

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 1870**

---

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, 20 December, 1870.*

Mail and Passenger Service to the United Kingdom.—  
Border Customs Duties Bill.—Electoral Districts Bill.

MAIL AND PASSENGER SERVICE TO  
THE UNITED KINGDOM.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved, pursuant  
to notice—

That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve  
itself into a Committee of the Whole, for the pur-

pose of considering the following resolution, viz.:—That it is desirable that the Government be authorised to negotiate with any parties for a mail and passenger service, *via* Fijis and San Francisco, or *via* Sydney, Auckland, and San Francisco, to the United Kingdom, at a cost to this colony not exceeding £6,000 per annum.

The honorable member said he did not think it was likely that much discussion would arise upon this resolution. He believed that every member of the House would consider it desirable to obtain better communication with the United Kingdom, and as there appeared to be very little chance of the Torres Strait route being opened, the possibility of obtaining communication *via* California deserved every consideration. The Government had received several communications on the subject, as honorable members would see by the papers laid on the table of the House. There could be no doubt that a contract had been entered into by the New Zealand Government, with a combination of firms, to to run a line of mail steamers from New Zealand to San Francisco. The first service was to be a temporary one, but three alternative lines were provided for, so that there were four contracts offered, one of which would have to be adopted. One of these proposed to extend the line to the Fiji Islands, which would be an important consideration for Queensland. He had little doubt that the colony of New South Wales would join in any scheme of this sort; and he believed that by making proper arrangements, and by alternating the service *via* Suez—which would then be left in the hands of Victoria and South Australia—with the service *via* New Zealand and San Francisco, this colony would have the advantage of a fortnightly communication with the United Kingdom at a very small cost. He had declined to propose to the Queensland Parliament a larger subsidy than £10,000; and looking to the proportion which this colony ought to subscribe, he thought it would not exceed £8,000. He found by returns from the Post Office, that the amount paid by this colony in 1868, for Ocean Mail Subsidy, was £9,199 12s. 9d.; to the A.S.N. Co., £1,887 10s.; making a total of £11,087 2s. 9d. In 1869, the Ocean Mail Subsidy was £10,255 1s. 10d.; A.S.N. Co., £1,500; total, £11,755 1s. 10d. In 1870, Ocean Mail Subsidy, £7,999 10s. 4d.; A.S.N. Co., £2,276 10s.; total, £10,276 0s. 4d. The cost of the San Francisco route (unpaid) for 1870 was £134, estimated at twenty shillings per lb.; and the Panama route for 1869, £191 11s. 5d., and 1870, £199 11s. 5d., at the same rate of twenty shillings per lb.. Now, simply as a matter of economy, he thought if the Government were authorised to contract with the company for the branch line to the Fijis, sending mails right through, the House would not go far wrong if they voted a sum not to exceed £10,000. Possibly it might be done for less;

for, of course, it would be the duty of every Government to get their mails carried as cheaply as possible. The matter was as yet unsettled as to which contract the New Zealand Government would accept; but there was the difference between £60,000 and £40,000 to be paid for those which did not include the branch line, and he thought they would think twice before spending the extra £20,000. Honorable members would see that the agent for this company, writing from New Zealand, distinctly asserted that they had a contract with the Government of that colony which provided that no mails were to be carried to the United States, except from New Zealand. If that were the case, it would then appear that the only way for Queensland to get up a trade with the States would be by this line. He believed the Sydney Government would be quite ready to join this Government in any scheme that would enable them to carry their mails in that way, and throw the onus of supporting the present mail service on the southern colonies altogether. This was a question upon which he wished to elicit an expression of opinion from the House, as during the recess it might come before the Government, and he thought they should be armed with the proper authority. It was well known that the Government could do these things upon their own responsibility and obtain the authority of the Legislature afterwards. That had been done before, but he preferred to ask the House to arm the Government with the requisite authority. He left the question in the hands of the House with every confidence.

Mr. STEPHENS said there had been a good deal of correspondence between the Government of New South Wales and this colony on the subject of mail services, as also with the New Zealand Government, and it appeared to him that it might be desirable to carry out the principles which those Governments had advocated. But he hardly thought that would be effected by the resolution before the House. It did not seem to him to be sufficiently clear. The question, as it presented itself to him, was, whether it would not be advisable to leave the Governments of South Australia and Victoria to continue the Suez line, and for this colony and New South Wales to join the New Zealand line *via* San Francisco, and so have a fortnightly service. The effect of that arrangement would be that the southern and the northern colonies would have to enter into a joint arrangement to carry each other's mails, paying the ordinary rate of postage. Thus, each colony would derive all the advantages of fortnightly communication, the one line being supported by South Australia and Victoria, and the other by New South Wales, Queensland, and New Zealand. That appeared to him the most advisable way of obtaining fortnightly communication at a reasonable cost. But in the form in which

this resolution was framed it appeared doubtful whether it was the intention of the Government to continue the annual subsidy of £10,000 or £12,000 for the Suez line, and it seemed to him that by passing the resolution as it stood the colony would be committed to a payment of about £22,000 per annum. He hardly thought that was the intention of the Government, and he should be glad to know what they intended. If they proposed to drop the Suez line and take up the other, he should be glad to support them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, his object in bringing the resolution before the House was, to drop the Suez line and leave the colonies of Victoria and South Australia to take it up, merely getting them to carry Queensland letters at the usual rate of postage, and returning the compliment to them. He thought he had made that sufficiently clear in the few words he had addressed to the House. He did not think it necessary to alter the resolution on that account. It could be referred to as a record of the House at any time, and the debate could also be referred to if necessary. It was not the intention of the Government to subsidise two lines, but he would call the attention of the House to the fact, that the service, *via* Suez, could not be stopped all at once; and it would be of no use to tie up the hands of the Government in any way which might prevent them from furthering the interests of the colony. He distinctly stated, that it was not the intention of the Government to bind the colony to two lines of service. If that expression could be embodied in the resolution in any way he should have no objection.

The question was put and passed.

#### BORDER CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved, pursuant to notice, the second reading of a Bill to provide for the collection of Customs duties upon goods imported by land. He said the Government had reason to believe that large quantities of goods were imported from New South Wales overland, which benefitted the revenue of that colony instead of that of Queensland. He believed the money which was lost to this colony by that means did not amount, at a rough guess, to less than £14,000 a-year. The Government, therefore, thought it necessary to take steps to put a stop to this state of things. They had offered to the Government of New South Wales to accept an annual payment instead of levying duties upon these goods; but having received no reply to that offer, they found themselves at last compelled to take action. They had therefore resolved to appoint revenue officers to collect duties upon such goods as might be imported from the neighboring colonies. They only intended to appoint a few officers at first—probably an inspector, sub-inspector, and about four troopers only; and the report

they would receive from those officers would guide them in increasing the number. That force would, at any rate, be sufficient to check a good deal of what was going on; for, although the frontier was a very large one, drays were only introduced into the colony at certain points, and there would not be much difficulty in intercepting the traffic. He did not think it was necessary to go into any further details. The question had been before honorable members some time, and the measure had become absolutely necessary.

The question was put and passed, and the Bill was read a second time.

#### ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the second reading of a Bill to provide for Additional Representation and a Redistribution of the Electoral Districts of Queensland. He said honorable members would bear in mind that there was an implied promise on the part of the Government last session that they would bring forward this session a Bill to provide increased representation and to redistribute the seats in the electoral districts of Queensland. In compliance with that implied promise they had thought it their duty to lay this Bill before the House. Of course all Governments were aware that a measure of this sort could not be passed through the House unless honorable members threw aside the feeling of party spirit which sometimes actuated them, and lent themselves to the consideration of what would best promote the general interests of the colony. It was, at all events, with a feeling of that sort that the Government had framed this Bill. They considered that, having accepted the trust, they were bound to lay aside all such feeling, and to endeavor to bring in a measure which would do justice to all classes. There were a great many matters which were very difficult to adjust in connection with this question. The first principle which the Government had adopted in the Bill was, that the basis of representation should be the adult male population of the colony. Upon that basis the Bill was framed. If honorable members would refer to a printed table which he had caused to be circulated for reference, they would find that it shewed the number of adult males in each electoral district of the colony of Queensland; the number of members returned to the Legislative Assembly; the proportion equivalent to the number of male adults; and the proportion due to each district if the number of representatives were increased from thirty-two to fifty. He might state that one of the greatest difficulties presented to the Government was the effect which the Bill would have upon those electorates which were already distributed. They found that some parts of the colony were not sufficiently represented, according to the population of adult males, while others upon that basis were over represented.

They found it would be almost impossible to reduce the number of members in any given locality, or at any rate, a great deal of difficulty would arise, and they met that objection by increasing the number of members to fifty-three. Another difficulty which the Government had to provide for was, the representation of the gold miners, who formed a very important portion of the population, but who were an extremely migratory class; and they had there provided for them as a special class. He could not say that he quite approved of the principle; it savored a little too much of class legislation, but there appeared to be no help for it. According to the last census, there were 6,600 adult males on the gold fields in the various parts of the colony; and they would have three representatives for the different districts. That plan had been tried in the neighboring colony—Mr. Wilson had been originally a member for the Southern Gold Fields—and it had not been found that a special representative of the mining interest at all interfered with general legislation. The numbers in the table to which he had referred were taken from the last census, the only papers which the Government could base their calculations upon. By that census, they found the number of diggers to be 6,600. These persons would, of course, be also represented by the members who were returned for the districts in which the gold fields were situate. The Government thought, therefore, that three mining representatives would be a fair proportion. Honorable members would see by the last census, that the number of adult males in the colony at that time was 32,872, and there were thirty-two members returned to the Legislative Assembly. That was as near as possible one member for every thousand adults. If the number were increased to fifty, and the proportion still carried out, they would find that number of members would fairly represent the population in the way this Bill provided. For instance, the male population, over twenty years, in North Brisbane, exclusive of gold miners, was 2,329; they now returned three members to the Legislative Assembly; the proportion of representation, equal to adult males, would be  $2\frac{1}{4}$ , and the proportion of representation due, if the House were composed of fifty members, would be  $3\frac{1}{2}$ . He had made use of larger fractions than were exactly correct, in consequence of the difficulty in getting the exact portions printed, but they were very nearly correct. In South Brisbane, the adult male population, exclusive of gold miners, was 202, represented by one member; proportion of representation equal to adult males  $\frac{1}{4}$ , proportion of representation in a House of fifty members,  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Fortitude Valley, male population, over twenty years, exclusive of miners, 803, represented by one member; proportion of representation equal to adult males,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ; proportion in a House of fifty

members,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ ; East Moreton, male population, over twenty years, 3,891, returning two members; proportion equal to adult males,  $3\frac{3}{4}$ ; proportion in a House of fifty members, six. Now, taking these electorates in the group, which he considered about the fairest way of shewing the actual representation of the colony—taking the whole of the electorates he had named, for instance, that was to say, the East Moreton group, there were 7,225 males, over twenty years, now returning seven members to the Legislative Assembly. The proportion of representation equal to adult males would be seven; and the proportion of representation due in a House of fifty members would be  $11\frac{1}{4}$ . In Ipswich, they would find the male population 1,096, returning three members to the Assembly; proportion of representation equal to adult males, 1; proportion due in a House of 50 members,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ . West Moreton, with a male population of 2,099, returned 3 members; proportion of representation equal to adult males, 2; proportion due in a House of 50 members,  $3\frac{1}{4}$ . Taking the total Darling Downs group (including Drayton and Toowoomba, Warwick, Eastern, Western, and Northern Downs), they would find the adult male population to be 5,644, returning 6 members to the Legislative Assembly; proportion of representation equal to adult males,  $5\frac{1}{2}$ ; proportion due in a House of 50 members,  $8\frac{1}{4}$ . Total Wide Bay and Burnett group: Male population, 4,447, returning 4 members; proportion of representation equal to adult males,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ; proportion due in a House of 50 members, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ . Total Rockhampton group (including Rockhampton, Port Curtis, and Leichhardt): Male population, 5,656, returning 4 members; proportion of representation equal to adult males,  $5\frac{1}{4}$ ; proportion due in a House of 50 members,  $8\frac{1}{2}$ . Total inland group (including Maranoa, Warrego, Mitchell, and Clermont): Male population 4,572, returning 4 members; proportion of representation equal to adult males,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ; proportion due in a House of 50 members, 7. Kennedy: Male population, 2,121, returning 1 member; proportion of representation equal to adult males, 2; proportion due in a House of 50 members,  $3\frac{1}{4}$ . Country beyond electoral districts (Burke): Male population, 437, for which the proportion of representation in a House of 50 members would be  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The proportion between the number of town and country members he now proposed to read from a short paper. At present, Brisbane, including South Brisbane and Fortitude Valley, had five members, whereas, going on the proportion of one member to 1,000 inhabitants, those electoral districts together should have only three and a-fourth members. Again, Ipswich had three members, and should only have one member. Drayton and Toowoomba had only one member, though entitled on the population basis to have one and a-half. Warwick had one member, but was entitled to only one-half. How-

ever, as it was impossible to effect such an arrangement, it was necessary in such cases to provide for one member. Then, Maryborough had one member, whereas it was entitled to one and a-half; and, Rockhampton, which had but one member, was entitled to one and three-quarters. It would be seen by the statistics he had so far read, that the towns mentioned had twelve members, whereas they should only have nine and a-half. Now, as regarded the country constituencies, the corresponding position was this, namely:—East Moreton had two members, and should have three and three-quarters; West Moreton had three and should only have two; Eastern Downs had one member, and, according to the population basis, was entitled to have only one member. Western Downs had two members, but was entitled to only one and a-half; Northern Downs had one member, and was entitled to only one member. The Wide Bay district had only one member, but was entitled to one and a-half. The Burnett district had two members, but was entitled to only one and a-half. Port Curtis had one member, and was entitled to only one. The Leichhardt district had two members, though it ought to have two and a-half. The Maranoa had one member, but was entitled to have one and three-quarters. The Warrego had one member, though, according to the population basis, it was entitled to have only three-fourths of a member. The Mitchell had one member, but was entitled to have only half a member. The Kennedy had only one, but was entitled to have two; and Clermont had one, but was entitled to have one and a-half. In other words, the country districts had only twenty members, whereas they should have twenty-two; while the town districts, which had twelve members, were entitled to only nine and a-half. Now, it had generally been considered that the outside districts were over-represented in proportion to population, but he thought it must be clear to honorable members, from the papers he had read, that it was the town districts that were over-represented in proportion to population. As to Brisbane, he considered that it had always been over-represented, because, independent of the fact that, while entitled to have only three members, it virtually had five, there was the additional fact to be considered that a number of members from the country districts, after residing in the capital for a short time, took an interest in the place and assisted to promote its welfare. In fact, the capital would always be adequately represented, and its interests well looked after. To think of a measure of finality was entirely out of the question. He was satisfied that any measure of reform that might be passed would have to be remodelled in the course of a few years. It was, of course, impossible to meet the views of all parties by any measure of this kind; but, taking this measure as a whole, he

