before them on the third reading, when they came to vote upon them *in toto*, they could not be secure.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL believed that the object sought would be better effected by a joint committee of the two Houses. Such a committee would be invaluable in checking the Bills. As it was, the clerks had very hard work indeed, and with the greatest care they could hardly avoid errors of great consequence.

Mr. THOMPSON said that the practice was for him, as chairman of committees, to examine Bills together with the clerk, so that there could be no doubt the Bill came correct before the House.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that was purely a verbal examination, but the functions of the committee of examination suggested, would be much more extensive, so that they could send back a Bill if it were incorrect.

The Bill then passed.

PETITION OF MR. TURNER.

Mr. THORN said, in reference to his motion that the petition presented by him on behalf of Mr. Turner, be now taken into consideration by this House,—that it was needless to enter into any lengthened discussion on the subject, seeing that the Government had made the *amende honorable*. He had not tabled the motion to see justice done to a district or constituency, but to raise the question of commonage throughout the colony. That would be dealt with at large in the proposed amendment of the Land Bill of 1868, by the

honorable member for the Northern Downs. So far as commonages were concerned, he thought commonage, instead of being beneficial, was a curse to the country. There had been an indignation meeting in opposition to the commonage clauses of the Land Bill of 1868, and he was satisfied that but for the good nature of the honorable member who held the run adjoining the town of Dalby, there would have been a revolution there before now. He questioned very much whether the amended description of the commonage for the inhabitants of Drayton and Toowoomba were in accordance with the provisions of the seventy-eighth clause of the Land Act of 1868. The Government had recommended the boundaries, yet, by the eighteenth clause, the land taken for commonage could be opened for selection by free-selectors. He would say that it was not right for the inhabitants of one district to go to another district for commonage, when they had equally good land for the purpose in their own. As far as his constituents were concerned, they looked upon these commonages as mere nests for cattle-stealing, and he hoped the commonage would be selected before long. He did not object to commonages, as in Dalby, where they were needed, but in places where the land would be required for settlement before long. After hearing the honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba, seeing that Mr. Turner had been treated fairly, he would withdraw the motion.

The SPEAKER asked: Was the motion withdrawn, or not withdrawn?

MR. THORN: No.

MR. GROOM said he had been very much surprised when the honorable member for West Moreton had told him that it was his intention to withdraw the motion. He felt surprised that a petition making allegations against the Government had been presented, and that the motion should then be withdrawn.

MR. THORN said the original proclamation included land—

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Order, order.

MR. GROOM resumed, and said that he was one of those who, as far as he could understand the matter, wished the question of commonages should be settled at once and for ever. It seemed that difficulty always arose concerning it, and that the legislation of last year had not settled the question. The inhabitants of Drayton and Toowoomba had petitioned for commonages, and the petitions were printed in the *Government Gazette*. But the land applied for, they were informed, was contained in Mr. Turner's lease, and could not be granted. Further inquiries were made, and it was ascertained that there was land three miles on this side, suitable for a commonage for Drayton and Toowoomba. The mayor got up a petition for a commonage, according to a tracing supplied from the land office; and the portion applied for was not in Mr. Turner's run.

He had been surprised at the treatment of Mr. Turner; for there was no squatter who had suffered so much as Mr. Turner, or who had so strong a claim to compensation. His run had been cut up by the railway, and his cattle slaughtered by the navvies working on the line; so that the consideration of the House was due to him. He was greatly surprised that any objections should have been offered to the portion of land not on Mr. Turner's run, applied for as commonage. Drayton and Toowoomba was surrounded by hills in the form of a horseshoe, and could not get land suitable for a commonage except over the range. A public meeting was held to consider this question; it was stated that the land applied for was in the Eton Vale run, that there was not land suitable for a commonage in the neighborhood of Drayton and Toowoomba, and that the land all round was purchased; indeed, that there was no land except a small patch pointed out by the present Minister for Lands. There was land fit for the purpose on the Eton Vale. The honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay, had said he would give up some two thousand acres of land to settle this question of commonage. He would like to see the question settled, for it raised difficulties and constant quarrels much to be regretted. He should be prepared to make some amendments in the proposed commonage Bill, so as to achieve the object in view. He would ask the honorable member for Western Downs, before sitting down, whether it was not true that there was land on his run suitable for a commonage, without going over the Main Range. It was no doubt due to Mr. Turner, and owing to the meeting, that this was pointed out.

MR. RAMSAY said he would answer, at once, that there was no land on his run at all suitable for a commonage. There was, indeed, no unpurchased land adjoining Drayton and Toowoomba at all. He had offered three thousand acres or so, and thought he thus behaved very handsomely. The inhabitants applied for land near Eton Vale, and the mayor came out to see it. The mayor said to him, "Suppose we get this land for a commonage, we can't get at it because of your purchased land." He then said, not to see the Drayton people in this position, he would, if Government did not object, withdraw from his application three thousand acres on the top of the Main Range, so as to allow the people a road to come backwards and forwards to the commonage. He did not give up this land for a common, but to prevent the inhabitants being shut out from a common. Drayton was within four miles of the land, which was at the head of the creek called Hodgson's Creek, which runs up towards Toowoomba. The land there was not sold though surveyed, and there was nothing better than that for a common—for there was excellent grass there, and always plenty of water. A fence run

along Eton Vale would prevent the cattle straying, and the people of the town would then have a very nice common. But with regard to a common for the Drayton people, it would not be of much use, for his idea of a common was a place where the poor people could have a goat, cow, or horse, at hand for them. What, then, was the use of a common four miles off, for cattle, which could not be got away except by the work of a strong man for some time? The land along Hodgson's Creek would make a nice little common for Drayton; but, as he was not acquainted with the circumstances of Toowoomba, he would express no opinion concerning it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said the land which had been applied for as a common was in the resumed half of Mr. Turner's run. The petition said the land did not adjoin the town: the fact was, that the land did adjoin the town. There was, again, nothing in the Act to compel commonages to be in the same district with the town to which they were granted. The clause of the Act said—

"It shall be lawful for the Governor in Council to proclaim any unsold land as a township common upon the following conditions—

1. That a petition signed by not less than thirty freeholders resident within such township praying for the proclamation of a common adjoining thereto shall have been presented to the Governor in Council.
2. That after the said petition shall have been notified in the *Government Gazette* for a period of sixty days no counter petition shall have been presented signed by a larger number of freeholders resident within the said township.

"Every such common shall be proportioned to the number and wants of the freeholders resident in the said township but shall in no case exceed twenty square miles."

There was nothing there to prevent the commonage for a town being taken out of an adjoining district. The third paragraph of the petition stated—

"That the railway reserve running through your petitioner's run (as ascertained by survey just completed), comprises half the area of the said run."

He distinctly denied that. Altogether it was a lying petition, and he could not see that any injustice had been done to Mr. Turner in the matter. The petition was untrue from beginning to end. The Government had not amended the boundaries of the commonage at all; the boundaries were the same as had been gazetted. There had been, some time ago, an application for commonage by the Drayton people, and the land then applied for was in the leased half of a run, and it was refused because it was in the leased half. Mistakes had arisen, perhaps, from the mixing up of two occurrences. However, the descriptions of the boundaries had not been altered in any way whatever, and the commonage was entirely in the resumed portion

of the run. He had taken off whatever was not within it.

Mr. FRANCIS said he was not at all sorry that the matter in question had been brought forward, for it was one of the interesting subjects connected with the administration of the land law, upon which it was so difficult to get light thrown. The inhabitants of a township wanted a common, and the Government proposed to accede to their desire by giving up a portion of a run at a great distance from the town.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The commonage adjoins the town, and comes right up to it.

Mr. FRANCIS resuming, said, he was not sorry that the matter had been brought before the House, and he was not at all certain that justice was to be done to Mr. Turner. That gentleman had no reason to expect it, as his political influence did not entitle him to it. Some of these Drayton and Toowoomba people, it appeared, wished for a portion of Eton Vale. What next? Cecil Plains would not be safe; Jimbour would be asked for next; Gracemere and the country round Clermont. There was no knowing what might not be demanded after such absurd requests of Drayton and Toowoomba. The honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Thorn, had done great public service by calling attention to the question before them. He would suggest to Mr. Turner that there were other ways of getting the sacredness of his run acknowledged in that House than by petitions.

Mr. THORN, in reply, said that there was a commonage applied for by the people of Drayton and Toowoomba, different from that inserted in the *Government Gazette*, and the petition asked for land other than that which the inhabitants would get now. The land granted was different from that requested by Drayton and Toowoomba, and this land was in the resumed portion of Mr. Turner's run, and could be open at any time for selection. He would withdraw his resolution after the discussion upon it.

