

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 18 MAY 1871

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 18 May, 1871.

Supposed Remains of Leichhardt.—Gold Export Duty Repeal Bill.—Gold Fields Homestead Act Amendment Bill.—Adjournment.

SUPPOSED REMAINS OF LEICHHARDT.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in reply to a question by Mr. Groom, said that no instructions had been issued to Mr. Sub-Inspector Gilmour to prosecute further searches for the remains of Leichhardt and his party; but that Mr. Gilmour had been called upon to furnish a further report upon the subject of his discovery of certain human remains. The matter was one in which many persons took considerable interest, and he might therefore state, that the bones which were found by Mr. Gilmour had arrived in town, and had been placed in the hands of three doctors for examination. He regretted to say that the quantity of bones received was very small indeed—not so much as he could lift in his hands. The doctors to whom they were shewn, and with whom he was present at the time the bones were first examined, were agreed that they were the bones of a human being, but whether they were those of a black or a white person they could not then say. To himself, they appeared to be the bones of a younger person than any of Leichhardt's party. The doctors asked to be allowed to take the bones to the hospital for comparison with a skeleton, and he consented to their request. When they had completed their examination and furnished him with their report he would be in a position to give the House further information on the subject than he was able to give at the present time. The quantity of bones which had been sent down was very small indeed. They appeared to have been much wasted by exposure to the air, and, if he was not mistaken, to the action of fire also. There was nothing like the quantity he expected, from the report, to receive.

GOLD EXPORT DUTY REPEAL BILL.

Mr. KING said that when he brought forward a Bill to repeal the Act granting an export duty on gold during the last session, he pointed out that the duty was not in reality what it professed to be—an export duty on gold. It was paid by the producers who lived and spent their earnings in the colony, and it was not paid by the exporters. He believed that the Honorable the Colonial Secretary and the Honorable the Colonial

Treasurer, in speaking on this question last session, stated that they did not consider it as an export tax, but as a rent or royalty. With regard to the claim for rent, he would just point out to the House that at the rate of 10s. per annum for forty feet square, the extent of an alluvial miner's claim, the miner paid at the rate of £13 10s. per acre, or £8,640 per square mile as rent. The land which was let to the miner at those rates was usually very worthless for other purposes, and would not be classed higher than second-class pastoral, which would be sold at 5s. per acre, or let to the squatter at 2s. 6d. per square mile. With regard to the claim as royalty, he would point out that this claim arose in very barbarous times, when the Monarch could claim a share in all enterprises, and when royalties were accordingly paid on all minerals. Royalties were paid up to comparatively recent times on all coal and iron and other minerals raised in Great Britain, but with civilisation came the knowledge that by allowing the laborer to enjoy the full profit of his labor the country, as well as the laborer, would profit, and accordingly these royalties were abandoned on all the metals and minerals found in Great Britain. Gold was not now found there, and to that circumstance it was owing that the royalty charge upon it was allowed to remain, though it was actually obsolete. Shortly after the discovery of gold in Australia, an old mine in Wales, named the "Vigra Clogan," was re-opened and worked for a short time, and £23,000 was paid to the shareholders in the course of two years from the gold obtained; but the Government made no demand for royalty. When he was at home, about two years ago, there was a small gold field discovered in Sutherlandshire, and the Duke of Sutherland charged miners a small license fee for permission to dig; but no demand was made for royalty on the gold. This tax was at one time levied in Victoria, but it had been abolished by the Act 29 Vic., No. 293, of the colony of Victoria. He would now tell the House why this tax had been abandoned in Victoria. When the tax was first imposed there, the miners were working shallow alluvial deposits of extraordinary richness; and when it was recollected that a party of three men, working at Mount Alexander, obtained 120 lbs. of gold in one day, and that success approaching to that degree was by no means uncommon, it would be seen that the miners in that colony could well afford to pay an export duty; and that, even after a reasonable deduction, the profits of the miners would still be so great, that the gold fields would be most attractive. When, however, the shallow alluvial deposits of Victoria became exhausted, and quartz mining and deep sinking began to prevail, it was found that this tax acted in a most injurious manner, by prohibiting the investment of capital on the gold fields. But when it was found that quartz mining

in particular required large capital to provide heavy and costly machinery, to pay an expensive class of labor, and to carry on works on a large scale, the action of this tax was so injurious, that the Legislature of Victoria at once abolished it. This tax would amount to about two per cent. on standard gold of the value of £3 17s. 10½d. per oz.; but very little of the Queensland gold was so pure as that. Now, the tax was not charged on profits, but on capital and profit together. The capital of a gold-mining company in this colony was not usually large, as money was scarce; and a company usually started with only sufficient capital to carry on until they raised and crushed some stone, the proceeds from which would again carry them on to the next crushing. To give an instance of the operation of this tax: If a company commenced with a capital of £600, which they spent in one month, in raising and crushing a lot of stone, out of which they got gold worth £700, this would give them back their capital and interest at the rate of 200 per cent. per annum, which, even for gold mining, would be a splendid return. But the tax would have to be paid, not on the £100 profit only, but on the £600 capital; and supposing that the company crushed once a month, they would have to pay 24 per cent. per annum tax on their capital, in addition to the tax on their profits. Now, supposing that they did not make any profit, and that after doing £600 worth of work they only got £600 worth of gold in the month, why, in the course of the year, their capital would be diminished nearly one-third, whilst the mine was just paying its expenses. If a man spent £1,000 in gold mining, and got £1,000 worth of gold, he would lose £20 by the operation of the tax; and if he only got £500 worth, he would be taxed £10 for losing £500. If a capitalist came into this colony and asked a resident to advise him how to invest his capital, what would his friend say? Why, this—that if he invested his capital in squatting, in sugar-planting, or in storekeeping, he might keep all he could get, but he must advise him not to invest in gold mining; for, though the quartz reefs of the colony were unusually rich, the Government levied a tax of two per cent. on the produce of all gold mines, and if his profits were not sufficient to pay that, they would take it out of his capital. Now, did they suppose a capitalist would invest under such circumstances? Yet capital was the great want of the Queensland gold fields. To shew the feeling of the mining population on the subject, he would quote from the evidence taken by the Commissioner appointed to inquire into the management of the gold fields. Mr. O. W. Hodgkinson, at Ravenswood, said he would recommend—

"The abolition of the export duty on gold, as savoring of class legislation; also because it promotes an impression that the Government, from the politically-defenceless position of the gold miner, regards him as a fair object of prey."

At Cawarral, the miners passed a resolution to the effect—

"That the export duty on gold should be reduced."

At Ravenswood, the following resolution was adopted at a public meeting—

"That it is the wish of the present meeting, that the Government would do away with the export duty on gold, as all miners look upon it as a real grievance."