thought it was such a one as honorable members would admit the Government had done their duty in bringing before the House, and he hoped it would be accepted in the same spirit as had actuated the Government in preparing it and submitting it to the House. It had always been found to be a difficult matter to deal with this question. Considering the basis on which the Bill was framed, the Government had introduced into it the principle of manhood suffrage. It was also proposed to extend the franchise to the holders of miners' rights. He could not say that he altogether approved of that; but it had been found to work well in other colonies. The rest of the Bill was mostly technical in its nature. Of course, it provided that honorable members now holding their seats would continue to hold them; and that the senior member for any district should have the option of choosing for what portion of the district he would sit, after it was divided. The Government had brought this Bill before the House, believing it to be such a one as should be brought in. He might have brought in a Bill that, he thought, would have been more acceptable, and one that the present Government would not have had cause to be ashamed of in future years, if he had gone upon the principle of patchwork; but that was a principle in which he did not believe. He believed there was a necessity for additional representation; and he looked upon that as a matter of so much importance that if the House should not consider it well to agree to this measure, he would be prepared to bring in a Bill next session to increase the number of members to forty. He hoped the Bill would not be rejected, though he knew that some honorable members considered there would be a difficulty in obtaining so many as fifty-four members, which was the number proposed in the Bill; but having taken the number of the adult population in the several districts as a basis of representation, the Government felt they must go on to this extent. There were many new members in the House this session; and he hoped it would be found that, should the Bill pass, there would be seen many new faces in the House next session; and that, by the increase of members, legislation would be improved. He must say that, for his own part, he thought thirty-two members was too small a number to carry on the business of the country; and that an increase to forty members was absolutely necessary. Of course, it would require a majority of two-thirds of honorable members to pass the Bill; and he hoped there would be found such a majority to accept it. He had now only to move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. LILLEY said he did not feel that he could vote for the second reading of this Bill. He thought the Bill should be withdrawn, inasmuch as it could not possibly pass this session. In the first place, he objected to the

Bill because he considered that the principle on which it was based was a vicious one. The basis was that of representation in proportion to the number of the adult population in the electoral districts. Some politicians considered that females holding property should have a vote, but this Bill went farther than that, or rather, he should say, that to adopt this Bill would be to go backward. The Bill proposed to give universal or manhood suffrage, or, in other words, to give every man, no matter what might be his position, an equal influence over the legislation of the colony. According to the provisions of this Bill, a shepherd or a laboring man would have an equal political influence on the legislation of the country as any highly educated or professional gentleman had, or any large employer of labor who contributed greatly to the revenue of the colony. He objected to the Bill before the House on that ground if there were none other; but he also thought it would be impossible to get a majority of two-thirds to agree to the passing of the Bill. Another objection he had to the Bill was that the proposed increase of members was too great. At the present time there was a difficulty in getting thirty-two representatives; and, if so, how much greater would be the difficulty of obtaining fifty-four gentlemen sufficiently qualified to enter upon the duties of legislation unless there was some system of payment of members? He also objected to the Bill on the ground that he thought the single member system of representation was a very bad one, inasmuch as it ignored the representation of minorities in any electorate. He had always advocated the representation of minorities somewhat in the way recommended by Mr. Hare; but by this Bill minorities would be entirely disfranchised. He believed they ought to have some system of representation which would have the effect of making the influence of large and intelligent minorities to be felt. Those were some of the main objections he had to the Bill; but still he had to mention another, and that a very grave one. It was that he did not think the division of the electorates as proposed would bring about a fair distribution of members. For those reasons, he could not consent to the second reading of the Bill. He did not see that, considering the short period the session was to last, any discussion of the details of the Bill could be profitable for the purposes of legislation at present. It was understood that the session would not last beyond the end of the present week, and he would therefore rather see a measure of so much importance delayed till next session, in order that there might not be anything like hasty legislation on the subject. He would not vote against the measure on the ground altogether of his being opposed to it, but because he considered that to read it a second time would only lead to a waste of time, inasmuch as no conclusive legislation could

follow. For the reasons he had given it was his intention to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. KING said he thought the Government had shewn a desire to deal with this question of political reform in a large and liberal spirit. Some honorable members, however, seemed to think otherwise. However, it was his opinion that the question was one of so great and so grave importance that it would be impossible to deal with it during the present session. It was impossible for honorable members to consider the details of the Bill, and therefore far less the principles on which it was based. He must say that, for his own part, he did not object to the principle on which the measure was based, which, as he understood it, was that of representation in proportion to the number of the male adult population in the several electorates. He believed the majority of honorable members would agree with him, even though they objected to the Bill, that any measure of reform was better than none. There were many anomalies in the existing electoral law which were quite opposed to the principles of representative government. He maintained that all electors who were equally responsible for the payment of taxes, should have an equal political power in the matter of the expenditure of the revenue to which they contributed. Since the day of Separation, only a few in the colony had exercised political power, while a great number of the people had been virtually disfranchised. As he had already stated, he did not object to the principle on which the Bill was based; and if, at any future time, a similar Bill was brought forward, he would suggest that it should include the principle that obtained in America, which was, that a certain number of male adults, settled in any district, entitled the district to have a representative. There were many other objections he had to the Bill; and, considering the importance of the measure, he would like to see the main provisions of it more fully discussed before he could consent to its being read a second time. If there was to be any organic change made on the present system, he thought it was the duty of the honorable member making such a proposition to shew that he had good and valid reasons for doing so. He must say that he did not approve of the sub-division of electorates; because he thought that if every district in the colony was to have only one member, the minorities would be virtually unrepresented. It appeared to him that it would be impossible to get a majority of two-thirds to agree to the passing of the schedules of the Bill even. Great changes in the way in which members were to be elected were proposed in the Bill, but he held that where such changes were made, good reasons should be advanced in support of them. The settled male adult population of the Wide Bay district was given by the

last census at upwards of 1,400—miners, of course, being excluded. Now, there was a larger number of male adults settled at Gympie, but it had not an equally proportionate representation to any other town in the colony. In the colony of Victoria, it appeared that the tendency of the leading politicians there was to reduce the number of members of the Lower House. For his own part he did not consider that the Wide Bay and the Gympie districts were altogether fairly dealt with in the matter of representation, in proportion to population, by the Bill now before the House. The schedules were, in his opinion, very imperfect, especially because of the omission of miners. Now, supposing that the principles of the Bill were approved of by the House, the question would arise as to whether its provisions were suited to the circumstances of the colony. He would not urge that it was altogether necessary that the number of members of the Legislative Assembly should be increased by twenty-four—and, besides, he did not know where twenty-four new members, the additional number proposed by the Bill, would be found, who would attend to their parliamentary duties during the session. For the reasons he had stated, he must say that he did not think the House would be improved by an addition of members in the way proposed; and, therefore, he thought it would be well for the Government to withdraw the Bill. By way of amendment, he would move—

That all the words after the word "That" be omitted, with a view of inserting in their stead, the following words:—In the opinion of this House, so important a measure as a Re-distribution of Seats Bill cannot be properly discussed and considered at this late period of the session. (2.) That, as an urgent necessity exists for an increase in the number of representatives allotted to certain districts, which are, at present, deprived of the political influence to which their population, wealth, and extent, fairly entitle them—it is desirable that the Ministry should introduce a short Bill, giving additional members to the following districts and towns, viz. :—

Kennedy, 1 additional member	
Rockhampton, 1	"
Port Curtis, 1	"
Wide Bay, 2	"
East Moreton, 1	"
Drayton and Toowoomba, 1	"
Maranoa, 1	"
Total, 8 additional members.	