The motion, by leave of the House, was withdrawn.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Mr. ARCHER said that, in rising to move the resolutions standing in his name, he would observe that there had been placed upon the notice paper other resolutions of a similar nature by the honorable the Attorney-General. Had those resolutions been such as he could have agreed to without amendment, he would, of course, not have brought forward those he proposed to bring before the House that day. To test the opinion of the House on those resolutions at the present time he felt justified in occupying its time. Those resolutions were—

That in the opinion of this House,—

1. The time has now arrived when the labors of Parliament ought to be strictly confined to

matters relating to the general government of the colony.

2. That it is the duty of the Government to introduce a measure that will grant full powers of local government to the different districts of the colony.

3. That excepting such part of the revenues of a district as will be a fair share of its liability for carrying on the general government of the colony, such local governments ought to have as full power over all the revenues of the district, and over local works and lands, as the Ministers of these departments now possess, while their legislative powers ought to be confined strictly to local matters.

During the debate on the address in reply to the opening speech of His Excellency the Governor, some remarks fell from the honorable the Attorney-General which he desired to consider. He believed it was a rule that the House was not allowed to quote from previous debates of the session. But as he generally paid great attention to the speeches of the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, as indeed they were worthy of attention, his memory would supply him with references for the reasons which prompted these resolutions. The Attorney-General at that time, in his speech on the address in reply to His Excellency's speech, drew a picture upon the demands of northern members for local government, as though they desired to be lieutenant-governors with cocked hats, received with the presenting of arms, and other ceremonies attendant upon the opening of the House. Ridicule was indeed effective to laugh a person out of court, but he denied the truth of the remarks which then fell from the Attorney-General. No remark had been made by any of them to induce anyone in this House to suppose that they wished for the symbol and not for the power of local government. Should it be supposed that it was so, he entirely denied it now. He had no wish to follow a custom of no value. If the head of the Government recollected the old forms, he could probably paint that gentleman in a position that would be ridiculous with his head under a wig and his person under a robe which hid his fair proportions, but it would be no argument against the advantage of an advocate and a court of justice. The Attorney-General did not make use of such an argument as ought to appeal to the sense of this House. Whether the argument was good or bad, it was not at all in point: nobody had ever been for anything of the kind. Those remarks did not apply to the case, but some of the remarks made by the Attorney-General induced him to ascertain whether there should not be some measure for local government, and especially the remarks made about separation. After this ridiculous picture, the Attorney-General then drew an easy and brilliant picture of separation, hiding all its disadvantages, and bringing prominently forward all the attendant advantages. He was not like

the honorable member for Maryborough, who looked upon the mention of the word separation as marking a traitor. On the contrary, he thought it would cause great evils; but still there were evils greater than that. He would not, therefore, go so far as to say it was traitorous to mention the word in the House; he held that it ought to be mentioned whenever anything grossly unjust caused it to be brought forward. Honorable members, although they did not listen, should at least not be speaking together. He was, indeed, perfectly confident that the matter, as concerning the North, was not regarded as worth listening to. The wishes of the Attorney-General that, if matters came to separation, the North should go with good luck, were very good; but he would ask whether it did not show that he had not considered the question as a statesman should. It was the easiest thing possible to say "Let the North go;" a parrot might be taught to say that. But it was for a statesman to consider by what measure to prevent the evil of separation, and what would be for the general welfare of the country as a whole. It would have been much more to the credit of the Attorney-General to have considered that, than to have made it appear there were no evils in separation.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not admit that there are no evils.

Mr. ARCHER, resuming, said he would point out some of those evils by-and-bye; and it would have been the part of a statesman to show those evils, and not talk of separation, with a wish that good luck go with them. As he considered there were great evils in separation, he was not to be the person to take the measure in hand unadvisedly. One of the most prominent of the evils of separation was that a double government would be formed, which would probably introduce the very things mentioned in another debate. The honorable the Attorney-General, in asserting that cocked hats and guards, with the attendant ceremonies, were wished for in the North, and by trying to divide this colony into two, tries to make two governments to be supported, which was an evil of itself. Another evil attendant on every country under rule in the world was the central Government, causing expenses in localities which had to be borne by the general community. Now, the larger the number of the people, the smaller the amount of the expense each one had to bear. The division, then, of the country and Government into several districts, instead of one, would be but largely to increase the expense of general government. He was not at all anxious to see the expenses of the central Government increased, and he believed the system he advocated would have the effect of diminishing them. All he wanted was, to see equal justice done to every district. Separation would have an injurious effect upon the commerce of the country; and the difficulties, especially, in con-

nection with the customs duties would be multiplied in proportion as the country was multiplied into different colonies. Great anxiety had been shewn to induce some company, by means of a subsidy, to establish a line of communication by way of New Zealand to Torres Straits, on to Batavia, and thence to England, and the formation of another colony to the North would be an additional obstacle to this undertaking. There were many reasons why he thought the colonists of Queensland should stick together and endeavor to govern the colony in such a way that separation would not become a necessity. It could not be denied also that a certain amount of respect was always paid to the negotiations entered into on the part of any country which possessed a large and important territory, and this respect would be considerably diminished if Queensland were cut up into separate colonies;—not only in the eyes of the other colonies, but in the eyes of the whole world. It well known that the policy of the mother-country was to give independence to any colony who really wished for it. That had been the tenor of all the debates which had taken place on the subject in the House of Commons of late years. The general policy of England was, that no colony should for the future be coerced; and if they were, at some future time, to come before the world as an independent state, would it not be better to do so as a large and important country, than to be broken up into different factions. The honorable the Premier had stated that he saw no evils which would result from separation. He confessed he did not agree with him. He saw a great many evils requiring remedy, but he wished to prevent what he thought would be a still greater evil which would arise from a subdivision of the colony at the present time. One of the strongest reasons against separation was the proof they had had that the innate justice of all Australian colonies was extremely limited. Past history would show that, as a rule, the capitals of large colonies invariably oppressed the outlying districts, and the latter were much to be pitied, unless they could make use of some influence to act as a counterpoise to the overwhelming power brought to bear against them. For these, and other reasons, he should regard separation as a great evil, and it was with that view he had put these resolutions on the paper, and because he believed they would have the effect of preventing that agitation for separation which could not otherwise be avoided. The first resolution stated that—

“The time has now arrived when the labors of Parliament ought to be strictly confined to matters relating to the general government of the colony.”

He thought there was no honorable member present who could deny the truth of that assertion. Scarcely a day passed in which some question was not brought forward which hinged entirely upon some grant or

expenditure required to supply a local want in some part of the colony; either a road or a bridge was wanted, or some bonus or grant of money in some form or other. He would ask whether these were really the objects for which the House met? Were they not assembled rather for the purpose of initiating laws, and seeing those laws properly carried out, for the general good government of the country? It might be said that he had himself infringed upon this principle, by asking for sums for the benefit of his own district, and he confessed he had done so. But it was absolutely necessary, under the present form of Government, and there was no other way of obtaining justice. Every time some petty local matter was brought before the House, they had greater and greater proof that the House was inadequate to deal with such questions. One honorable member would get up and ask for a sum of money for a local purpose; another honorable member would rise and point out that some other district was more urgently in need of assistance; and money was voted in favor of the member who possessed the greatest influence, and not upon any system of Government embracing an equitable distribution for local works—that was to say, not taken from the revenue of the particular district in which the work was carried out, but from the general revenue of the colony. The waste of time which was thus caused was perfectly deplorable, as well as inconvenient to members. If the general business of the country alone claimed the notice of the House, if no extraneous business were introduced, he believed they would be able to get through their duties in one-half, if not one-third, of the time which was now occupied in them. That was in itself, he thought, a sufficient reason why these resolutions should be agreed to. But not only did these petty local matters occupy the attention of honorable members, but they were actually ignorant of what they were doing; they were called upon literally to vote in the dark, and to exercise a serious responsibility upon matters of which they knew nothing whatever. It was not a question of opinion at all. A man might form a very good opinion in reference to cotton bonus or a Pastoral Relief Bill, but not upon a local work in a remote district, which he had probably never visited. But because the House had got into the habit of taxing the whole country for every local work, he was obliged to vote in ignorance of the merits of the case. The object of the resolutions before the House was to remedy this state of things, and, therefore, he thought they should be supported. It was hardly worth while to speak at greater length upon that point, because it was generally admitted that that House was not a proper place to discuss local matters, and it had also been admitted that it was the duty of the Government to bring in a measure to remedy the evil, and to