At Gympie, the Local Court said—

"We think that this tax is inequitable in principle, and presses very heavily on the class of miners now working in the colony. We fail to see any valid argument in favor of its continuance, unless it is found necessary for the purposes of revenue to tax all exported produce."

Then again, a public meeting, at Gympie, passed the following resolution:—

"That this meeting is of opinion that the export duty on gold is unjust, and depresses the mining industry."

Having thus shewn that the tax was felt by the mining population to be unjust, he would now proceed to shew that it was impolitic. He thought that the gold fields of the colony should be dealt with on the same principle as the public lands. They had a tolerably liberal law for the alienation of Crown lands in fee simple, and they had the other night passed through its second reading a Pastoral Leases Bill, to enable the squatters to take up runs at a rent of two shillings and sixpence per square mile. The argument used to recommend these measures was, that it would be better to give the land away, if by that means a population could be settled upon it who would contribute to the revenue, than to keep it barren and unoccupied by imposing too high terms. The same argument would apply to the gold fields. They had enormous gold fields and a very small mining population, and it would be better to have those gold fields peopled than, by imposing too heavy taxes upon the miners, to drive them away. It must be remembered, that the mining population contributed more than any other to the Customs and Excise revenue by their large consumption of dutiable articles. He perfectly agreed that, in dealing with this question, the good of the colony must be considered before the benefit of any particular class. He did not consider, as some honorable members might, that it would be for the interest of the colony to get as much as they could out of every miner. He did not believe that it would be to the benefit of the colony to attempt to deprive the gold miner of any of the proceeds of his labor. He believed that it would be to the benefit of the colony to have the gold fields fully populated—and that would never be the case as long as class legislation prevailed and the miner was the victim. He would now proceed to point out from the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 1871 that this tax was an unwarranted

imposition on the miners. If honorable members would look at the Estimates of Revenue for the present year they would see that the revenue derived from miners' rights, escort fees, &c., amounted to £7,500; and on turning to the Estimates of Expenditure under the department of the Secretary for Public Works, they would find that the total estimated expenditure on all the gold fields of the colony was only £7,219. In other words, the special gold fields taxation, without the export duty, amounted to nearly £300 more than the special expenditure. Under those circumstances, he could not imagine that any person who desired to deal justly with the miners would vote for the continuance of this tax. He must point out also, before closing his remarks, that, owing to the manner in which the tax was collected, it really amounted to much more than 2 per cent., as the greater part of the gold exported from this colony was exported in the form of amalgamated cakes containing a considerable percentage of dirt and quicksilver, in addition to other metals with which the gold might be alloyed. In fact, owing to this, he might say that the duty would amount to three per cent., instead of two per cent., as was intended by the Act. He would also inform the House that most of the Queensland gold was largely alloyed with silver, and the duty was charged on both silver and gold. The mines at Blacksnake, near Kilkivan, were, in fact, almost silver lodes. He had held in his hand a bar of gold, from Blacksnake, containing 67 per cent. of silver, and 33 per cent. of gold; but duty had to be paid on the whole—silver as well as gold—at the rate of one shilling and sixpence per ounce on silver worth only five shillings per ounce at the Mint. Several promising mines at Blacksnake had been abandoned, owing to this tax, and the colony lost considerably by the desertion of that very promising little gold field. It had been said by members on the other side of the House, that if the duty were not paid in this colony it would have to be paid in New South Wales. Now he had the assurance of an inspector of one of the principal gold-purchasing banks that that would not be the case. That gentleman pointed out to him that if the New South Wales Government attempted to impose a duty on imported gold, the banks could easily establish an assayer in Brisbane, have the gold from the northern ports brought down and melted here, and sent down with the English mail and put on board the English steamer, without even landing it in New South Wales. He hoped the Treasurer would not attempt to make an appeal *ad misericordiam*; but if he did, he would remind honorable members that he (Mr. King) had proved the tax to be unjust, and he would ask them to remember the saying, "*Plat justitia ruat cælum.*"

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Government could have no hesitation in opposing the second reading of this Bill. It was not,

however, from any feeling of affection for the gold export duty, but because there were several reasons why it should be retained. Some honorable members would, no doubt, recollect that before 1857, a very offensive fee was charged upon diggers in the neighboring colonies; and, in order to assist the diggers in getting rid of what was a sort of capitation tax, an export duty on gold was imposed, to the amount of two shillings and sixpence per ounce. That rate of charge, however, was afterwards reduced to one shilling and sixpence per ounce, because it was considered that two shillings and sixpence was oppressive. It was considered that the reduced rate was the easiest way of collecting a revenue from the miners. Now, miners must pay a tax, in order to provide for their special requirements; and he thought it would be admitted that the most just course was to impose a tax that would not come down equally and indiscriminately on the successful and the unsuccessful miner. The gold export duty only came upon the miners who were successful, and therefore he considered it to be the most just system of taxation that could be adopted in the case of miners. There were other reasons why the Bill ought not to pass a second reading that evening. The honorable member for Wide Bay had taken the usual course of having a Bill of this nature introduced through a Committee of the Whole; but he had not shewn how the loss to the revenue by the repeal of this tax was to be met. Now, he thought that it was the duty of the honorable member to do so when bringing forward a Bill, which, if passed into law, would very seriously affect the revenue. If other honorable members were to bring in measures for the repeal of certain taxes, to which they or their constituents might object, the revenue of the colony would soon be diminished to a very small amount indeed. It had been acknowledged that this was not so much a tax as it was a royalty for the gold obtained by the miners. There was no analogy, he maintained, between the case of the miner and the case of the pastoral tenant, in the matter of the development of the resources of the colony. The honorable member had not, in the course of his speech, shewn the full amount that was expended in connection with the gold fields of the colony. He had not shewn how much was expended in the construction of roads and bridges for the benefit of the gold fields. For those reasons he thought it must be obvious to honorable members that the Bill should not be read a second time. A Bill of this kind had been brought before the House on several occasions, but had never been assented to. The principle of the tax was never regarded favorably by honorable members; and no one looked upon taxation on exports favorably; but this was an exceptional tax, and was imposed for the purpose of providing for the convenience of the miners

themselves. For that reason, he considered it was justified as an exceptional tax. He had never heard that it was strongly objected to by the miners themselves, generally. He had heard some objections made to it; but it had not been generally complained of, either in this or in the neighboring colonies, as an excessive or oppressive tax. The successful miners, who held large claims and obtained large quantities of gold, might complain of it; but he thought that the unsuccessful miner, or the holder of a small claim, would not complain of it.