And that they should, if necessary, move the suspension of the Standing Orders of this House, in order to enable the said Bill to become law before the Prorogation of Parliament.

Mr. McILWRAITH seconded the amendment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that, as honorable members did not seem disposed to discuss the principles of the Bill, he would take the liberty now of saying a few words in reply. The great objection to the Bill appeared to him to be, that it did not pro-

vide for the representation of minorities. Now, he thought that the representation of minorities was the strongest point in the Bill. He maintained that the Bill did provide for the representation of minorities. If, for instance, Brisbane were cut up in the way proposed, there would be a more general representation of the inhabitants. Such a division would secure a representation of minorities; and would also secure that the commercial community would be represented in the House. The Government, having introduced the Bill, could not accept of the amendments proposed by the honorable member for Wide Bay. If honorable members thought there was not time this session to discuss the principles of the Bill, and give due attention to its details, it would be far better to meet the motion for the second reading with a direct negative. It was unreasonable to expect that the Government could introduce a new Bill, and have it passed through its various stages on a day's notice—unless on the suspension of the Standing Orders, and he objected to that, except for very particular purposes. The Bill had been very maturely considered by the Government; but, if the House was not prepared to accept it, he would prefer that it was met with a direct negative.

Mr. ATKIN said he considered that, from what he had seen since he became a member of the House, he believed there was no intention on the part of the Government to pass the Bill now before the House, or any other measure of the kind. It was, no doubt, impossible for every honorable member to have his own views fully carried out. They must all, to a certain extent, give and take. This measure was one which tended in a great degree to excite party feeling; but there was scarcely any measure in respect to which it was more necessary that party feeling should be drowned. The basis of the Bill was that of representation according to the number of the adult population of the district. Now, he considered that to be a vicious principle on which to frame a measure of this kind. But, besides that, he objected to the Bill on the ground that, as regarded population, it was founded on the census of 1868. Since then many changes had taken place in most of the districts of the colony. Many people, for instance, who in 1868 were occupied in mining pursuits were now settled along the coast districts. Then, the population in the pastoral districts had been greatly diminished since 1868 owing to the fencing in of runs. He had ascertained that in 1869 the departures from the colony amounted to 7,124 and the arrivals to 6,701, being a decrease of 423, and of that number 366 were adults. Now, during the first six months of the present year, the arrivals were 3,131 and the departures 2,796, giving an increase of 335. It would be seen by those figures that during the eighteen months, up to the end of June last, there had been a decrease



in the number of the population of 423 and an increase of only 335, which gave a total decrease of 88. Now, of the increase during the last six months 395 were Chinamen and Polynesians, and therefore the total decrease of white people amounted to 483. The excess of births over deaths during the eighteen months preceding the 30th of June last was 4,412. Of that number there were 3,212 in the southern portion of the colony, which left 1,200 for the rest of the colony; and of that number 580 were in the Wide Bay district, leaving for the whole of the colony north of the Wide Bay district 620, which was just fourteen per cent. of the whole increase. The census of 1868 shewed a population of 39,454, of which 22,485 were single adult males. Now, taking that census as a basis for the increase of the number of members to fifty-four, would give one member to every 730 adults. The population of the Kennedy district in 1868 amounted to 2,814, of the Leichhardt district to 2,746, and of the Port Curtis district to 2,371; but in the Kennedy district the number of Chinamen and Polynesians was 766, in the Leichhardt district 452, and in the Port Curtis district 628, making a total of 1,846, which left a total white population of 6,085. Now, according to this Bill, those three electorates would be entitled to return twelve members, or one to every 507 adults, while the Wide Bay district, with a population of 5,368, would return only three members, which would be one member for every 1,789 of the population. Then, taking into consideration the education clause, he found that from their not being able to read or write, there would, in the Clermont district, be 426 persons disfranchised, in the Kennedy district 656, in the Leichhardt district 522, and in the Port Curtis district 349, making a total of 1,953 out of 9,633 adults, or over twenty per cent. The number who would be disfranchised on the same ground in North Brisbane would be 157, South Brisbane 21, Fortitude Valley 67, Wide Bay 474, East Moreton 616, West Moreton 279, Ipswich 135, making a total of 1,749, or a little over ten per cent. out of a population of 15,927. Now, what provision had been made for education in the North? Why, in the Leichhardt district, there had been one school open for six months, and the average attendance had been 56 scholars; in the Clermont district, one school with 78 scholars; in the Port Curtis district, one school with 87 scholars; in the Kennedy district, two schools with 276 scholars. For all those districts there were only five schools. Now, in East Moreton, there were 17 schools, which were attended by 1,020 scholars. It would be seen by those statistics that the Bill would not provide a fair and equitable representation over the whole colony; and that was one of the chief objections he had to it. He looked upon the Bill as being based on a mixture of conservative and chartist princi-

ples. Although, as he had stated, he disapproved of the population basis for a measure of electoral reform, he believed that some measure of reform was necessary, and, therefore, he would support the motion that it be read a second time; as he believed that, in committee, it might be satisfactorily amended. He did not, however, think that it could be passed this session. Still, he should wish to see it pass the second reading; because, if there were no other reason, he believed that if Bills for electoral reform were thrown out session after session, the public would come to the conclusion that certain members were determined not to accede to any measure of reform whatever.

Mr. THORN said he was very much astonished to hear some honorable members who had always advocated electoral reform oppose the Bill now before the House. He referred especially to the honorable member for Wide Bay. Now, it was well known that the Wide Bay district had derived more benefits than larger and more important districts. He objected to the Bill on the ground that it was based on the census of 1868; but, on the other hand, he approved of it, because it proposed to break up the several electorates, so that there should be only one member for each district. It had always been his opinion that there should be small districts, each having but one member. There was a map exhibited in the House by way of explanation of the Bill. It was on a very small scale, and if it was correct, there was to be fourteen miles of water frontage taken off from West Moreton and thrown over to East Moreton. He also disapproved of the Bill, because he thought the number of members proposed to be added was too large. If the Bill should pass, and the number of members be increased to fifty-four, the whole of the influence of legislation would pass into the hands of the representatives of the southern and western districts. He further objected to the Bill, on account of the way in which it was proposed to divide the several districts, because he considered the effect would be to give an unequal representation. However, he would vote against the amendment. He would like to know where the Government got their data for the basis of the Bill; for he could assure the House that, as regarded East Moreton, and West Moreton, the number of the population was incorrectly stated.

Mr. CRIBB said he should oppose the second reading of the Bill, and he should not let this opportunity pass without placing on record his objections to it. First, he objected to it because there was not time, this session, to discuss a measure of such importance; and, if the Bill were passed as a whole, it would give such immense power to the northern districts that the whole representation would be possessed by that division of the colony; that was, provided those districts could get local men to represent them in the House. If they could not send local

members, then, no doubt, such of the northern districts as were in that position would be represented by residents of Brisbane, as was the case with Mitchell, whither two Brisbane barristers had gone opposed to each other, desirous of obtaining a seat in the House as its member, there being no local man to represent the district. That would be the case of most of the northern districts if the Bill passed; and then Brisbane might be regarded as Queensland, as Paris was France. That was a position, he thought, very much to be guarded against; and that was one reason why he would not assent to the Bill. At the present time he did not approve of the Bill, and there was not time to make the necessary alterations in it. The number of members proposed by the Bill was too many for the population of the colony; it was out of all proportion to the representation of the various countries that he was acquainted with. Another reason for his opposing the Bill was, that he did not think the census of 1864 was a proper basis for such a measure, and, on that ground, the Bill would not do justice to the country. Very great changes had taken place in some districts by an increase in the number of the population, while in others there had been a decrease. He thought it would be only fair that before such a measure was passed, a fresh census should be taken.