place matters on a proper footing. But he thought it was the duty of every member to state his views of what such a measure ought to be. He was aware that there existed a great difference of opinion on this subject. He had heard from both sides of the House the most extraordinary ideas in reference to the requirements of the North, or other part of the colony which asked for local government. He had heard it stated that they wanted to make their own land laws, to borrow money for themselves, and to do a hundred other things which no one ever thought of. He would at once state his opinion, that the functions of any local government granted to the outlying districts of this colony, should be entirely confined to executive action, and should not include legislative power. He had been accused of asking for legislative power for the northern districts, should a system of local government be established, but he had never done so; if any one had asked for legislative power he had not. There could be no doubt that the mal-administration which had taken place, and the misfortunes which had resulted under the system of local self-government which had obtained in New Zealand, was a great drawback to those who asked for local government in this colony; but he did not accept that as a reason why it should not be introduced in Queensland, but rather as a warning not to follow the example set in that country—not to adopt their errors. In New Zealand they had committed the mistake which the honorable the Premier had tried to hold up to ridicule when he talked about a number of small Governments trying to ape a larger Government; but no measure, which had been advocated by northern members in that House, had embraced the power of legislating and making laws, the power of appointing a Governor—or anything, in fact, but the executive power necessary to administer to the local wants of the different districts, and they had simply pointed out New Zealand as a warning to avoid the mistakes made in that colony. For his part, he should consider it a great misfortune for Queensland to be cut up into a number of Governments, each of which had the power to make its own laws and contract its own debts, issue its own debentures, and to carry out a policy of its own, which would probably be at direct variance with that of the general Government of the country. The northern representatives had never asked for that power, although they had been accused of doing so. They simply asked for the power to administer the laws passed by that House as the central Government of Queensland, and to have the expenditure of the revenue raised in their own districts. They had no desire to infringe upon the just and legitimate authority of that House. Therefore, it was unfair to object to the reasonable demands of the North by referring to the local self-government established in New Zealand. If they

had laid the New Zealand Act on the table of the House, and asked to have it applied to this colony, it would have been a different thing. But if it were decided by the House that Parliament ought to confine its attention to matters affecting the general government of the country alone, seeing that it was incapable of dealing with local matters, and that they ought to pass a Bill to place those matters under local control,—it might be a question what these local questions should be; and that, he thought, was the most important part of the subject. In endeavoring to show what, in his opinion, the powers of local governments should be, he should be obliged to refer to the resolutions which had been laid on the table of the House by the honorable member at the head of the Government. He had only seen them yesterday for the first time; having been engaged on a select committee during that morning, he had not had time to study them sufficiently to say what he thought of them. But there was one to which he should like to refer; it was one of the last sections, and it referred to the way in which local governments were to be supplied with money. He was exceedingly sorry to see that so little interest was taken in a question of such importance. It was very unfair and very undignified for honorable members to leave the House whilst a subject of such moment was being discussed. He thought honorable members, if they did not care to listen to him, might at least give their attention to the question upon which he was addressing the House. It was disheartening to a member who came down to represent northern interests to find that the wants and wishes of those districts were so little regarded, that when they were brought forward in that House, only some half-dozen members remained to listen to them. If the southern members were so utterly careless and indifferent to the future of this colony, why, perhaps, the sooner it was broken up into pieces, the better, sorry as he should be to see it happen. He thought it was the duty of the House to listen to him. He was anxious to have their opinion on this question, as it might give southern members an opportunity of preventing, to a great extent, the question of separation, which might otherwise be forced upon them. He was going to call attention to the sixty-second clause of the resolutions which the honorable Premier had submitted to the House, and he would quote a portion of it—

“From the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, actually received during the preceding year, there shall be deducted the costs, charges, and expenses, incident to the collection, management, and receipt thereof; also, the annual interest of the public debt of Queensland, at the time of the passing of the Bill; also, all the other costs, charges, and expenses of the Government and Parliament of Queensland, and all such other sums as the Parliament of Queensland shall, from

time to time, deem it necessary and proper to deduct for national purposes. The balance of the actual receipts of the colony, after such deductions, shall be divided over the total population of the colony as ascertained at the last preceding census, and the proportion of the whole per head of its population, allocated to every established district under the Bill.

"From the sum so allocated shall be deducted the annual interest upon the public debt of the district, contracted under the provisions of the Bill; and the balance, after deducting any sums payable to Queensland, for advances or other charges, shall be paid to the treasurer of the district, for the purposes of the local government."

Now, it appeared to him absurd to expect the House to accept these resolutions without considerable alteration. He did not know whether the Government were prepared to receive amendments upon them; but it would be impossible to pass them in their present form. Was it right to call upon every part of Queensland, even the North, to pay, in the first place, the interest on the debt of the colony, and then to divide the surplus among the different districts, for the purpose of carrying on local government, besides deducting—

"all the other costs, charges, and expenses of the Government and Parliament of Queensland, and all other such sums as the Parliament of Queensland shall from time to time deem it necessary and proper to deduct for national purposes."

Then again—

"shall be deducted the annual interest upon the public debt of the district, contracted under the provisions of the Bill," &c., &c.

The Government actually proposed that, after they had paid the interest on the debt of the colony, which could not be met without further loans—for a Loan Bill was to be introduced before this session was over—and the expenses of the Government, they would divide the surplus for the benefit of the outside districts. It really took one's breath away to contemplate such a proposition. He had been told by the honorable member at the head of the Government, that he was not willing to accept a liberal scheme from him, but that he would rather accept it from some one else. Did the honorable member call this a liberal measure? Why, his (Mr. Archer's) complaint had always been that the poorer districts of the colony were robbed for the benefit of the wealthier districts. He was not going to complain of the extension of railways, or the amount of money paid for introducing immigrants into the South; but, when he found the southern portion of the colony, where this enormous expenditure had been received, calling upon the poor North to pay her share of the interest on the public debt, before receiving any share of her revenue, he felt astonished that the honorable member at the head of the Government could have laid such resolutions on the table of the House. As he had already said, in asking for a system of local government, they did not ask for legislative powers; they only

asked to be allowed to spend the money they collected in their own districts. The honorable the Premier might, perhaps, answer that by saying that no country district in England received money from the central Government for local purposes. But those districts were not taxed to pay for general public works. The whole of the public money in England was spent for the benefit of the people of England, and not for local works; and no Bill which did not give to the different districts the amount of money raised in those districts, after deducting the expenses of the general Government, could possibly give satisfaction. He found he had mislaid a note containing some figures which he intended to have quoted. He believed, however, he could give them pretty correctly. He found that the expense of the general Government of this colony amounted, in round numbers, to about £210,000. That included the salaries of the Governor and judges; the cost of police, and all matters relating to the central Government. Now, the estimates showed that they were expected to spend, this year, something considerably over £700,000, and, out of that sum, only £210,000 was required for the general government of the country. That, of course, might be denied; but he was stating what he believed to be the case. Then he observed that in the South, for strictly local purposes, for payment of interest on local debts in the South; for public works now being carried on in the South, and for other purposes, for the benefit of southern districts, there was the sum of £400,000 to be expended this year, and in the middle and northern districts, £100,000. Now, no persons residing in the North, or in any other part of the colony, would, for a moment, suppose that they were not indebted to the full extent of their share for the cost of the general government of the country; but they altogether repudiated the idea of being taxed for the purpose of paying for works carried on in the richer part of the colony. He found, too, that Maryborough was included in the southern part of the colony, and he must say he could not see why Maryborough should be taxed to pay for railways in the South. If the revenue received in Maryborough were added to the northern revenue, it would show a much larger disproportion in favor of the North. That was the great complaint of northern members: they complained that, in this country, taxes were imposed for the purpose of carrying on local works, and that those taxes were expended in the richer portion of the colony to the injury of the poorer, and until some remedy was found for that state of things, they would not be satisfied. During the debate on the address in reply to the opening speech, the honorable member at the head of the Government had twitted him with having said that he would oppose the general business of the country if his own views were not carried out. He said nothing of the kind; but he did say he should oppose

the expenditure of money for local works until some arrangement was made and it was shewn who was to pay for them. He thought he should prove, before he sat down, that he had not been unjust in saying so, and that he was only doing his duty. The honorable member also asked him if he could not imagine that some economical works might be carried out which would be remunerative. Of course he could imagine a great many things; he could imagine money obtained without interest and laid out to the best advantage. But he did not believe that either of these things would occur—either that the Government would obtain money at a low rate of interest, or that it would be well expended on local works. He would ask the honorable member at the head of the Government to put himself in his position. He had already stated that, in his opinion, the North was taxed some £40,000 or £50,000 a-year beyond what they ought to pay, and that was for the benefit of the South. Now, if the honorable member would imagine himself to be in his position, representing a population which, if it were in the southern portion of the colony, would probably have three representatives, and at the same time imagine that that population to be enormously overtaxed for works from which they derived no benefit whatever; and, being in that position, be called upon to decide whether or not it was his duty to resist further taxation for the benefit of some one else. He thought the honorable member would come to the conclusion to oppose all increased taxation for local works, and he would be false to his trust if he did not. Had that honorable gentleman ever experienced the feeling of a person that had been robbed; if so, let him imagine that feeling to continue year after year, with nothing to look forward to, but the prospect of being robbed again; he would probably find it an unpleasant sensation, and would make up his mind to resist all further attempts upon him. And, although, of course he did not use the words applied to him by that honorable member—for he had no desire to obstruct the business of the country—he should unhesitatingly resist any extension of local works, until some account was made out between the North and South. It might be said that his figures were wrong, and that he had not made out his case. But his statements had not been disproved, and he believed they were correct. His constituents believed them to be so, and he hoped the honorable member at the head of the Government, after having considered them, would admit that he could not see the justice of taxing the people in Bowen, for instance, Charleville, Roma, and other remote portions of the colony, for local works in other districts, from which they derived no advantage whatever. He maintained that the North, which was at present the weaker portion of the colony, had been held down by its stronger brother, and forcibly robbed of its