Mr. PRING said he would support the second reading of the Bill, but he would do so with a certain amount of regret, because, though he looked upon a tax of the sort as an unjust one, he could not fail to see that its repeal would deprive the revenue of a certain amount. Some years ago, when Mr. Herbert was at the head of the Government, this gold export duty was imposed. The Act was similar to the Act of New South Wales, and it was considered to be a very bad Act; and Mr. Herbert never denied that it was a bad Act *per se*, and that it had not the effect of producing anything like the amount expected from it to the general revenue of the colony. It was admitted that it might have been a very good Act for New South Wales, whence gold was exported direct to England, but it was very different in the case of this colony, whence they had to export their gold to Sydney. An instance of the unjust nature of the tax came under his own observation during his recent visit to the gold fields as Commissioner. He was shewn two pieces of gold, both of about eight pounds weight; one was from the Cloncurry, and was of the value of £3 17s. 6d. an ounce, and the other was from Western Creek, and was only worth about £2 an ounce, because of the quantity of silver it contained; but the same amount of duty was chargeable upon both. He did not object to the miner being fairly taxed, but he certainly objected to a mode of taxation that did not fall fairly upon him. It was only upon the gold that was produced that the tax, if any, should be levied. The miners brought a great deal of evidence before him on this subject, but he told them that he could not entertain it, because it was outside the province of his duties as Commissioner to do so, and that the House had already dealt with it. The evidence he so refused to receive was verbal evidence; but what came before him in the form of written communications, he had inserted in his report, and he could not prevent its being there. He might, however, state, that from the evidence given, both oral and written, it was quite clear to him that the miners considered the gold export duty to be a very oppressive tax. Though he regretted that the revenue might be deprived of the amount derived from this duty, he would support the motion for the second reading of the Bill; but he hoped the

Ministry would be able to devise some means, should the Bill be carried, to make up the deficiency.

Mr. ATKIN said that the honorable the Colonial Treasurer had stated, that it was the duty of the honorable member who had brought forward this Bill, to shew how the deficiency it would, if carried, occasion to the revenue, should be made up. Now, he (Mr. Atkin) maintained that if the Bill were passed by Parliament, it was properly the duty of the Treasurer to shew how the deficiency should be made up. When, in 1866, Mr. Fitzsimmons brought forward a motion with a view to the introduction of a Bill for the repeal of the export duty on gold, the honorable gentleman now at the head of the Government supported the motion. At page 835 of the third volume of "Hansard," that honorable gentleman was reported to have said that—

"He would support the motion, because he believed all export duties were bad, in theory, in principle, and in practice, and because he thought that instead of the diggers being discouraged they ought to be encouraged, and that as much as possible, and one of the best ways of doing so would be by abolishing the duty that was now placed upon their industry. The honorable the Colonial Treasurer had read some figures, which were no doubt correct, shewing the amount of revenue derived in New South Wales from the export duty on gold; but the honorable gentleman should have informed the House, at the same time, that in New South Wales the duty was going through a process of diminution towards its total abolition, and that in Victoria the duty had altogether ceased to exist. Now, honorable members might not be aware that the duty pressed very unequally upon the miners. But such was the case, and in this way: that all the steerage passengers in the steamers leaving Rockhampton for Sydney direct were searched, though the saloon passengers were not; and why there was such an exception he did not know. But on board the steamers leaving Rockhampton for Brisbane no one was searched; nor were any of the passengers by the steamers from Brisbane to Sydney searched. He thought honorable members would see, that by such an arrangement the duty could not fall equally upon all the miners. If a northern digger came to Brisbane, and then sailed by another steamer from Brisbane to Sydney, he escaped having to pay any duty upon the gold he might have with him. As to assisting to pay the expenses, the revenue from the duty come to only about £900; and he thought that if the duty were abolished the loss of that amount of revenue would be more than compensated for by the amount of gold that would, in consequence of the abolition of the duty, be brought into circulation, and by the increase in the customs revenue on account of an increase of population on the gold fields. He considered it was most impolitic to impose this duty. It was a sort of class legislation, a kind of legislation that he always objected to; and, therefore, if the motion went to a division, he would vote for it."

Now, the great bulk of the arguments contained in that speech, held good at the

present day; and if the honorable member held the same views now, with respect to the export duty on gold, as he did then, he must vote for the motion. This was a class tax of the most objectionable kind; and he could not see why the miners should be singled out, as a class of the community that should be subjected to special taxation. They paid the ordinary taxes which others had to pay, and it was well known that they were the largest consumers of dutiable goods. Therefore, why they should be subjected to a special tax he could not understand.

Mr. FIFE said he would support the second reading of the Bill, as he knew that the miners in the Rockhampton district desired that the tax should be repealed. He had not changed the opinion he had from the first entertained upon the subject; but the miners had changed theirs. He, however, thought that those who asked for the repeal of this duty, ought to shew how the deficiency it would occasion to the revenue could be made up. For his own part, he looked upon this as a legitimate and equitable tax, and that to abolish it would be to make a present to the banks of the amount it now yielded to the revenue. If the Government were true to themselves and to the country, they would establish a national bank. By the course of legislation that was carried on the banks were enabled to dictate to the Government of the colony as to what they should do. Why, the banks had the power to say to the Government whether there should or should not be railways constructed in the colony. If the Government was in that position, that they had to be subservient to the banks, the House ought to step in and legislate in a way that would be for the general interests of the colony. Bank notes were not a currency, except in the case of the Bank of England, and they were only a currency within twenty-five miles of the city of London. However, the notes of the Bank of England, as honorable members knew, were generally received in almost every part of the world, at their full value, although it was universally known that the Bank of England had been three or four times insolvent during the last hundred years; and that the Imperial Government had had to step in from time to time, and, by special enactments, support the bank through its difficulties.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was quite aware of the opinions which he expressed in 1866 on a similar measure to this, and of which the honorable member for East Moreton had reminded the House by reading part of his speech, and he could not say that he had changed his opinions very much as to his objections to the tax. He still looked upon the gold export duty as a bad tax, as one that he should be very glad to see repealed. But, since he had made that speech, he had had to take part in providing to carry on the government of this colony, and when an honorable member was placed in such a position, he was

apt to look at a subject from a very different point of view, and to take a different view of it from that he had as a member of the Opposition. Still, he believed he was right in theory. Admitting that he should be exceedingly glad to see this tax done away with, he could not at all see his way to doing away with it at present. As to its being regarded as unjust by the gold producers, as the honorable Mr. Pring had stated, he could hardly believe it. When honorable members looked back to the time when it was imposed, they would find that it replaced another very objectionable tax, and that, in fact, it was a sort of compounding with the diggers, and was put upon them instead of the license fee of thirty shillings a-month, which had been a great trouble to collect. The license fee was reduced to ten shillings a-year, and the export duty of half-a-crown an ounce was put upon gold. The House would not, he hoped, forget that the export duty was imposed instead of the license fee of thirty shillings a-month, which had borne inconveniently upon the digger. The man who was lucky did not care about that fee; but the man who was unlucky was, perhaps, ruined by it, or driven off the gold field; or, he ran the risk of digging without a license. The present license fee and this export duty did not press heavily upon any one. The argument that it was inconvenient, as the gold was worth more than the standard price, would not hold. All taxation bore inconveniently, and no one could give an instance in which it did not. Even the income tax, which was supposed to be the fairest in the British dominions, bore unevenly on different individuals—more heavily on a married man than on a bachelor, though they had similar incomes. In the position in which he (the Colonial Secretary) was placed, he had a duty to perform to the country, and so had all the Ministry, and that was, to provide revenue—to provide for the carrying on of the Government, and for the payment of the interest on the public debt. If the House should choose to sweep away the revenue from the gold of £21,000 per annum, the Ministry would, of course, have to propose some taxation to make up for it.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: *Ad valorem*.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It was some recompense for the extra expense the country was put to with regard to the diggers. Taxation in lieu of it must take the shape of an increased license-fee for miners' rights, which might be very objectionable in many ways, more particularly in the trouble of collection. If the license-fee was increased the Government would have to raise a small army of police to collect it. He believed that on some diggings it was almost impossible to get the diggers to take out miners' rights.