Mr. DE SARGE said he wished to address a few words to the House before the close of the debate, not exactly as representing purely the views of his constituents—for he conceived that in the proposal of the Government they had omitted to make such provision for the representation of the population of Clermont as the Colonial Secretary had said was warranted by the classification which had been made, of two and a-quarter members in a House of fifty-two members—but because he thought honorable members ought to look at the question in a higher light than as representing the views of their constituents. The Government, in introducing this measure, shewed that they were anxious to bring before the country, at the earliest opportunity, a large scheme of reform, and it was met by those who had clamoured for it with a coolness that was strange. Honorable members on the Opposition side of the House had met their constituents, and acknowledged to them that a scheme of reform was wanted before anything else—before even the Estimates. The moment a measure of reform was put before the House, it was met by an exhibition of coolness that, to say the least of it, was rather extraordinary and very odd, and not to have been expected by him. As far as he was concerned, the Bill was a very liberal and comprehensive one. It had been said that the Bill did not meet the representation of minorities. He asked the honorable member for Fortitude Valley how, in this country, where interests were so divided, could he adopt means for the representation of minori-

ties? Provision was made in the Bill so as to set apart the various claims of the people—those in boroughs, those in towns, those in pastoral districts, those settled on the land in settled districts, and the miners also; their interests were separated, and to each was given its members in the House. He took it that absence of provision for the representation of minorities was the great objection, and it was one that was very fairly met by the Bill. The other great objection urged by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, who certainly displayed an amount of candour that he (Mr. De Sargé) was very much surprised at, was that, whereas it was now difficult to get thirty-two members, when the number was increased to over fifty there would be still greater difficulty in getting them, and that the northern districts—which were so much cared for by the Opposition side—would find their representatives in Brisbane barristers. That was an objection which, he (Mr. De Sargé) contended, could not come from the honorable gentleman's heart; for the honorable gentleman would find himself very much strengthened in the House if he had at his back a number of Brisbane residents, who would throw the interests of the northern districts to the winds so long as they could get what they wanted for themselves. That was an objection which should come from the Ministerial side of the House. But he fancied that there was a spirit in the North that would prevent such a representation of the northern districts as that by persons in the legal profession residing in southern towns. He thought there would be seen, every year, a cessation of those complaints which had been made in respect of the representation of the North in the House. The patriotism of the people of the North was growing stronger than it had been, and while the country prospered there would be local men who would find time to come down to represent the interests of the northern constituencies sooner than entrust them to persons in the metropolis. The Bill would initiate no such thing as had been stated. Objection had been taken to the Bill, because of some of the northern districts being over-represented in it. He would single out the district of Leichhardt, which had been unfairly dealt with, as an honorable member on the Opposition side of the House had said, by having too much representation. That honorable member had shewed that he spoke on a subject which he did not understand, when he so referred to Leichhardt. He had selected it, no doubt, as having so many "pure merinos" resident there. If there was a district in the colony that required additional representation more than another, it was Leichhardt. The history of that district was:—It received at Separation two members, and, ever since, it had the same representation. In 1863 and 1864, the gold mining and the copper mining population required representation. Under

the Act of 1866, the mining population received that support; but that could not be said to be additional representation for Leichhardt District. A new borough was formed, and a member given; but Leichhardt was in exactly the same position—two members for that important district, just the same as it received in 1859. That district had more to complain of in the way of gross injustice in respect of its representation than any other district of the colony. It was to be considered that shortly after Separation there was not one inch of the Nogoia and Peak Downs country in any way stocked or populated; but it was now stocked and populated equal to the Darling Downs; and it would be hard to find in Australia any district with the future before it that might certainly be predicted for that of which he spoke. The remarks which he had heard about it displayed an amount of ignorance which shewed that certain honorable members paid no attention to the subject on which they spoke. He could say that the country he was most intimately connected with, as a member of the House, represented half a million of capital expended upon it; and he felt he had nothing to be ashamed of in that way. He had come down, representing a great deal of property in his district, to prevent the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Atkin, from becoming Colonial Treasurer. He hoped that the gentlemen who would come down for that district, and for the other northern districts, would not detract from the respectability of their representation, and that in any scheme brought before the House for additional representation, the Leichhardt would be fairly treated. He regretted very much that in the amendment of the honorable member for Wide Bay that district had not been provided for. He thought the honorable member should deal fairly and equitably with that district, as well as with his own. If the Government had named forty members in their Bill, instead of fifty-four, which was too large a number, it would have been best. They could not expect to get each a number of persons to leave their business to come down to the House to work for the public. He (Mr. De Satgé) believed, however, that the Government had been actuated by a very comprehensive and liberal idea in framing the Bill in accordance with the wish of the country; and, if they had failed, it was not their fault—it was more from the spirit which invited reform. No two members of the House were agreed; and it was, of course, impossible that every member could be satisfied with the extension of reform proposed. But honorable members must all give and take in this matter. They should deal with one another in candour and justice, and leave out party spirit as much as they possibly could. He always considered that to initiate a measure of this kind, the repeal of the two-thirds clause should be first effected. The more he heard of the debates

the more he saw it was utterly impossible to obtain a majority of two-thirds of the House. There must be such a difference of opinion, such a temptation to scrambling for office, such a desire in various ways to exhibit and advance petty interests, that the only way he could see to get reform was by a simple majority. If the present measure depended on a simple majority, the Government could easily pass it with a few alterations. As it seemed to be the spirit of the House that this Bill should not be carried this session, he thought that, when the House met again, after the prorogation, if the Government brought forward the Bill in a modified form—for instance, adding ten additional members to the present number, and making the total forty-two, it would be such a measure of electoral reform as was imperatively needed by the country. He would vote for the second reading of the Bill, on principle, to show that reform was required. The Government had really very fairly dealt with the subject.

The Hon. R. PRING said he did not intend to take up the time of the House with many remarks upon the Bill before them. Considering that, on several occasions, he had ventured to express his opinions as to what was a proper measure of electoral reform, he should content himself by saying simply that he was of the same opinion still. In the first place, he conceived that the colony should be divided into so many electoral districts; that those districts should not consist of any very great number, so long as they were equitably and fairly apportioned. Each should be represented by a member or members, who should represent the whole population of each district—not the adult male population merely. He thought also that when any scheme of the kind was propounded to the House, it should comprehend an immediate dissolution, as, after the passing of the measure, the members of the Assembly would not be on the same footing as previously. He protested against the Parliament passing a measure for reformed representation, and allowing the members of the Assembly to keep their present seats. If reform was to take place, the electors ought to have the right of sending in their members on the new scheme of distribution of the representation, and not have the present scheme patched up either by the choice of the present members, or even the voice of Parliament, by the mere addition of twenty-two or twenty-four to the present number of the Assembly. He considered that provision ought to be made in any measure of electoral reform for decreasing the representation of those constituencies where decrease ought to take place, as well as for increasing the representation of those which were unduly represented. He objected to the scheme of one member for each district, and he did so on the principle suggested by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley. He could not see how one member for a district could