due; and he would ask the Secretary for Public Works whether he had not stated in that House, that the North had a just claim for money of which she had been robbed by the South. Could any one be surprised that when this debt had been going on and increasing year after year, northern members should feel some wrath. He thought the Government should at once state that they wished to do equal justice to all parts of the colony; that they would not receive one penny from any part of the colony upon which they would not spend a penny; and that if public works were wanted, that portion of the colony in which the works were carried out, should pay the cost of them. If that were done, all the angry feelings which had been created would disappear, and northern members would have no cause of complaint. It was idle to say that there was no grievance to be redressed. Were the Government prepared to look into the matter, and to do justice if they found that injustice had been done? Were they, in fact, prepared to carry out the English principle that localities must be taxed for local works, and have nothing to do with expenditure for general purposes. He did not wish to detain the House much longer, as he was sorry to see they took but little interest in the matter. He would simply say, in conclusion, that he should extremely regret to see the Ministry pursue a course which must inevitably end in separation. He considered separation a great evil. He had seen, over and over again, that countries which were broken up into small states were generally at animosity with each other. Even between Sydney and Melbourne, and the other colonies, there were differences which were continually requiring adjustment; and he felt sorry to see the head of the Government of Queensland inclined to favor a policy which must lead to disunion. He did not think it was a statesmanlike course to adopt, when it was in his power so to act that he might be able to look back in after years to the time when he had contended against separation, as the proudest period of his life;—when he might have the satisfaction of remembering that he had grappled with and overcome the difficulty, and earned a place for himself in the ranks of statesmen. Believing, therefore, that separation ought to be avoided, at any rate for the present, and that the House was anxious to do justice to all parts of the colony, he thought they should agree to the resolutions he had placed before them; and he thought the honorable member at the head of the Government should be the first to admit that they were just in principle, and should be carried out in practice.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that if the honorable member for Rockhampton pressed the resolutions before the House to a division, he should feel compelled to vote against him. As the House was aware, the subject of local self-government was one of the topics touched

upon in the opening speech, as one in reference to which the Government would submit certain resolutions for the consideration of the House. It was therefore the duty of the Government to lay those resolutions on the table of the House. That he had done; and he thought it would be more convenient to discuss the whole question of local government when those resolutions came before them. It was properly the function of the Government to deal with this matter; but of course it was competent for any honorable member to discuss the abstract question if he chose. He should, therefore, for the sake of convenience, and because he could not see that any practical result would follow, vote against these resolutions. The House would see that he had laid on the table a long series of resolutions, which comprised in effect all the details of a Bill; and they could, in a very short time, be made into a Bill, if the House sanctioned the principles embodied in them. That, he thought, would be a much more practical way of dealing with the subject, and when those resolutions had been submitted to the ordeal of debate, he should be able to see what was left for the Government to deal with. He observed that in the third section of the resolutions of the honorable member for Rockhampton, he claimed

"full power over all the revenues of the district, and over local works and lands."

Why, without any responsibility that he could see, they would have full power over all the lands, just as the Minister for Lands now possessed, besides certain other powers. Now, the honorable member had not made himself at all clear, to him at least, what kind of local government he wished to have established. He had objected to his description of cocked hats and deputy-governors all over the country; but what he (the Attorney-General) wished the House to understand was, that he was not prepared to have a number of small Governments within a large one. He had not the least idea that the honorable member contemplated dressing himself up in a cocked hat, and coming out as a Governor. He objected also to the manner in which the honorable member had reproduced his opinions on the subject of separation. Believing that the honorable member was not in a mood to deal with this question in an amicable spirit, he had said,

"Well, of course, if we cannot possibly agree, we must adopt the alternative, and separate."

But he had never deliberately expressed an opinion in favor of separation; but he did say that if a house was divided against itself, it could not stand, and that then it might be better to separate. He must confess that he could not see the evils which the honorable member predicted if such a result should take place. They had every day before their eyes examples to prove that some of the smallest countries in the world were the best governed; and that, allowing a country to

possess the natural means of supporting a population and sufficient national strength, it was not necessary to possess a vast territory to make its people prosperous and happy. He did not therefore contemplate any such serious evils in the event of separation. He did not intend at present to deal with the general question, because he thought that would be more properly discussed when his own resolutions came before the House. He was now speaking to the observations which the honorable member for Rockhampton had directed to it, and he would refer to the honorable member's opinions in the same way as the honorable member had referred to his. He agreed with him that it was not desirable to multiply the different sources of taxation, and it was in that spirit that the other colonies were endeavoring to act. But look at the enormous size of Queensland. This colony was three times the size of France, and what harm would there be if it were cut into two? What was the use of keeping people together who were so completely divided in their hopes, and aims, in their pursuits, nay, in their very climate and products. Could it be supposed that if the North become enormously rich, through her gold and mineral treasures, she would care to be joined to her poorer sister in the South? No, she would separate, as sure as fate, and form herself into a new colony. Why, even now, she had become rich, and he could already hear a low whisper which spoke of separation. He had himself seen the account of a meeting in the North, in which that opinion was expressed. Well, that he called a whisper—the commencement of a movement in the North which was to result in separation. He had stated that if the North and South could not agree in their wants and opinions, he should be glad to forward such an object—that was all he had said. He had always taken a great interest in the North, and had always been ready to support any movement to advance its interests. He should be glad to see it progress in wealth and population; he had no mean or narrow-minded views in connection with it; and if separation tomorrow would create a great northern colony, and be to their advantage, he would give his vote in favor of the step. He had no wish to see the North fettered by the South, for he had also a firm belief in the good fortunes of the South. Though they were at present, he admitted, suffering under a great depression, and they did not possess the mineral wealth of the North, yet they possessed resources of their own which he believed would make them prosperous in all time to come. All he had been able to gather from the speech of the honorable member for Rockhampton was, that the northern districts wanted to get rid of the burden of the interest on the public debt—that they should remain nominally a portion of the colony of Queensland without any liability; that an adjustment of accounts

between them and the South should be made, and that they should pay for their share of the expenses of the general Government and no more. ["Hear, hear," from the Opposition benches.] Well, that was what he called repudiation. ["No, no."] It certainly looked like it. If the North refused to contribute towards the public debt, how was the South to pay it? The honorable member stated that it would be of considerable importance, in negotiating with the other colonies, to possess a large territory and a large population, and possibly it would be an advantage. But he had said if Queensland were divided into two or even three separate colonies they would still be entitled to a high position from their territory and population. Her voice would still be a loud one, and would claim a good hearing in any federal meeting of the Australian colonies. The United States, he thought, gave a marked example of the important influence exercised in their great national council by the different states. It was a broad national principle, that the country, as a whole, should be taxed to meet a national debt. He remarked that, besides the resolutions now under consideration, there was a motion on a similar subject upon the paper in the name of another honorable member, and there were the elaborate Government resolutions; so that the House would be invited three times to discuss the same question. No doubt, the small attendance on the present occasion indicated the feeling that the question was to be twice presented again. He should not enter into the resolutions further than to say that it would be inconvenient to pass them: they were indefinite in their terms, and led the House into a matter which they did not very clearly see the bearing of at this moment. It seemed to him that whilst the honorable member represented the necessity to avoid separation, it would be almost the inevitable consequence of a division of the debt or liability—the colony would soon be severed into two or more portions. He (the Attorney-General) could not imagine that the plan of dividing the interest of the permanent debt over a number of minor portions of the colony could be easily accomplished. It appeared to him that when a man entered into a state, he took upon him equally with the rest of the community the whole liabilities of that state: that was a great national principle. He could not imagine that any young and growing district should ask the older portions of the colony to accept all liability and allow it to escape its fair share, as the honorable member for Rockhampton proposed. The honorable member might convince some persons in the colony that his plan was practicable; but he would find it hard to convince the House. With reference to the statement of accounts, he (the Attorney-General) mentioned that he received a note from the honorable member for Kennedy a few weeks ago in which Mr. Fitzgerald informed him that he had