THE HON. R. PRING: Only Chinamen.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Others as well. If the license-fee were increased, there must be additional police to collect the

revenue, and additional police meant additional money to pay. Where the House would stop in striking off taxes because they were inconvenient, he did not know. The question having been decided last session, it would have shewn something of statesmanship if the honorable member for Wide Bay had not interfered with it until the tariff came up again. He did not wish to impute motives, because that was unparliamentary, but he could not fail to remark that every Bill or question the honorable member brought before the House bore particularly upon his own private interests. He did not think it was desirable to push forward private interests in the House. After the decision of the House on this question, only five months ago, it should have been allowed to rest. There had been no agitation upon it since. He (the Colonial Secretary) had heard the honorable member for Kennedy say, the duty ought to be repealed, and the honorable member for Brisbane, Mr. Pring, had said he was offered evidence on the subject which he did not receive. There was a large gold field near Brisbane, but there had been no agitation there on the subject of the repeal of the export duty; there had come no petition to the House against it. When the men on whom the tax pressed did not petition for its abolition or repeal, the House were not called upon to act on the motion of one honorable member.

MR. LILLEY said he should vote for the second reading of the Bill, and he could do so in perfect consistency with his frequently expressed opinion in the House. He admitted that there might be some difficulty thrown upon the Government in finding another source of taxation. But it was best to be just; and he had no doubt that his honorable friend, the Colonial Treasurer, would find some means of supplementing the revenue to the extent that he might be deprived of money by the passing of the Bill before the House. He thought the tax was an unjust one; it was unjust, to his mind, because it fell upon one class of the community. If we were to have anything in the shape of a tax of its nature—it might, perhaps, be regarded more as an income tax upon the earnings of the digger than as a royalty—the House ought to go in for an income tax all round. Why should not the squatter, or pastoral tenant of the Crown, who got a handsome revenue from the lands of the colony—

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Does he?

MR. LILLEY: Why should not he pay? Why should not the lawyer, who made a good income, occasionally, from out his brains, and his law books, and his practice?—and why should not the merchant, and others?—why, in fact, should not all contribute, if the gold miner was called upon to pay his income tax? He (Mr. Lilley) saw no reason why they should not. Why should the House be so much puzzled to find a source of taxation?

He had heard the late Treasurer in despair as to where more taxation was to be got. Why, there was no land tax, yet!—and he saw that in Victoria they were about to impose that sensible tax. There, the lands of the colony were expected to render to the State a proper contribution to the revenue; and, here, we could have a land tax, and an income tax! Those were immense sources of taxation, if honorable members would only legislate, as they had been advised by the Premier, so as not to deal so much with the private interests of members, and not spend so much time in dealing with pastoral leases and other matters of that description, which shewed that a due regard was paid to private interests within the walls of the Assembly. He thought it would be well to vote for the second reading of the Bill. Again referring to the movement in Victoria for a land tax, he said that he did not care what form the tax would take here, so long as a revenue was obtained from the land. He thought it would be well that the lands were alienated, upon the condition that some revenue was got from them. And, without meaning by his observations to give alarm or offence, he must say that he was glad to find that in the colony below, legislation had a tendency in a way which he had advocated so consistently for adoption in this colony. He held that the lands should be alienated, subject to the reservation of a permanent source of revenue from them. He believed that it would be in many respects for the future advantage and progress of the colony, and would secure her people from any alarm of a deficiency of revenue. He should vote for the second reading of the Bill, although he did not suppose that it would be carried. It would be well for the House to deal with the question upon the broad principle of justice, and less upon expediency. He had done so always, and consistently; when Mr. Herbert was in office, when he (Mr. Lilley) was in office himself, he voted for the repeal of the tax, and he should do so on the present occasion.

Mr. FERRETT maintained that this tax on the diggers was necessary and convenient; and he objected to the substitution of a land tax for it, as suggested by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley. Victoria was a very different country from this, and could afford a land tax. If a land tax was imposed in Queensland, people would not come and settle on the land. He should like to know how many farmers, here, could afford to pay a land tax. It would be a most injudicious way of meeting an emergency; it would be worse than a robbery of the people who took up land.

Mr. GROOM said he could sympathise very much with the Treasurer in the lament, so to speak, which he had delivered to the House, about the loss of revenue which would ensue if the gold export duty was abolished. But the course of action which he would take

would be different from that of the honorable member who had introduced the Bill; he should vote against the tax because he thought it was inequitable and unjust. The main argument in favor of its imposition originally was, that it was a tax essential to be put upon the digging population in order to afford them protection; and the gravamen of the then Treasurer's speech was, that the diggers should be protected by the police from the inroads of the bushrangers of New South Wales. The measure was resisted by only seven members in a small House, and was carried. He had voted against it on principle, and he intended to oppose the continuance of the tax on the present occasion. The honorable member for Rockhampton had said that the Opposition who proposed to repeal an Act, which repeal would entail a loss of £21,000 on the colony, should shew how that loss was to be made up; and his words were cheered by the Colonial Treasurer. He (Mr. Groom) did not agree with the honorable member. The amount was small, and there were many other sources from which that amount could be raised. The honorable member for Fortitude Valley had mentioned one, when he referred to Victoria, where there was a movement, which he (Mr. Groom) was very glad to see. He felt certain that the public mind in this colony was being educated gradually to the adoption of a land tax. He represented a farming population largely, and in the way he had put it to them, they agreed most heartily that the land should be taxed, and that the proceeds should be devoted part to the improvement of the roads, and part for immigration. There was another means of raising revenue. In Victoria, about £150,000 was realised from business licenses. Why should not something of the sort be imposed in this colony? He suggested it to the consideration of the Treasurer. It was a fortunate thing for him that this discussion took place before he had to make his financial statement. There was no question whatever, that gold mining had settled down into a regular local industry. The alluvial diggings were worked out; and the present system of reefing was a recognised and settled occupation for a large population. He felt that it was very desirable to insist upon this, and that it should be known, in the face of what he found in the *London Times*, of the 18th March last. There was a report from Sir Clinton Murdoch to Sir Frederick Rogers, on the subject of emigration, and it contained the following, to which he requested the attention of honorable members, based upon a despatch received from the Governor of Queensland: it was fraught with serious consequences to this colony:—