represent the minority of the electors in that district; and if minorities were unrepresented, the effect would be injurious. A majority of one would decide an election, and leave the minority in a district that returned but a single member unrepresented. If there were three members, say, as in Brisbane, the minority had a fair chance to get a representative into Parliament. He (Mr. Pring) granted that the Colonial Secretary had kept his promise in placing a measure of representative reform before the House for consideration. He objected that the number of members was too many. He did not think that, with the present population of this colony, so many members were required in Parliament. Forty members would be enough, if the colony was properly divided into electoral districts—a certain number of members for each district, according to the scheme which he had formerly advocated. Such a modification would work better than if the measure now before the House became law, and the people would be better represented. There was another reason for his objection to the Bill, which, though last, was not the least:—He wanted to know what the expense of elections, under it, would be? Fifty-four separate elections, each district with its returning officer and all the attendant expenses of an election! Then, as had been stated, the men who ought to represent those districts would not be able to attend—there were so many representatives contemplated by the Bill—unless they were paid; and it was to be considered, as in Victoria, that, if a Bill was brought in for payment of members, there should not be too many to be paid. He thought the question of payment of members would be passed before long. Then, the country would be saddled with an expense that, he thought, would be convincing that so many members were not required. The House must guard against that, while providing for the fair division and distribution of the representation of the colony. He could conceive as much harm and difficulty in the carrying on of the Government from having too many members as from having too few. Mainly for the reasons stated he should vote against the Bill. The views he before advocated he held now, and he maintained that the Bill did not provide for that re-distribution of the representation which he regarded as necessary for the colony.

Mr. BELL said he regretted that he could not offer his assistance to the passage of the Bill through the House with any hope of success. He thought it was utterly hopeless to suppose that a measure of so much importance, entailing as it did so much consideration and long continued debate, could be passed this session. The Bill was the next thing to the last measure to be submitted to the House this session, and it was not likely to meet with their assent. The amendment of the honorable member for Wide Bay was

not such as would pass the House, either; and he (Mr. Bell) certainly could not give it his adherence. He regretted that he could not say at once that he would give the Bill his decided negative, and endeavor to throw it out on the motion for its second reading; because he felt bound to endeavor to assist the passage of any measure which had for its object the judicious representation of the colony. He trusted that the Government would see the advantages of getting an expression of opinion on the Bill, and then withdrawing it; because, holding, as honorable members did, each his own particular views, it would be most difficult, with the time at the disposal of the House, to get the schedule through committee, if even the Bill passed its second reading. It would be better for the position of the Government, and better for the position of members generally, if this Bill were accepted as a drawn measure for the present, with a promise from the Government that they would bring in a Bill on the same subject next session. But, he would suggest that the next Bill should be a little more in accordance than the present one with the opinions expressed this evening; for instance, that which had been most strongly urged was that the number of proposed members should be reduced. It was not, he thought, likely that any number more than forty-two would be sanctioned by the House. He was not one of those who expected to see continued for long in this colony the system of non-payment of members; and, if the colony came to adopt this system, then the fewer members in Parliament, consistent with the fair representation of the country, the better. No more should be in the House to be paid than were necessary. There were many strong arguments which could be used for and against the principle of the Bill, in regard to the adoption of the adult male population basis. He would not now go into them. While admitting that of the two propositions, that of representation of the general population was the one which bore on the face of it the stronger argument, he could not go the length of the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, on the other side, in the reasons he had given. A shepherd in the bush might keep as large a family as any man in a town. He (Mr. Bell) should be very glad if the Government could see their way to withdrawing the Bill, with the promise he had mentioned. He should vote for the second reading of the Bill, if it were pushed to a division, although he was satisfied that this would only be delaying other important measures which might be advanced to a fruitful result.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS desired to say a few words, not so much on the second reading of the Bill as in objection to the amendment of the honorable member for Wide Bay. That honorable member was not perhaps aware that the very same course he advocated had been proposed some sessions

ago, for an additional seven or eight members to the House. He (the Secretary for Lands) had the curiosity to look through the debate on the subject. To shew the honorable member for Wide Bay the difficulty before him, and what opposition he would have to passing such a measure as he proposed, even with a long session before him, he (the Secretary for Lands) would read a few extracts from the debate—to let him see from the views expressed by honorable members how impossible his task was of accomplishment just at the close of a session. The honorable member for Fortitude Valley was the head of the Government at the time, and introduced the Bill. The first who spoke on the subject, after him, was the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Thorn, who said—

“He was not prepared to oppose the second reading of the Bill, but when it was under consideration in committee, he would go particularly into the different schedules.”

Then followed a speech very much like what he had delivered during this evening—opposing the Bill because West Moreton was not sufficiently represented. The honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay, had said—

“He could not support the Bill before the House, not because he did not think it was very desirable that there should be an additional number of members, but because he did not approve of the proposed mode of distribution.”

Then the honorable member for Northern Downs, Mr. Bell, said—

“he regretted that the Bill before the House was not so satisfactory to him as he would have desired. There could be no doubt as to the necessity for an Increase of Members Bill”;—

everybody agreed to that;—

“but when honorable members came to examine the Bill which had been placed on the table of the House for a second reading, he believed so much dissatisfaction would be felt with respect to the details of the Bill”

—that was all to the point—

“that there could be little hope of its being read a second time.”

The next who spoke was the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Forbes, who indulged in rather strong language on the subject:—

“He could not admire the Bill that had been submitted to the House by the honorable the Premier, simply because there was nothing in it to admire.”

Then he went on to say it was—

“a mean, contemptible, tinkering thing, which was not fit to be laid on the table of any Legislative Assembly.”

The next who spoke was the honorable member, Sir Robert Mackenzie. He said that—

“Though he objected to the Bill, he was not inclined to embarrass the Government by voting

against the second reading of it \* \* \* it did not go far enough; and, presuming that population was the proper basis for a Bill of this kind, the basis of representation was stated at rather too high a figure.”

Then the next who spoke was the present Premier, Mr. Palmer, and he did not approve of the Bill at all. Then, the Secretary for Public Works of that day, the honorable A. Macalister, spoke, and said—

“In the first place, he must confess”

—he was in favor of the measure, of course—

“that the arguments advanced against the measure were of so contradictory a nature that it was very difficult to deal with them.”

Now, that was always the style of thing that went on in those debates. The then member for Mitchell, Mr. Lamb, said—

“When the Bill was first presented to him he could not see the object of it. However, after a very little consideration, he saw its object perfectly—the aggrandisement of metropolis.”

Then he (the Secretary for Public Lands) himself spoke. He would not trouble the House with what he said. Mr. Archer, who represented Rockhampton, followed next. He said—

“He was sorry he could not congratulate the Ministry on their appearance with their first Bill. He had hoped, as he had heard something to this effect from themselves, that now, having had time to prepare themselves, their measures would, at all events, give some satisfaction to the House; but if honorable members were to judge by the different addresses which had been made in opposition to the Bill before them, they must suppose it did not please either side of the House. He admitted that it was exceedingly difficult to satisfy all parties, or to meet the claims of the different districts, without exciting some feeling of jealousy. He made great allowance on that account—so great, that he intended to vote for the second reading of the Bill.”

The Secretary for Public Lands, Mr. Taylor, said—

“The honorable member (Mr. Archer) who spoke last stated that the Ministry had brought forward a miserable Bill as their first measure. If he had been in that House when the last Bill was brought forward he would have found that no measure formed such a difficulty to the House and to Ministers as one for the increase of representation.”

That gentleman said he was not at all surprised at the opposition, but

“There was not a squatting district in the colony that could claim an additional member, but that of Maranoa.”