placed something in the hands of the honorable member for Rockhampton that was for his (the Attorney-General's) perusal. There it was! He had not attempted to examine it: the only portion he had been able to look at was the heading—"Account for the year 1869." That threw very little light upon the mutual indebtedness of the two portions of the colony—the North and the South. It was manifest that if local matters could be dealt with by local authority, leaving general questions to the colonial legislature, it would be advantageous; but to advance that only, and nothing more, was not what was required; it was a convenient peg to hang a speech upon; but there was nothing in the resolutions which would enable the House to come to any determination upon the subject. It was very inconvenient to anticipate the resolutions he (the Attorney-General) had placed upon the notice paper; and he should not follow the honorable member, and do so. There were the resolutions for the House to accept or reject. Honorable members had heard about New Zealand. Well, he protested that he was not one of those who believed that it was impossible for the Government of this colony to be carried on without local government; he believed it was possible to have just government in this colony—a government that would expend the revenue in a fair and equitable way, for the benefit of the whole colony. But there would, he admitted, be some advantage gained in the removal from the Assembly, of discussions such as sometimes arose upon very small matters. He was not one of those who believed that the colony need necessarily separate; but separation would be the almost inevitable effect of the great growth of the northern districts—the people would become restless, and desire to establish themselves as a new Government. Still, it was possible, if the people would be wise, and just and true to each other, to administer the affairs of the colony of Queensland with justice to all. He would advise honorable members, before they accepted any form of local government, to reflect whether they were likely to get that cheap system of government which the honorable member for Rockhampton anticipated—whether there would be such a saving as the honorable member stated—whether the local powers given to local ministers would be successfully exercised to the satisfaction of the people of each division or district of the colony. Instead of the present six Ministers in Brisbane, there might be a dozen added—three or four in each district of the colony. He was very doubtful if local government would be found cheaper than the present system. Still, if it would promote largely the prosperity of the colony, a sacrifice even in that way might be made. In the opening speech, the Government stated their intention to deal with the question of local government, and as an earnest of their good faith, he had placed the

resolutions before the House. He invited honorable members to consider them attentively. The honorable member for Rockhampton said that, under the present system, the present administration was faulty in regard to the revenue expended on local works. He (the Attorney-General) asked him what assurance could be given that under another—even his own—system, the administration would be perfect? Had small local governments been so free from corruptions, so pure, so wise, as that he had reason to think his anticipations would be realised by the change? A great many hard words had been used, because the expenditure might not be exactly equally distributed in such a way as a nice sense of justice might require; but, it was not, therefore, that some portions of the colony should be charged with, or be guilty of robbery of the other portions. Those were not words he submitted to the honorable member for Rockhampton, which were likely to advance natural good feeling and friendly regard, or the interests of truth. The House might discuss the questions brought before them, temperately and without hard words, which really did not promote a good understanding, nor were they likely to accomplish any beneficial result that the honorable member wished for. Let them address themselves without hard words, with sober reason, and justly, to the consideration of the subject; and, if they found it impossible to agree upon the administration of the whole colony, there was hope in separation. He hoped for the good of all parts of the colony alike. If the independent action of its parts were necessary for that good, he would not object; but as he had pointed out, he did not think there would be any failure of its accomplishment by thoroughly united action. He was not one of those who believed separation would come soon; he thought the good sense of the colonists would give proper consideration to the advantages of remaining as it was. He hoped he should never see separation;—he did not wish to see it;—but, if he could believe firmly, or if he saw that it was for the advancement of the two great portions of Queensland that they should be separated—that they would grow in wealth thereby—he should do his best to promote it. The honorable member for Rockhampton set himself up, on all occasions, to judge whether the proceedings of the House, or the proposals of the Government, were statesmanlike or not. He said he was not vain; but he (the Attorney-General) had a shrewd suspicion that the honorable member thought himself the statesman *par excellence* of the House; he thought there was a lurking feeling in the honorable member that he could instruct them all. He (the Attorney-General) was very happy to receive instruction; he always listened to the honorable member with great consideration; but, at the same time, he was not prepared to set him up as a model statesman, from whom

he should receive instruction. He did not think the honorable member had given such a proof of statesmanship as to enable him (the Attorney-General) to rest with any assurance upon his advice. He should like very well to leave his name behind him in this colony—he should like to have credit with the people of Queensland for having done something towards the advancement of their welfare—he hoped, even, to achieve a little good, that should engrave his name upon the records of the colony—and, if a grateful remembrance should follow him, he would have reaped a sufficient reward for any service he was able to render the country in which all his interests were centered. He had no great pretensions to statesmanship, but to do his duty honestly and faithfully.

Mr. PALMER said that, so far as he had been able to follow the Premier, the principal objections taken to the motion at the present time was, that it was an abstract question and would lead to very small results—even if it were pressed to a division, and the honorable member for Rockhampton should get a majority in the House to agree with him. He must admit, at once, that he agreed, to some extent, with the Premier. He had once or twice told the honorable mover that he could see very little good in resolutions on which an Act was not intended to follow immediately; and he stated it when a division took place, two or three sessions ago, on a similar question to the present one. He still saw the force of the argument, that there was not enough to be gained by the discussion—even if the resolutions were carried. The House had an instance of what he meant in the resolutions carried on a former occasion by the honorable member for Kennedy—truisms, he called them. Nobody who had studied the subject could find fault with the substance of the resolutions before the House. The Premier also stated, as another reason for opposing them, that they clashed with some resolutions which he had tabled. They did clash to a certain extent. Passing over a great number of the ministerial resolutions as they stood on the paper, he came to the sixty-second, referring to “grants-in-aid.” It was impossible for any one, who had the interests of northern or western Queensland at heart, to agree to the form in which those resolutions were to be practically carried out—

“From the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, actually received during the preceding year, there shall be deducted the costs, charges, and expenses, incident to the collection, management, and receipt thereof; also, the annual interest of the public debt of Queensland, at the time of the passing of the Bill; also, all the other costs, charges, and expenses of the Government and Parliament of Queensland, and all such other sums as the Parliament of Queensland shall, from time to time, deem it necessary and proper to deduct, for national purposes. The balance of the actual receipts of the colony, after such deduc-

tions, shall be divided over the total population of the colony as ascertained at the last preceding census, and the proportion of the whole per head of its population, allocated to every established district under the Bill."

That was one way of keeping a promise to bring forward a Provincial Councils Bill. Of all the ways to establish local government, that was one of the most extraordinary. It must be patent to every member of the House that if the Legislature acted in the way it had acted heretofore, there would be no balance to be divided, and the proportion of the revenue allocated to each district would be nil. Unless a very great change came over the spirit of their dream,—unless there was a considerable reform in the management of the finances of the colony—there would be no funds to carry on; the districts might send in their bills at the end of the year, but there would be a deficit. It was notorious that ever since separation the colony had been getting into debt deeper, year after year. He did not think this was the time to debate the resolutions of the honorable the Premier; but he could not help drawing attention to that paragraph. It seemed to him rather like nonsense that the question whether provincial councils should be established should have to be debated at length, on some sixty-six resolutions; when, after all, the districts would get nothing, except what they might choose to tax themselves for. He did not think that came up to the ideas of any honorable member in regard to local government. The Premier alluded several times to separation, and he led the House to believe that his opinion was pretty firmly fixed that, if the different parts of the colony could not agree, it would be better to separate. The ideas of the Government and their supporters as to separation were very different from the ideas of the thickly populated parts of northern Queensland. The separation that Government and other persons at the southern end of the colony thought of was that which would give the boundary line at Cape Palmerston, going thence west. That was not at all the idea of the northern districts. No separation would be acceptable to the thickly populated part of the North, or would satisfy any but the Brisbane residents, which would throw Rockhampton on the southern colony, or keep that town and district in Queensland. After such a separation as that, there could be no satisfactory intercourse with this colony; trade would be inevitably driven away; nothing would come here; and the North would send to Sydney or Melbourne for what it wanted. It had been said that, amongst the evils of the new colony, would be that the expense of government would be out of all proportion to the population—that all the evils which had been experienced in the Government of Queensland would be quadrupled—as the expenses of governing a small popula-

tion in a large territory must be always very much greater than governing a thickly populated territory. Those were the evils which the northern part of the colony would suffer, if separation were effected. Well, he did not say they were sufficient to deter the inhabitants of the northern districts from trying for separation, if they were absolutely driven to it by the misappropriation of funds derived from taxation upon their imports. He believed they would carry out their ideas of separation, but not to have the boundary line at Cape Palmerston. He did not wish for separation; but he did not look upon it with that feeling of horror that some honorable members affected. He would advocate it, if he saw fit; and he could not agree that the man who advocated separation was, thereby, a traitor to his country. Separated or united, the various districts and the inhabitants of the colony were still under the same Crown; and if it would advance the interests of those claiming it, they had a right to it. He looked upon separation as the resource of the weak against the strong. He should regret if the cause for separation should continue. That separation must be, eventually, he had no doubt whatever;—it was a mere matter of time. But he thought premature separation was to be avoided. To follow out the similes suggested by a previous speaker, he held that the elder ought not to take the younger brother's portion, and ought not to turn the younger adrift with nothing. It was the duty of the elder to nurture the younger, so that when his time came for him to go upon the world, he could depart properly prepared, and, with his just portion, to start fairly for himself. He did not think that, taking the best part of the revenue of the North for the interest of the debt contracted for the sole benefit of the South, was dealing fairly by the younger brother. There was no difficulty, that he saw, in keeping the public accounts so that, when the time arrived, each division of the colony should be prepared to take its share of the public debt. There was no difficulty whatever in a commercial firm, after a long course of years, going over the partnership accounts, and dividing their debts and assets.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: If for separation, he agreed to that.