“The Governor of Queensland says, that for some years past the immigration into that colony has, in his opinion, been rather in excess of the demand for labor; that unless the arrival of immigrants be accompanied by the arrival of capitalists ready to employ them, disappointment

will follow; that the modern system of enclosing pastoral lands has reduced the demand for shepherds, and that the one class much in demand are female domestic servants. The only way in which the colony could be made available for immigrants from the United Kingdom is, he thinks, either by a loan for public works to be raised by the colony with the guarantee of the Home Treasury, or by an advance from the Home Government, or an association, of the expenses of settling immigrants on land. It is superfluous to observe that, so far as the Imperial Treasury is concerned, neither of these expedients is admissible."

That was a paltry statement to go forth to the emigrating public of Great Britain. *The Times*, of March 21st, contained a leading article drawing attention to the condition of Queensland, in consequence of that extraordinary despatch sent home by the Governor. There was not a word in that despatch about our gold fields, and their promise of employment to a large population, nor a word about the prosperity of the miners. There was not a word about the large interest established and almost begging for labor. In order to meet certain complaints that had been made about Polynesian labor, agents were employed by the Government to go in the ships to the islands in order to see that the laborers brought here for the requirements of the colony were properly obtained. In the presence of the fact that five or six vessels were engaged between this colony and the islands to procure laborers, and the fact that Coolies were inquired for as laborers, there was a statement to go forth to the world with official authority! At the present time, it was calculated to do serious injury to this colony. He thought it was quite time that all temporising should be abandoned, and that public men should put an end to a state of things that permitted such misrepresentation to go abroad. They should see whether the honorable gentlemen who occupied the Treasury benches should not have that despatch contradicted.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The members of the Government never see the Governor's despatches, that I am aware of. For the report of the Immigration Agent the Government are responsible; but not for the Governor's despatches, which they never see. We know nothing of the despatch in question.

MR. GROOM expressed his satisfaction with the statement of the Premier, which at once relieved him and the Government from an implied imputation; because, when he first read the statement, he imagined that it had been written with the concurrence of the honorable gentleman. It was a very damaging statement, and the more so as there was one part of it which could not be denied—that the modern system of enclosing runs reduced the demand for labor. He took exception to it altogether, for the gold fields gave employment to a very large class of the community, and would afford employment for a great

number of people, for some time to come, as they were opened out. Most certainly, he should vote for the Bill, as he always opposed the duty since he had a seat in the House. The Treasurer had justified the tax as necessitated by certain circumstances which he did not detail. It was known that the country had to employ a considerable number of native police, for the protection of the pastoral tenants in the outside districts;—was there any special tax on those pastoral tenants?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes; the rent.

MR. GROOM: The digger, too, paid a rent.

MR. McILWRAITH: Don't you get white police?

MR. GROOM: Yes. But there was no special tax imposed on the pastoral tenants of the Crown, in the outside districts, for native police. He referred to this because it had been argued that the diggers' peculiar vocation required that they should have larger police protection than any other section of the community. He took exception to that argument. The Colonial Secretary had said that no petitions had been sent to the House for the repeal of the gold export duty. That was perfectly true. But, last session, on the motion of the Minister for Lands, suggested by the honorable member for Wide Bay, the House resolved upon sending a commissioner to the gold fields to take evidence. Though the commissioner had had evidence proffered on the subject of the gold export duty, he did not think himself justified in going into that particular grievance; and, when the honorable gentleman mentioned the name of one pioneer digger who had offered evidence of the complaint of the diggers against the tax, the Minister for Works laughed derisively, though he durst say the opinion of that person was as good as the opinion of the honorable member for Maryborough.

MR. LILLEY said he never did see a Governor's report; if he had seen a report of the kind cited by the honorable member who last addressed the House, he would either have recalled the Immigration Agent, or thrown his commission in the Governor's face.

MR. McILWRAITH said he intended to vote for the second reading of the Bill; not because the gold export duty was an unjust tax; not because it was an inequitable tax. He should vote for it; not for the reasons that he had heard advanced on the Opposition side of the House, but for the reasons which he had given last session, and which he repeated now, that he could not see why there should be a tax on any produce of the colony, which he objected to on principle. As he had spoken so recently upon it, he need not repeat his arguments; but he would dwell on one point, and speak to the words used by honorable members, that the tax was unjust and inequitable. When he examined the statistics of the colony, he found that there were a great many taxes, and that, as a general principle, the colonists all paid alike; but that those who got special advantages, paid for those

advantages. He found that for business licenses on the gold fields, persons paid £4 a-year. For that, a man got a certain amount of land, on which to erect a house in which to carry on his business; he paid for this special advantage. A license to cut timber on vacant Crown land, cost £4 per annum; and for a license to cut hardwood alone, a man had to pay £2 a-year. In those cases, men who took out licenses, paid for converting what was the public property to their own advantage; they got special advantages. For a license to dig for and remove any gravel, stone, brick earth, shells, or other material, from off Crown lands, a man had to pay £5 per annum; and the brickmakers paid an annual license of £3 for each mould. Those were payments for special advantages. Now, so far as justice was concerned, all the persons mentioned, with the exception of the holder of a business license, whom he intended to leave out of his argument, were not in circumstances of greater prosperity than the gold-diggers of this colony; and he did not think they got any special advantages which the digger did not get. In fact, what they got from the public, or the Crown, were certain privileges for their own purposes; and they were much the same in each case. The man who was licensed to dig for gravel, paid to the Government what was equal to the duty on 66½ ounces of gold, which, reckoning it at £3 17s. 6d. an ounce, was a tax on an income of £257 6s. 8d. The laborer who went on Crown lands to cut timber paid equal to the duty on 53½ ounces of gold, or a tax on an income of £206 13s. 4d. The man who made bricks, and his circumstances were not specially favorable, paid equal to the duty on 40 ounces of gold, or a tax on an income of £155. He (Mr. Mellwraith) thought that completely answered the arguments as to the injustice and inequitableness of the gold export duty. He did not think the digger paid more than he ought to pay; but he thought that the duty was unwisely levied, and that it was wrong in principle. His figures shewed that, if the House went into the justice of the tax, there was not a man in the country districts who was not taxed more than the digger at the present time.