The honorable member for Maranoa (Mr. Miles) said that—

“After the speech of the honorable the Secretary for Public Lands, he could hardly be expected to support the Bill, seeing that the honorable gentleman himself acknowledged that Maranoa was entitled to another member.”

It was always the same, honorable members could see. Mr. Fraser hit the nail exactly on the head, when he said—

"It had been his intention to say nothing on the Bill, with which he was not perhaps more satisfied than several honorable members who had preceded him. At the same time, it was quite possible, if every honorable member of the House attempted to frame a measure on the same subject, that not one Bill would be produced which would not be objected to."

He (the Secretary for Lands) would put it to the honorable member for Wide Bay, whether he thought that, by suspending the Standing Orders, the House, constituted as they were, and the constitution requiring a majority of two-thirds to pass his measure—even if the Government gave him their whole support—he could get sufficient support to warrant him in pressing his amendment. He confidently predicted that the strongest Government that ever were in office here would not carry that. The same thing had been proposed by two successive Governments. The House could only approach the subject after mature deliberation. It must be discussed outside. It was not one question. If thirty-two members were to be retained to represent the country, there were thirty-two questions for discussion; if forty, there were forty questions; if fifty-four, there were fifty-four questions. As the honorable member for Brisbane, Mr. Pring, said, the proper way was to lay the whole matter before the country. In the old country, such an important matter would be put to the country; but here honorable members were unable to disassociate themselves from their prejudices, from the people they represented, and they would, he was sure, split on the very first item of the proposal of the honorable member for Wide Bay.

Mr. MACDEVITT said, representing a constituency, which it was proposed to affect considerably by the measure before the House, he thought it right that he should address a few observations on the Bill of which the Colonial Secretary had moved the second reading. When the Bill was first laid on the table, and he and other honorable members became acquainted with it, he shared the opinion that they then entertained, that the Government had seriously resolved to take into their consideration some means of definitely settling this very difficult subject. Seeing the elaboration of details, and the adoption of certain new principles, seriously made by the Government, he thought that they were strongly determined to stand by the measure, as their action in reference to it tended to spread the conviction that they considered the proposed reform necessary for the welfare of the country. That being the case, he hailed the Bill with considerable pleasure, for though it might not present that completeness in detail, and that satisfactory character which different honorable members might fairly expect, yet

it was a measure of reform, and an improvement; and, in committee, the Bill might be so moulded as to be of advantage to the colony. But what did he find? Honorable members said that at this late period of the session the Bill could not be considered, and it was proposed to shelve it. The Colonial Secretary made a sort of funeral oration when he moved that the Bill be "now" read a second time. He (Mr. MacDevitt) could not reconcile the speech which the honorable gentleman had delivered with an earnestness of desire on his part that the Bill should become law. The Colonial Secretary seemed to have expected the adverse criticism of the honorable member for Fortitude Valley; and when that honorable member stated that he would oppose the second reading of the Bill, the Premier thereupon said—he seemed to be glad to get rid of the difficulty as soon as possible—he would prefer that the motion should be met by the direct negative. The proposal of the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, inviting honorable members to deal with the Bill, was one of a very extraordinary character—for "working a dead horse." The object which it had been said the Government had in view was to benefit the colony; very seriously, and for a long time, the promise had been held out that the present Administration would be remarkable for the passage of a measure of reform such as the country desired; but when the measure was brought before the House, and met with a little adverse criticism, the Premier deserted it—and for a phantom of his own creation. The honorable gentleman was bound to stand by the measure—that was, if he wished to maintain the position which he had hitherto borne, as the head of a very strong Government. It was a pity that, with so strong a Government, he did not insist on his Bill, and thereby shew some consistency with the opinions he had expressed on the subject of reform. It had been said that, coming as the House were so close to the end of the session, it was not a fit time or opportunity to discuss a measure of such importance and complication, and one which affected so many interests. But why were they so close to the end of the session? Why was the time at the disposal of Parliament for the consideration of such subjects so limited? If there was not sufficient time for the discussion of such questions, which it was the duty of Parliament to consider, the want of that time was, to some extent, to be laid at the door of the head of the Government, in postponing the meeting of Parliament to a late period of the year; although he might, perhaps, have had good reasons for doing so. He (Mr. MacDevitt) had not heard that the delay of the meeting of Parliament was caused by the honorable members who sat on the opposition side of the House. There was no doubt that if the Premier had wished to provide for Parliament to have the opportunity of doing its duty in the matter, he could have done so. If, for

sufficient reasons, he could not have compassed the meeting of Parliament earlier, he ought to make up for that by prolonging the session, so that the important duty of reforming the representation should be attended to. He (Mr. MacDevitt), as well as other honorable members who had given a very effectual and independent support to the Government, had been led to believe that the Bill would be insisted upon, and that other measures of an equally valuable character would be brought forward if the Opposition would allow them to be passed; but the position now taken up by the Colonial Secretary receded from the very creditable position which the honorable gentleman had taken up in the beginning of his career in this Parliament. He most sincerely hoped that honorable members who were desirous for the improvement of the affairs of the country, and for the reform of the representation of the people, would back up the Colonial Secretary, and by the earnestness of their desire to see the Bill pass, supply him on this occasion with a little of that quality which, although he did not ordinarily require it, he seemed to want, now—courage for the performance of his duty, and for insisting on its performance. He (Mr. MacDevitt) did not imagine, at first, that the honorable gentleman would shrink for a moment from insisting—as far as he was concerned, and his Government, and his party—upon the passing of a measure which he had stated the colony demanded. Those observations, although not strictly within the scope of the present discussion, applied to another important measure in which he, as the representative of a northern constituency, felt equal interest, the Bill for effecting financial separation. It seemed that, practically, that measure was to be shelved. He felt called upon to protest against the shelving of that for such an insufficient and flimsy reason, that they were at the end of the session. Why, he again asked, were they so near the end of the session? Simply, because they had begun so late. Justified as the Colonial Secretary might have been in postponing the assembling of Parliament, he ought to make up for that by, at all events, assisting as far as he was able in its continuation to meet the exigencies of the country. It had been stated that, if the Bill before the House was thrown out, another measure of the same character, but differing altogether in its provisions, would be brought forward in the next session, which it seemed from the speech of the Colonial Secretary, he would insist upon becoming law, and which he would make a Ministerial and party question. Why, if the Colonial Secretary had a measure of reform which next session he would stake his position upon, as far as he could, would he not do it now? If he was sincere in his desire that reform should be granted or accepted, why did he not insist upon it now? Although the Bill seemed effective in evoking

opposition on all sides—of liberal members and members who were thick and thin supporters of the Government programme—he (Mr. MacDevitt) thought it was one which had a good ground work, one which, if seriously considered, would effect the solution of a difficulty; but, if the Bill were now shelved, they did not know how long its solution might be delayed. The Colonial Secretary had brought forward the measure, now, because, by virtue of his promise at the commencement of the session, something of the kind was demanded of him; but if he could throw upon the House the responsibility of his promise not being fulfilled—if circumstances deprived him of the opportunity of fulfilling his promise—what guarantee had the House that the measure would be brought forward again in an acceptable form? As to the arguments concerning the representation of minorities, it seemed to him that the proposition of the Colonial Secretary furthered the representation of minorities. If he was given rightly to understand the Bill, they would have, even from West Moreton, a member pledged to support the railway policy. He supposed the honorable the junior member for West Moreton could see that, if the measure became law, there would be a constituency formed in West Moreton that would support a very average railway policy.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: No, no.