Mr. PALMER: With a view to separation. He only looked upon the colony as a partnership of the different districts for a period; and he could see no reason why, in that way, the House should not regard it as a mercantile firm. He knew that there could be no difficulty whatever, now, in obtaining a statement of the public debt apportioned to the different districts of the colony, in proportion to the taxation raised—the revenue derived from them—and the expenditure. The late Premier, Sir Robert Mackenzie, when in office, assured him that, in a very short space of time, the accounts would be ready, and could be laid on the table of the House in a

week. That was what honorable members representing northern districts wanted at the present time. They wanted to know their standing in the firm; and they wanted to know not only what they had to expect as juniors, but what was done to the senior parties in the firm. The Premier said that all parties were equally responsible for the debt—that the whole of Queensland, from the southern boundary to the Gulf of Carpentaria, was liable for it. He (Mr. Palmer) admitted that, at present, it was so; but it was absurd to say that, in the event of separation, the northern portion of the colony should be responsible for the whole of the debt. The argument would, no doubt, hold good if the firm became insolvent—each member of the firm was then responsible for the whole debt; but where a business was on the safe side—where there were assets as well as debts—the members of the firm who had put in the largest amount of money took the largest amount out, and the junior took his share in proportion. On the same principle, the accounts ought to be kept in this colony, so that, at any time, upon the dissolution of the partnership between the South and the North, they could both know how the different districts stood to each other. But if the honorable the Attorney-General's reasoning were carried to its inevitable conclusion, Queensland must be responsible for the whole debt of New South Wales.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes. We are made so.

MR. PALMER: Well, he thought it the duty of the Premier to call on the Treasurer immediately to pay the New South Wales Government the whole amount due under the circumstances. The debt had been talked about enough, and payment should be delayed no longer.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That was a matter between ourselves.

MR. PALMER: With respect to provincial councils, he did not go so far as the honorable member for Rockhampton, although he thought local government desirable, and desirable for the South as well as the North. He believed honorable members ought not to sit in Parliament to legislate for roads and bridges that they knew nothing about. He took it that the Parliament would be what they ought to be if they acted according to what was laid down in the first resolution—

"That the labors of Parliament ought to be strictly confined to matters relating to the general government of the colony."

He did not see how any one could dissent from that, even the Premier. Again, the second resolution said—

"That it is the duty of the Government to introduce a measure that will grant full powers of local government to the different districts of the colony."

Surely the House, at all events, would admit that? Then why object to pass those two

resolutions, if not the third? Centralisation, he looked upon as the great evil of all Government, so far as local works were concerned. There was no proper plan for the supervision of them such as there would be if those works were placed in the hands of local boards who represented themselves and their neighbors, and who had an interest in their completion. If such a system were carried into effect, the House would have no such matters to take up their time as the Bungil Creek Bridge; which was only one of a number of instances of the public time being wasted in the most extraordinary manner, and nothing to show for it; discussing what very few members knew anything about. While in office, he initiated the plan of dividing funds voted for local works amongst local boards, nominated at public meetings, and appointed by the Colonial Secretary at once; and he believed it worked in a proper and satisfactory way, and thereby a great deal of expense had been spared to the Government, and a great deal more work done for the money than under the previous system. He and the honorable gentleman who acted with him only asked the Government to carry that system a little further; and he really did not see why they should not do so. The resolutions did not ask for local Parliaments, or for the establishment of an *imperium in imperio*; that he should strictly object to. It was only to cut the country up into larger municipalities than existed—do that, and the system might be said to be completed. He did not see why the Attorney-General objected to the resolutions—unless in a spirit of jealousy, that they clashed with his own resolutions! That, however, was a spirit he should never impute to the honorable gentleman; but he could discover no other, to actuate his conduct on the present occasion. The resolutions were meant to apply to the whole colony; and he was quite satisfied that the more they were thought over, the better they would be liked; and the more they were thought over, the more honorable members would feel that the Parliament should not degenerate into a parish vestry. There was a time when he (Mr. Palmer) should not have been surprised to see them opposed by the Ministry, because everything which was proposed for the benefit of the North was opposed; but, really, such a change had come over the House—a desire to be just animated honorable members—that he was surprised at the present opposition. The honorable the Attorney-General concluded his speech with a dissertation on patriotism: he generally wound up that way, or with some allusion to his career, and his hopes to end it in this country. That was really becoming stereotyped. The best way for him to earn a niche in the Temple of Fame was to carry out the resolutions, and not to talk about his hopes to do it—to show by his deeds that he was above any petty feeling

against resolutions brought forward by an honorable member not in the Government. The resolutions before the House did not clash with those of the Government. Let them be passed without any more discussion, and it would show the Premier that the House was ready to discuss his own resolutions temperately when he brought them forward.

Mr. WALSH said he should not be able to advise his honorable friend, the member for Rockhampton, to push his resolutions to a division. He really did not see their value. They did not conclude in the ordinary way—That they should be sent up to His Excellency the Governor, or to the other House for their concurrence. There was nothing practical about them, though they were framed in terms that could not be denied. There was not the least doubt that they indicated that there were wrongs to be redressed and misgovernment. There could be no doubt, also, that such a state of things ought to be remedied. But, even if the resolutions were of a more practical character, he could not see that they would be of the least value. Therefore, as the matter had been fairly and impartially discussed, he thought his honorable friend would be perfectly justified, in consonance with his duty to himself and to the country in asking the permission of the House to withdraw the resolutions; and, indeed, he thought that would be the best course for him to pursue. He sympathised, to a certain extent, with the honorable member for the way in which the resolutions had been received, not only by the Government, but by the House. He had gone through the same trying ordeal himself—he had attempted, as the honorable member now did, to do his duty to the country, and he had been treated in the same way; and, until the North was stronger in the House, every motion for its benefit would be met with the same callousness by the House and by the Governments—to so many of which the honorable member for Eastern Downs belonged. One of the first things he (Mr. Walsh) did in the House, was to call attention to a subject similar to the one which the honorable member brought forward. Without vanity or egotism, he might say that his resolutions were quite as practicable as the honorable member's—as good as his—and the House would not listen to them. He no sooner rose to address the House, than he was almost talked down. He remembered that the Speaker rose and gave the House the severest lecture that he had ever heard administered. He was then compelled to say what the honorable member for Rockhampton might have said this evening—though, of course, in better language than he was able to use—

“I am not at all surprised that a motion of this kind should be met by such proceedings as you have very properly taken notice of. Too long have the northern districts of this colony been treated with indifference.”

The honorable member had no sooner risen this evening, than he was met with derision, such as he never saw directed to any one in the House, except to one notorious member. He (Mr. Walsh) objected to an honorable member being so greeted—he objected to such coldness and neglect being evinced to a subject of great interest to the colony at large, as on the present occasion—he objected to the way in which the honorable member for Rockhampton had been treated by the House and the Government this evening. He trusted the honorable member would not take it very much to heart, and that he would, like himself (Mr. Walsh), hear it without self-abasement. The whole question raised by the honorable member for Rockhampton was, he admitted, fraught with the greatest difficulty. He was never yet able to see how provincial councils, or any other system of local government, in this curiously-peopled country, could be carried out. If all were alike—if the people followed the same pursuits—if the districts were all the same size, and had the same number of population—some scheme might be adopted that might be applicable to all; but, with the varied interests that existed, he could not give his adhesion at all to what was called local self-government. He could not see that it would be advisable to extend the district councils on any such scheme, as he apprehended that to be which was propounded by the Premier. It would be too costly in the scattered districts of this colony to work satisfactorily; in such a large district as Leichhardt or Kennedy, it could not be carried out. It would be sacrificing the really valuable—the moneyed—interests of those districts, or leaving them at the mercy of the aspiring few, who had very little to lose and everything to gain by becoming public characters. As an Englishman, he should like to bring representative institutions, as justice, to every man's door; but he would never agree to do that which he thought would be injurious. He would take one case by way of illustration. The Port Curtis District was large, and, with the Leichhardt, would probably be formed into one district for local self-government; it might also include the Mackenzie. Supposing those enormous and rich districts united for local government, he would venture to say that they would be completely at the mercy of Rockhampton, and, in a very short time, the people would make the same outcry against the rule of that town as the people of the North were now making against the southern Government. Every district in the colony would be put into a similar position towards another, that all now occupied with relation to the South, and they would have much the same complaints as they were now compelled to make against the Government for geographical, as well as other reasons. He did not think the Premier addressed himself to the question with that statesmanlike ability which he should have shewn on this occasion;