Mr. HANDY said, that having heard the speeches for and against the Bill, he felt disposed to support the second reading, for the simple reasons, first, that he thought the export duty on gold a very partial tax; second, that it pressed unequally on the miners; and, third, that it was prohibitive of the opening up of our gold fields. The tax did not fall on the banks that exported the gold; but on the miners who sold their gold to the banks at a price from which the duty was deducted. A very small minority of the miners of the colony were successful, and the vast majority were struggling for an existence, and it was very hard on the latter that they should be taxed equally with the former.

That duty was a class tax, and an offensive tax. The Treasurer evinced a want of statesmanship if he could not find some other source of taxation which would yield the amount of revenue that the repeal of this tax would deprive him of; and he ought not to ask the Opposition to shew him where to supply the deficiency. He (Mr. Handy) told the Colonial Secretary that if the Government were in difficulties about the loss of £20,000, that was nothing to the Opposition. Whether or not the Government could make up the revenue, he was bound to oppose the tax. The Treasurer had spoken of the cost of roads and bridges on account of the gold fields, but he had not said a word about the large direct revenue derivable from publicans' licenses on the gold fields, besides the indirect revenue from the consumption of dutiable goods on the diggings. Besides the gold duty, he should oppose the license fees charged for cutting timber and removing stone from Crown lands; he felt that they were unjust to industries of such a nature.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he had the misfortune to differ from a good many honorable members who had already spoken, because he did not see the grievous objections to this impost which had struck their minds. There was one objection, and that was its name. If, instead of being called an export duty, this charge were called a royalty, he thought that honorable members on the Opposition side of the House would find very little to say against it. For that reason, he would vote against the Bill. This charge—he would omit the name tax altogether—was levied only on the successful digger, and the successful digger paid less for his rights than any other licensed worker in the colony, while his returns might be incomparably larger—a small amount of work might bring positive affluence to a man, within a year. There was no other occupation in which a man could obtain the same advantages by the same amount of labor of his hands. He (the Attorney-General) thought that the men who devoted themselves to mining had advantages which were not possessed by any others in the community. The sum of ten shillings was what they paid for their miners' rights, and the advantages they had were protection for their claims and their property, and the right to search for gold almost wherever they chose. It was only a nominal charge. Those who were unsuccessful had no further charge to pay, and those who were successful could well afford the charge which the Bill proposed to abolish. If the gold export duty were cut off, it would probably be necessary, certainly it would be a matter for consideration, whether the Government would not be obliged to return to the old system for which this royalty had been substituted. He thought the House would find that they were making a mistake, and were misled by catching at a name merely.

Mr. STEPHENS said he wished to correct a mistake into which honorable members had fallen with reference to the loss to the Treasury which would be involved if the Bill was carried. He was not quite certain who started it—whether the Treasurer or some other Minister, he thought it was the Premier—but the loss would in all probability be about £11,000 or £12,000.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: More than that.

Mr. STEPHENS: He saw that the total amount of gold revenue was taken into consideration; but he was not aware that it was proposed to touch anything but the gold export duty. In 1869, that revenue was £10,762; last year, it was £10,486. It was estimated—why, he could not tell—to amount this year to £14,000. He did not think it probable that that amount would be produced, but only about half of it. He took it that the revenue for the last two years averaged £10,500 a-year; and, if the taking away of that amount was set down as a loss to the general revenue of the colony, that loss would not be a very serious thing after all. When a similar Bill to this was before the House last year, he voted against it, very much, indeed, against his will; but, on the ground of expediency, he did not think it was exactly right at that time, when there was a considerable deficiency in the revenue, to repeal the Gold Export Duty Act, without providing some means to replace the amount proposed to be taken from the revenue, or until they saw the result of the increased Customs duties. That reason did not apply now. He must on principle vote against the duty. Already, the House had provided something in the place of the gold duty; they had done it last session. The late Treasurer had told them that they had taxed every mortal thing they could think of, and that they could not impose another tax. On referring to the Customs returns, he (Mr. Stephens) saw that for the first three months of this year the duties collected exceeded the amount raised during the corresponding three months of last year by £22,000. He did not mean to say that the whole of that increase was due to the extra taxes; but much of it was. If that was the case, the House might fairly be able to spare the gold duty; it fairly entitled the country to expect it. He could not see where the Attorney-General got his argument about the advantages of gold digging. It might have applied to the old alluvial system of mining, when men went into the field without having the least idea where the lumps of gold were: it was a lottery then, and a man might reach affluence in a short time and suddenly. There was a certain amount of justice in putting a tax on realised property; but the honorable gentleman seemed to have entirely forgotten, in the remarks he had made, the altered circumstances of gold digging, now, from what it was years past. There was very little

alluvial digging now in the colony; the ground was all worked out. Unquestionably, the large amount of gold exported now was derived from quartz workings, which demanded considerable capital and somewhat of scientific knowledge, and a number of men on wages, to prosecute them profitably. The system was very different from alluvial digging, where there might be one great prize, while the blanks were enormous. However, the gold export duty always seemed to him to be bad in its operation as in its policy; and he thought it should be done away with. The best thing the House could do was to encourage the occupation of gold mining as much as possible. Everything in the shape of a grievance should, he believed, be removed from the diggers if possible. The increased revenue from extra Customs duties would enable the Government to spare the gold duty; and he was sure that if the Bill were passed, the House would not hear the Treasurer say a word about it hereafter.

Mr. JORDAN said he concurred in the maxim with which the honorable mover of the Bill concluded his speech, that the House should do right though the heavens should fall. Whatever the consequences, that maxim ought to guide them in this and every other question. If the House were satisfied with the reasons brought forward by several speakers that this gold export duty was an unjust tax, then, whether it was impolitic or otherwise, they should do away with it. For his own part, he had been long convinced that an export duty on anything which was produced in a new country was a mistake. He should be one to object to a tax on wool or tallow, on that principle, although they could better bear it than the gold. The Treasurer had said the tax was fair and just because it left the man who was unsuccessful free. That was hardly a fair way of putting it—that it let the man off paying the duty who had nothing to pay it on, who found no gold. Honorable members divided the diggers into two classes, the very fortunate, and the men who found no gold. But there was a large middle class, and he believed it constituted the great body of the people on the gold fields, and that was composed of those who just made wages and an honest livelihood. It was as fair to dig gold as potatoes; they both demanded honest toil. But it was very hard work digging gold, and the gold digger ran great risks, and incurred much discomfort in connection with his pursuit. Many of the gold miners had to leave their wives and families, and they had a claim to the attention of the House, and to their protection. They ought to be satisfied, by the remarks which had been made by the honorable gentleman who had visited the gold fields as a commissioner so recently, that the tax pressed very unequally; and who had told them, also, that a mass of evidence had been offered to him on the question. It had been said that no complaints had been