MR. MACDEVITT: At all events, if there was a minority at present, there, they were not by any possibility represented. As to the basis of representation being that of the adult male population, it seemed to him that a basis such as that ought to be put forward for some very substantial and cogent reasons. It would work favorably so far as the claims of the constituency he represented were concerned; still it behoved the supporters of the Bill to give some better reasons than he had heard in support of it, for he was not aware that there was any precedent for that basis. At all events, he felt that it would be better to have the Bill pass than that there should be no reform at all; and he thought that those honorable members who were ranked as the popular party, who assumed to themselves to be the exponents of popular opinion, ought to have addressed themselves to the means by which the present imperfect measure could be rendered perfect, and to finding out how, in a matter in which so much remained to be done, they could do the greatest amount of good, rather than to prevent this opportunity being taken advantage of to do anything for the cause of reform. Those who had any interest in solid and constitutional reform should have addressed themselves to the means by which the measure could be made, if not thoroughly acceptable, at least acceptable for a time: it would have involved concessions on both sides, but that might have been arranged, and if all parties had gone to work willingly some benefit might accrue to the country. It was quite Utopian to imagine

that a Bill should be acceptable to all sections of the House. No matter what Government, or what party, were in power, that would never be. Honorable members who opposed the Bill, through not being satisfied with its details, if they waited till a Government proposed a Bill acceptable to all, they would have to wait for the Millennium. Therefore, he thought the Government should insist upon the Bill; and if they succeeded in passing a measure of reform, even though not so perfect as could be wished, he believed they would deserve well of the country. No one could gainsay that the House no longer represented the country, and that the sooner they took action to deprive its representative institutions of their non-representative character, the sooner would they perform their proper functions. The honorable member for Wide Bay had given very many reasons why it might not be possible to pass the Bill; he deserved credit for his sincerity in advocating reform, but his resolutions could not be accepted in substitution of the Bill. The carrying of the amendment might defeat the object which he had in view. He (Mr. MacDevitt) did not accept the Bill as perfect, although it treated the claims of the Kennedy electorate very liberally. There were many matters in which he would co-operate with other honorable members in committee, for the improvement of the Bill. He desired to press it on the consideration of the House. Any reform was better than stagnation. At present the House had not that weight with, nor that respect from, nor that confidence of, the people of the country, that they ought to have; and any measure of reform, no matter how imperfect, that provided fuller representation than the country now enjoyed, would be an improvement. He hoped the Government would not lose the opportunity they now had of procuring for the country a measure of reform that would give additional representation. He remembered the Colonial Secretary, at the commencement of the session, on the question of the election of Chairman of Committees, to his astonishment, pronouncing that that election would be made a party question. The honorable member then brought to bear upon it all the power and *prestige* he possessed as the head of a strong Government; and why did not the honorable gentleman now proclaim that he would look upon this question as a party one, and call upon the advocates of liberal principles to redeem their pledges, and to shew the sincerity of their professions by assisting him to carry it through the House? Why did he not say that this question was one which the country was looking for, and which the present Administration were pledged to bring forward, and insist upon its being passed, as far as he was able to do so? That would have been the proper and equitable position for the honorable member to take up. Although he might have impliedly taken up that position, he had not sufficiently main-

tained it in his speech upon the second reading of the Bill. He (Mr. MacDevitt) thought it was due to the constituency he had the honor to represent, and also to the liberal principles he had advocated, to protest against this measure being served in the way it was likely to be served. He thought the friends of representation, and especially the honorable member who introduced this Bill, were bound to stand up for it, and not give way at the first onslaught of the enemy.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had not liked to interrupt the honorable member, but he must now beg to correct him. He had not recommended that the Bill should be met by a direct amendment. What he had stated was, that rather than a number of amendments should be proposed which the Government could not accept, he would prefer to have the motion met by a direct negative.

Mr. FORBES said he felt at a considerable disadvantage in addressing the House after the eloquent address to which honorable members had just listened. Not that he had been able to learn anything from the speech of the honorable member who had just sat down, for he could not say that he had received any instruction whatever from it. It had always appeared to him impossible for any human mind to frame a Bill for the redistribution of seats and general electoral reform. That seemed to him a work which would not be achieved for years to come in this colony. How did they find representation was increased in the mother country? There, when a constituency found they were not sufficiently represented in the Imperial Parliament, they petitioned the Parliament, and a writ was issued for the election of an additional member. That was how reform was made in the mother country, and if a similar course had been followed in this colony and petitions had been received from those districts which were not represented, the two-thirds clause would not have been found a check upon reform in that direction. But when an effort was made to carry out a sweeping measure of reform and a redistribution of electorates, it of course affected the seats of existing members. He thought that if it were possible to make an equal distribution, the basis upon which the Bill before the House was framed was one which would be acceptable to the country. When he looked at the figures which had been placed before honorable members, he must say he thought the representation had been fairly and equitably distributed upon the basis of the adult male population. He could see nothing unequal in the distribution. His own view of the matter was, that instead of going into a large and sweeping measure of reform like this Bill propounded, it would have been better to have received petitions to the Legislature from the various districts for additional members—for the Wide Bay District for instance, the northern districts, the mining districts, and those districts in which



the population had increased; and he thought it would have been wise for the House to have granted their requests. With regard to a thorough reform in the representation of the country, he could only see one course to be pursued, and that was an adaptation of the principle of personal representation. He was aware that many persons looked upon this as a visionary and theoretic scheme, but, in reality, every step taken towards electoral reform approached nearer to this principle. The subdivision of electorates provided for in this Bill, by which each electorate returned one member, was an acceptance of the first great principle of personal representation. He merely adverted to this to shew that all liberal reformers were legislating in that direction. He was not going to speak at length about the measure before the House. He merely wished to comment upon the hurried way it was being treated. He knew only one constituency who had spoken openly on this subject at a public meeting; and he thought if the Bill were referred to a select committee to be reconsidered, such a course would tend to the elucidation of the question by the time the House met again. He was sorry to say, that looking to the present state of the House, if the second reading were pressed that evening, he should be compelled to oppose it. It was not because he objected to the character of the measure, or that he was not an advocate for electoral reform, but because he thought they were entering upon the subject with too much haste. A measure of this sort required deep thought and deep research; it required to be adapted, as far as possible, to the different constituencies of the colony. They had to consider the interests of the pastoral tenants, the farmers, the population of the towns, and the gold mining and other interests. The gold mining population had been considered in this measure, and, perhaps, a preponderance of representation had been given to them, which merged upon class legislation. He would not detain the House by making any further remarks at the present time, and would only express a hope that the Government would find some way of disposing of the question for the present, and deferring it for a time, that it might be more generally and more wisely considered.

The amendment was put and negatived without division.

The question that this Bill be now read a second time was then put, and the House divided:—

Ayes, 14.  
Mr. Palmer  
" Ram-ay  
" Moreton  
" Atkin  
" De Satgé  
" Bell  
Dr. O'Doherty  
Mr. MacDevitt  
" Royds  
" Wienholt  
" Mollwraith  
" Scott  
" Walsh  
" Thompson.

Noes, 13.  
Mr. Handy  
" Fyfe  
" Pring  
" Edmondstone  
" Jordan  
" Haly  
" Forbes  
" Ferrett  
" Cribb  
" King  
" Thorn  
" Stephens  
" Lilley.

The SPEAKER said it now became his duty to state that as this was a question affecting the Constitution, which could only be decided by a majority of two-thirds of the whole House, the motion was negatived.