and he was not altogether satisfied with him, because it appeared that the honorable gentleman was becoming that very dangerous character—dangerous for his own reputation and for the welfare of the country—a trimmer. It was not very long ago he heard the honorable gentleman cheering when some honorable member on the Ministerial side of the House spoke of separation for the North. He looked with dread upon that man who spoke prematurely of separation. The honorable the Attorney-General, this evening, not only told the House, at the commencement of his speech, that he was prepared, when the day arrived, to agree to separation—when the people of the North demanded it—but, at the end of his address, when he found his remarks were not very palatable, he told the House that, as he was a patriot—of course they had a dash of the patriot again, though he (Mr. Walsh) forgot the honorable member's exact words—he did not hope to live to see separation, and that there ought to be no separation, unless the different districts of the colony found it is possible to agree. He told the honorable gentleman that, instead of casting about for a bait for the North, as a statesman, he should set about removing everything which would raise disagreement or discontent in the minds of northern people. He admitted that it was a great task; but it was not beyond the province or the ability of a great statesman to do so in their time. In their time, there was no need for Queensland being divided, or becoming smaller in territory. He told the Premier that the cry for separation had not been nearly as loud in the North as the South. The whispers from the North were but the echoes which had reached it from the South. The real panacea for prevailing discontent and the grievances of the North was the removal of the capital. He should not be doing his duty to the country if he did not assert the fact. He knew it was one most unpalatable to be stated in Brisbane. Any unprejudiced man would see, without being told of it, that the capital of this colony was not in the position that it should be for the benefit of the colony at large. When the House arrived at that conviction, they should set about giving effect to it, and see if could not remove the capital to where it ought to be.

MR. LAMB: Gladstone.

MR. HALY: Gayndah.

Another HONORABLE MEMBER: Maryborough.

MR. WALSH: That was the usual way, he knew. The Premier was a southern man; but Gladstone, Gayndah, Maryborough, or some other more central place was better fitted for the capital than Brisbane. The subject was too serious for laughter. It was one on which every part of the colony would yet have something to say; and he trusted soon to see that it would be forced upon the attention of the Legislature, and would not

be submitted as a joke. The colony would be better governed if the position of the capital were changed to a place where there would not be such a preponderance of the inhabitants wedded to the same interests and duly influenced by legislation for the general welfare. Honorable members should not legislate for the present only, but for the future; not for one place, but for the whole colony;—otherwise, their conduct was selfish. He had gone over the subject before, and in a thin House, he would not detain honorable members longer. He wished it to be understood, that while he desired somewhat of an improvement in legislation for the fair treatment of the outlying districts of the colony, and better ground than now prevailed; he could not see that parcelling the ground out, either as the honorable member for Rockhampton or the Premier desired to do, was sufficient for the object sought. He hoped, however, that the House would deal with the resolutions in that impartial way, of which the honorable mover showed so good an example.

MR. DE SARGE said he thought it a pity that the time of the House should be taken up on so grave and important a subject, when it would be a topic of discussion so soon again upon another series of resolutions which had been tabled by the Government. The hopes of the great part of the northern politicians, it would be found, were not centered in provincial councils, but in separation as a growing colony. At any rate, that was the object of the meeting held at Bowen the other day. Such separation would give the North an inexpensive form of Government—and that was what it wanted—suited to its wants. The administration heretofore did not sufficiently consider the North—it was not wisely treated; and in separation it would find redress. He thought that these local councils were not wholly desirable, being expensive and cumbrous, and he was pretty certain that a recent meeting held at Bowen was in favor of separation and a Crown colony, and not for these provincial councils. It would be well if the present Government studied the better administration of their government, so that they sent out able officers, and plenty of them, to meet the wants of the northern districts; they might yet avoid these local councils, or the necessity for separation. He thought that the ignorance of the present Ministry on the wants of the North and its geography, were main causes of all these difficulties. If the Ministry were to travel throughout the whole central portion of the colony to find out the wants of the North, they would be able to decide the justice of the constant remonstrances of the North, sent to that House. He admitted, fully, the very great grievances they were suffering under, but he failed to see that they would get those evils redressed by local councils. There would be great bickerings and jealousy, besides great expenses attendant upon those local councils. If it were difficult for the districts to obtain one

efficient member to represent them in the House, there would be greater difficulty in obtaining ten or twelve to attend for a northern district. The measure for local councils would, however, have to be discussed more fully on a subsequent day; and he thought that the honorable member for Rockhampton should have postponed the present debate, as the question would have again to be discussed in the measure of which that honorable member was, to a certain extent, the god-father.

Mr. BELL said that a great portion of the speeches made by the honorable member for Port Curtis and the honorable member for Maryborough, met with a response from him, and he thought their suggestions admirable. He could not agree with the resolutions, as put forth by the honorable member for Rockhampton. He did not think their discussion likely to be more useful or more practical than the motions discussed or measures passed by the chamber in past years. The honorable member for Rockhampton could see, or would find out, that nothing but practical resolutions would be listened to in that chamber. The honorable member's observations were not looked upon with great importance; first, because they were not practicable, and so lead to no good result;—and then, because the subject would have to be gone over again in debate. There was, indeed, no position in which the honorable member could put the subject, which would lead to a result favorable to his views. If that honorable gentleman would address himself to the Additional Members Bill, he would do the North more service than the resolutions he had in view. He could not entertain the opinion that the colony was so far advanced that it could be divided off into localities, with government which must be of an expensive character. Indeed he could not see that the municipalities of the colony, for instance, had shewn themselves more capable of dealing with questions of a local character than the different Governments hitherto had been on their own account. They were in themselves but a very small municipality. Though the subjects brought before them were large and broad in principle, yet, at present, they had no more to deal with than many municipalities alone in other parts of the world. If the good government of the country were better attended to, the result would be far better than to divide it into a system of municipalities which would be productive of no greater benefit. He thought, however, that the system asked for, and entered upon, by the honorable member for Port Curtis, was a very valuable one indeed, and, if carried out, would remove much of the complaints they heard. He referred to the expenditure of moneys by boards in each district where the money was raised, for local works. He had once thought that they should have a financial separation of North from South; but the more it was spoken of and discussed the more

impracticable it was seen to become. It was impossible that a thinly populated country could have separation for years to come. The time, no doubt, would come when they must have separation, and then there would be an equal feeling for separation on both sides. But, it was evident from what had been said in the course of the debate by honorable members from the North, that there was no great desire for separation on the part of sensible men in the North; neither was there on this side of the country, so long as the position of the colony was such as not to make it appear necessary. He had no doubt, in his own mind, that when the population of the colony increased sufficiently, a more central position than this city would be more suitable as the head-quarters of the Government. By that he did not mean the change of the capital in a general sense; but he believed that, like Washington, in America, a more central position should be pointed out and used for the legislation of the colony. However, that was not a subject for immediate consideration, but would come forward at some future day. But, so long as they were a thinly scattered population, the colony was not ripe for subdivision. In the matter of representation, the feeling in his own mind was, that the North had not yet a full share of the representation. As he thought much might be done in that way to allay the grievances of the North against the South, he hoped the honorable member for Rockhampton and the Government would fully consider that question. The proposed Additional Members Bill did not, in its present shape, give a full share of representation to the North. He had risen merely to state that he did not see any greater chance of the resolutions being passed with good results than previous resolutions of a similar character. He did not think that the strong intentions put forth by the Premier on the notice paper would come to a conclusion satisfactory to the honorable member for Rockhampton. There were great difficulties in the way; and, although the honorable Premier, doubtless, had felt as great satisfaction in setting down his principles upon paper as the honorable member for Rockhampton in framing his resolutions, yet he was afraid that both were doomed to meet the same fate as previous efforts. He was sure the House did not see its way to side with the views of the honorable member for Rockhampton.

Mr. GROOM said he was prepared to vote for the first and second resolutions, if any good could ensue from them, but not for the third resolution. He was opposed to the third resolution because it proposed to give the districts power to dispose of the public lands.

Mr. WALSH: No; the administration of the lands.

Mr. GROOM: The administration would include disposal. Having written to New Zealand for information concerning the pro-

vincial councils there, he had been fully satisfied that a mistake was made by the honorable member for the Kennedy and the honorable member for Rockhampton in proposing to entrust the administration of public lands to provincial councils. Thus it had happened in New Zealand, that, when rich gold fields had attracted to one place population from other districts, so that they were almost depopulated, these other districts reduced the price of land as a counter attraction to the gold fields. With provincial councils established according to the resolutions, similar results would ensue here. In some districts, for instance, they would at once annul the ten years' leases. Therefore, they should be very cautious in giving up the larger matters, which should be brought before the general Government only. But, as the whole question would be thoroughly gone into on another occasion, he would then give the House a statement of the working of the provincial councils in New Zealand, where the inhabitants had become heartily sick of them, and wished that they had never had them. If the resolutions were pressed to a division, he should vote against the third of them.