made on the subject by the gold miners themselves; but that was answered by the commissioner, though he had not considered that, in his position, he should take such evidence; and by the honorable member for Wide Bay, who had shewn that, notwithstanding, evidence on the subject did come out before the commissioner that there was a very strong objection to the tax amongst the mining population, and that it was by them considered a very unfair tax. He (Mr. Jordan) thought that it had been sufficiently shewn to be an unjust tax, because it was a partial tax, pressing on one particular class, while persons connected with or engaged in other industries were not taxed. It was unequal, because it was paid upon a great amount of alloy as well as upon pure gold. The gold fields of the colony should be made attractive. When he found such reports sent home as had been read to the House, it was their duty to make the gold fields attractive, in justice to the colony. When he was in South Australia, which was a very successful colony, a great many persons were enabled to settle on the land by the money they had saved from the gold fields in Victoria. The House should do away with the unjust impost. It would cost the colony only £10,500, as the honorable member for South Brisbane had shewn, which could be very easily obtained from some other source. There ought to be a tax on land. He was satisfied, being a land holder himself, occupying and using some three or four hundred acres, that the persons who were really using their land, *bonâ fide* farmers and planters, would not object to it; they would gladly pay a land tax. Those only who held a quantity of land which they did not use, mere speculators, would object. Something like sixpence an acre should be levied, and it would be paid, on the principle that the money should be spent on the improvement of the roads in proportion to the amount contributed by localities. He was satisfied that before long the House would have to legislate in that direction. When honorable members on the Opposition side of the House opposed the tax on flour, which it was supposed would yield a revenue of £20,000 a-year, they did then propose a remedy; not that he had thought they were called upon to do so. The suggestion had come from the honorable member for South Brisbane that, in order to replace the sum to be raised on flour, the *ad valorem* duty should be increased from seven and a-half to ten per cent. He (Mr. Jordan) did not think that, if the gold export duty was done away with, honorable members on his side of the House were called upon to suggest another tax to replace it. The little amount could be very easily made up. The Government had yet to bring forward their Estimates, and they could very easily make it up.

Mr. MORGAN observed that when the Bill was first laid on the table he had very considerable doubts whether he should support or

oppose it. He was not aware how little it affected the revenue of the colony, having thought that it must do so very seriously. The matter assumed a very different aspect to him, now, compared to what it had originally. He had always a strong objection to taxes on exports, and he thought that a tax upon anything produced in the colony was undesirable; because, if one article of produce was taxed, it was not fair to stop there—the colonists generally should be taxed, and the burden of taxation distributed equally. If gold was taxed, the House ought, in common fairness, to put an export duty on wool, tallow, and hides. If the Colonial Treasurer was at a loss about this trifle of £10,000 or £11,000 which the repeal of the duty would cost, the only fair and unobjectionable way to make it up was to fall back upon a land tax. A land tax was, he (Mr. Morgan) believed, something like the Brisbane railway, only a question of time. Come, it must. He was prepared to support the second reading of the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he should not have risen to speak, only that one honorable gentleman who was to address the House was absent. It was, perhaps, necessary that he should say something now, to shew that his views were not a bit changed from what they were when the question was previously before the House. He did not think the House debated the question fairly when they debated the gold export duty as a tax at all. It had been said they had no right to tax the diggers' earnings. They did not do so. They taxed what the digger took out of the soil, and in proportion to what he got from the soil and took away absolutely. Gold digging was not like farming, in which occupation a man took something away, it was true, but he also gave something in return, and did not leave the soil worse than he found it. Gold digging was a pursuit *sui generis*; what the digger took away, was gone for all time. The gold export duty was, in fact, not a tax, but a royalty. It was a very great privilege that the gold miners enjoyed on the Crown lands. If they worked on private property, they had to pay for it, and why should there be any difference between a royalty paid to private owners of land, and a royalty paid to the Crown? How was it just for a private individual who owned a mineral property, to claim a royalty, and unjust for the Government to do so? He (the Secretary for Lands) could see a great distinction between a tax and a royalty. The gold export duty was a just impost, inasmuch as it was a return for advantages received by the miners. It might be too heavy—it might be too light; but that was beside the present question. The diggers paid in proportion to their success, and the impost was therefore fair. It would not be fair, perhaps, if the land were leased to them, and the Government charged a certain price for every square foot occupied. As far as the

Crown tenants on the pastoral lands, were concerned, he was sure they would be glad to be treated on the same terms as the diggers, and to pay according to their profits. But there was this difference between them: the pastoral occupants improved the land and benefitted the country the more the longer they stopped on it. The gold diggers destroyed the ground, and took away that for which they sought, and which did not come back again—and they were to pay nothing for it! They were to be protected; they had special legislation; and they were to pay nothing for the extraordinary privileges they enjoyed—for taking valuable treasure from the ground. Was that reasonable or fair? If it could be shewn that the duty was upon their industry, something might be said favorable to the Bill. But he believed it would be found by the returns that the gold diggers were the most expensive class the Government had to deal with. It was said that they consumed a great quantity of dutiable goods. But they were consuming the capital of the country; they were taking the richest part away, to send out of the country; and they were charged only for what they sent away to other countries; they were not charged for what they circulated in the colony. A great deal had been said about the dearth of capital which he (the Secretary for Lands) did not understand. The honorable member for Fortitude Valley said, the other evening, that the colony was in a prosperous state, because we spent a great deal of money. Such arguments, and the figures used, he had a great difficulty in making out; but it seemed to him rather queer to say that the gold export duty was an unjust impost, and yet that the gold miners were enriching the colony. If gold was valuable to the colony, surely the Government were justified in charging the diggers who got it, a small amount upon what they sent away, although it cost them something to get it. But he had said enough. It was wasting time for honorable members to be repeating their speeches over and over again. Last night he had declined to speak, on that ground, upon the railway question, which he had made speeches about until he was tired of it. He spoke now only to put the present question in another light; and he thought he had given a good reason for the light that was in him.

Mr. MILES said he would like to know what course the Government intended to pursue in respect to this Bill, as distinct information on that point might alter his views on the subject. He should be sorry to see the Government resign in the event of this Bill being carried; still, he felt that he could not oppose the motion for the second reading of it. A measure of this kind had been before the House on several occasions since he had the honor of occupying a seat in the Legislative Assembly, and he had always supported it, on the ground that a gold export duty was a species of class