Mr. FRANCIS said he rose simply to assure the honorable member for Rockhampton that it was not because he did not feel a great interest in the matter before the House that he did not think it desirable to enter upon the subject on the present occasion. He avoided it, as he saw the resolutions of the Government were to come before the House next week. He wished also to deny the statement of the honorable member for Maryborough, concerning the indifference of southern members to the subject. On the contrary, during this discussion, he and his colleague, the honorable member for East Moreton, the honorable member for West Moreton, and other southern members were present all the time of the debate. So that it was not true that southern members were not interested in the question. With regard to separation, he believed there was neither more nor less outcry for it in the North than in the South, where there was simply none at all, so far as he could see. On the contrary, there was a very strong feeling that the colony was one, and that justice should be done to all parts alike. If he were an American he would protest against separation, and would be for union; if an Irishman, he should be against the repeal of the union, and for justice to Ireland; were he a German, he would be willing to sweep away small principalities, to show that Germany was one nation. He was glad to see that the Premier had modified his statements in advocacy of separation. For himself, he had no sympathy with it. They should render justice to the demands of the North, and he thought there was some justice in them. If the law was badly administered they should administer it better. He held that there was no North and no South; where was the North? Where did it begin?

There was the East as well as the North, and the East had as much to complain of against past Governments as the North. The West too could make out as good a claim. What they had to contend against was the baneful Darling Downs interest. For the sake of self-preservation, he should be sorry to see the northern members separated from the East and West, who would be left to fight their own battle against the Darling Downs, alone. If the House would accept the practical suggestions made by himself, such as the payment of members, a land tax, the assessment of lands, and apportionment to the different districts, of their local burdens, these, and other practical measures, would meet many of the objects had in view by the honorable member for Rockhampton.

Mr. LAMB said he had hoped that the honorable member for the Warrego would have given the House his views on the question; but as he had declined, he would state what he thought of matters as an outside man. He had not been induced to alter his views of the question, and he thought the resolutions might have been left for discussion till the honorable the Premier brought forward his resolutions before the House. He saw that the honorable member for the Kennedy had something of the same kind on the notice paper, so that there were three sets of debate on the subject, when one would have been quite enough, after the debates of a previous session. The honorable member for Rockhampton considered the South as an elder brother robbing the younger. But with district councils, in an outside district, the feeling would be that of several older brothers robbing the youngest; for before the produce was through the provinces, to the port, there would be so much tax as to leave very little income for the outsiders. They would have their roads and taxes for them, and the outside men would be taxed for the ports, so that they would be well fleeced in the end. The remote country had to be taxed to dredge the Fitzroy, to build wharves, to make railways, and the outsiders had to pay £1,500 a year to drag their goods for a mile through the streets. There would be a dozen of such places, with the inauguration of district councils, and for his own part, he considered the rule of the King of Brisbane enough, without half-a-dozen reigning at Tambo and elsewhere. He would suggest that the honorable member should withdraw his resolutions, as this subject would come on again for discussion, and further opportunity be afforded for speaking on it.

Mr. ARCHER, in reply, said, he could not feel gratified to find, after the debate, that if he were to divide the House, there would be only one or two to support his motion. Yet, it afforded an idea of what the House thinks of local self-government, and the chance of any measure in the way of it, brought forward by the Government, being passed by it.

Every one was prepared to vote against these resolutions; but although honorable members had expressed their opinions so decidedly, yet he would answer some of the principal objections brought against the motion. One of the strongest was, that the resolutions were not practical, and they were likened to the resolutions introduced by the honorable member for the Kennedy last year. The principles involved were assented to, because in abstract resolutions which nobody could deny. He would ask, with respect to the present resolutions, was it an abstract resolution, that—

"The time has now arrived when the labors of Parliament ought to be strictly confined to matters relating to the general government of the colony."

Was that abstract or was it not rather a distinct expression of opinion that the House should no longer devote its time to matter that it had no business with, but rather should confine itself to the practical government of the country. And so with the other resolutions, honorable gentlemen could not have read them to say the motion was abstract. If the House assented to the resolutions, they admitted that a measure for local government was necessary to remove from their consideration work which the House ought not to be called upon to do. The honorable member for Maryborough, and other honorable members, must have been hard-up for argument when they called the first resolution an abstract question; he could not see in what way it could be called so. Again was it abstract to determine that the Government should introduce a measure that will grant full powers of local government to the different districts of the colony? Abstract questions were generally questions of, and determined, by reasoning simply, but this was a question of fact and thoroughly practical. There was not the slightest reason in the world for the third resolution to be called abstract. In fact, all the questions contained in the motion were concrete questions, as they had a meaning which led to practical results. The honorable member at the head of the Government appeared to think it was an extraordinary thing that a demand should be made for local purposes of that portion of the revenue which did not go to the use of the general Government. For his own part, he did not see anything extraordinary in that. The honorable gentleman quoted England, as though, on his principle, England ought to be split up into districts, and the general revenue applied to local works. And so it should, if there were general taxation in England for local works. Here, in this colony, the debt was contracted for local railways, and caused the imposition of *ad valorem* duties. He would ask, when did ever England do anything like that for railways? He was surprised that the head of the Government should have drawn any such parallel.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said there was a Local Government Act in England; and, if the railways had been national works, as here, they would have been paid for with national money.

Mr. ARCHER said England was no parallel; here, the local works were made national, while England's were not; therefore there was no parallel between the two countries. It was wrong to tax a whole country by *ad valorem* duties for railways which did not benefit the people mainly paying for them. It was a species of robbery, by the power of numbers over a smaller amount of representatives. Talking about different countries, the honorable the Premier informed us that the largest country was not always the happiest; and, that Queensland was thrice the size of France, and might, therefore, well be divided. Thus, he compared Queensland with France again, for the sake of division. If the honorable member had argued that it should be filled with population, he could have understood him. But that, because Queensland was greater in extent, and with a smaller population, therefore it should be divided, he could not see. That was rather an argument why separation should not be entertained. He thought it somewhat ridiculous that the honorable member at the head of the Government should make it appear that he was anxious to repudiate. That was not so; but he was desirous that those who had the benefit of the expenditure should have to pay for it; while those who had no benefit from it should not be called upon to contribute. The part of the country he represented was called upon to pay capital and interest, for which they received no equivalent; whereas other parts should be called upon to pay it. He saw no prospect of the country being fairly dealt with, if the general country were still to be taxed for local works. If the Government, for the benefit of the South, were to swallow up the whole taxation, no measure of justice could be brought forward, so that public works might be executed where the taxes were raised. He was not now discussing whether local government would be better than the Government as it is—he was very certain it could not possibly be worse. At all events, if the local government received the money raised within the district, it would be expended amongst those living there. But that was the very lowest ground upon which local government ought to be carried out. He was told that in New Zealand such government was a failure, although every time he had spoken on the subject of local government he had said that New Zealand was not a case in point. Neither did he ask to legislate for the public lands by local government so as to lower the price. He did not ask for such legislative power. He was glad to hear that there was a strong feeling against separation, and he was trying to take a step to avert it, and to induce the House to do

justice to the North. He did not see that the present debate would result in anything; but as the head of the Government was anxious to settle the question of local government on his resolutions, he would wait till those were debated before taking more decided action on the matter. But assuredly more decided action would be taken if no practical result ensued. He should look upon the advocacy of separation as a duty if the House refused to grant the separation of accounts, crediting each district with its revenue, and charging it with what was expended upon general government only, in fair proportion. Then he should agitate as strongly as he could for the separation of the North, since there would be no other way of preventing the drain of money thence for public works in the South. That was the feeling he had, if there were no practical result from the resolutions of the honorable the Premier, although he looked upon separation as an evil. One word more, it was a thought of the Attorney-General that he was the statesman to work the object sought. Now, he believed that the honorable Premier could do something in the matter if he would but work and apply himself to the task. His diffidence had prevented him from accepting any trust on the Government benches, because he had felt that his previous life had not fitted him for it. He was surprised at the taunt that he should have been a statesman, when it was well known that he might have been a member of the Ministry now, only his honesty prevented him from being so. But he would be very much disappointed if the Premier did not produce some better measure than his resolutions pointed to, as he well might, if he applied his mind to the matter. As, however, he himself, if he were to press his motion to a division, would be in a small minority, he saw no use in doing so. He was not sorry that the debate had taken place, for if the resolutions proposed by the Premier met with the same result it would be a guide to the northern members as to what they had to expect. He begged to withdraw his motion.

Motion, by leave of the House, withdrawn.