taxation. On one occasion, there was a Bill brought before the House for the purpose of imposing an export duty on wool, tallow, and hides. He opposed that Bill for the same reasons as he would oppose this Bill. The view he took of it was this—that the industrious man, the man who labored the most, had the highest amount of taxation to pay; and he never would, by any vote of his, allow such a system of taxation to be continued. This export duty on gold was a special tax; and it was one of a very objectionable character. For those two reasons alone, if there were none other, he would support the second reading of the Bill for its abolition. At the same time, if the Bill was passed, he thought that some steps should be taken by the Government, in order to secure that the diggers should pay their fair share of taxation towards the revenue, in order to provide for the carrying out of the works specially required for their accommodation. Brick-makers had to pay a license fee for the use of the Crown lands they occupied, and why should not gold miners also have to pay for the use of the lands they occupied? Still, he thought the Government should hold out every encouragement for the introduction of gold miners. In fact, it was the duty of the Government to encourage the settlement of population by every means in their power, especially of miners, who were the greatest consumers of dutiable goods. The honorable the Colonial Treasurer had said that a great amount was expended for roads and bridges for the convenience of the miners; but, he would like to ask, if there were not roads and bridges constructed for the convenience of the others; and he would remind the honorable gentleman of the amount that had been expended in the Dalby district on roads and bridges for the convenience of the settlers there; but the people there were not required to pay any special tax on that account. The Secretary for Public Works had expended moneys where he had no right to do so, on account of such expenditure not being included in the vote. He supported the vote for roads and bridges, which had been referred to by several honorable members; but when he did so he had no idea that it would be spent in the way it had been. For the reasons he had given he would support the second reading of the Bill. He thought the export duty on gold should be abolished, though it might be advisable to increase the charge for the miner's right.

Mr. DE SATGE said he thought it was premature to introduce this Bill, seeing the honorable the Colonial Treasurer had not yet made his financial statement. He might state that it was his intention, in committee, to move an amendment on the Bill, providing for a sliding scale; so that, by such means, the tax might be gradually reduced every year until it was finally extinguished—say, in the course of three years, in the same way

as the cotton bonus was to be done away with. The honorable member who had brought forward the Bill stated that such was the course which was pursued in Victoria with respect to the abolition of the gold export duty there. Now, he did not see why a similar course should not be adopted here. He was strongly impressed with the belief that the revenue could not afford to be deprived of the amount derived from this gold export duty at one sweep. When, as at the present time, they were expending such large sums on immigration, and virtually giving away the lands for nothing for the purposes of settlement, he did not think that they should at once do away with this tax. He had listened with a great deal of interest to the excellent and lucid speech of the honorable member for Rockhampton on this subject; and he believed that anyone who heard it could not fail to come to the conclusion that when the North was separated from the South, that honorable member would become Colonial Treasurer for the northern district. He did not think the reasoning of the honorable member for Wide Bay was strictly correct as to the relative position of the miner and the squatter. The benefit of the industry of the squatter, as well as the benefit of his capital, remained in the colony; whereas, the miner took the gold out of the ground, and sent it elsewhere, without leaving any benefit whatever to the colony. At the present time they were expending large sums of money for the introduction of immigrants to the colony, and a great many of the immigrants brought here at the public expense, did not remain in the colony. Many of those who were brought here as free immigrants, and who entered upon mining pursuits, shortly afterwards left for other colonies. Now, he did not see why they should foster a system of immigration for the bringing out of miners, without some such a tax as this. The miners could leave the colony at any time they liked, and go to another colony, where they had not to pay any export duty on gold. For those reasons, and, as he did not see that the revenue could afford, at once, to lose the amount derived from this tax, he could not support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. MACDEVITT said, that from the opening remarks of the honorable member for Clermont, he thought he would have been able to get through his speech, on this occasion, without attacking any other honorable member representing a northern constituency. But such had not been the case. The honorable member had referred to the honorable member for Rockhampton, in a way which he (Mr. MacDevitt) considered was personally insulting; and the other evening he spoke of the same honorable member as not having a stiver in the district he represented.

Mr. DE SARCE denied that he had made any insulting remarks respecting the honorable member for Rockhampton, either now or on any former occasion.

Mr. MACDEVITT: Well, while he did not desire to refer to any former debate, he would give the honorable member for Clermont credit for having a stiver invested in the district he represented; and when that honorable member went back to the district he represented, he might be able to take up a quantity of land to the value of that extent.

The SPEAKER informed the honorable member that he could not refer to anything that had been said in the course of a previous debate, during the present session.

Mr. MACDEVITT: Well, he would not refer to a previous debate, but he would refer to the supposititious case of this individual, who had a stiver invested in the district he represented.

Mr. SCOTT rose to order. He considered it was not according to parliamentary practice, for any honorable member to refer to another as "this individual."

Mr. ATKIN: The honorable member for the Kennedy was referring to a supposititious individual.

The SPEAKER was understood to rule that if an honorable member, in raising a supposititious case, referred to another honorable member, he was out of order in doing so.

Mr. MACDEVITT: Well, he might be permitted to say that he intended to support the second reading of the Bill. Whether it should be passed or not, or whether it should be postponed at present, he was satisfied that the time would soon come when they would have to follow the example of Victoria in the abolition of this gold export duty. One of the reasons advanced by the honorable member for Clermont for supporting this special tax was that the miners who took the wealth out of the colony derived special benefits from it; whereas the pastoral tenants, who improved the country and left it stocked, derived no special benefits from the amount of taxation they had to pay. Now there was one observation he would like to make upon that point, and it was this—that, but for the discovery of the gold fields, the pastoral tenants would have found that their improvements were of very little value indeed. Before the discovery of the gold fields, the country in the neighborhood of the Cape River and Ravenswood diggings was almost valueless—so much so that it was being gradually deserted by the squatters. But the discovery of those gold fields had greatly enhanced the price of stock, and consequently of station property; and the squatters in those districts should therefore remember that, if it now paid them to raise stock, it was because of the digging population who had gone there. When a motion for the abolition of the export duty on gold was formerly before the House, the honorable gentleman now at the head of the Government supported it on the ground that the duty was absurd, ridiculous, and iniquitous; and yet he now stated, that, while holding the same opinions respecting it, he felt that the necessities of the

country required its continuance; and he advanced that opinion on the miserable plea of expediency. He must say it was unfortunate that there was not that adherence to principle which should characterise the conduct of honorable members. He certainly sympathised with the Government as to the difficulty in which they would be placed in raising the amount by which the revenue would be reduced if this export duty on gold should be abolished. Now, if the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government had stated that he had changed his opinions in this matter, other honorable members could have understood his conduct; but, on the contrary, he had said that while he supported the continuance of the tax, his opinions respecting it remained unchanged. On a previous occasion, when this question was before the House, the honorable gentleman who now held the office of Secretary for Public Works, in the course of his speech on the subject, went on to shew how much the diggers were taxed in excess of the amount that was expended for their particular benefit. The honorable gentleman stated that something like £17,000 was expended on the gold fields, while the revenue derived from them amounted to about £21,000. So far, that might be correct, but it only applied to the matter of direct taxation; but it gave no credit to the miners for the amount they paid to the revenue in the way of indirect taxation. Now, he believed that the amount derived from the miners in the way of indirect taxation—and that in addition to direct taxation—was something like £50,000, or, perhaps, more. Now, that would at least bring up the amount of the taxation on the miners to about £71,000 at the least, while the expenditure, for their benefit, amounted to only £17,000. The £17,000, raised by way of direct taxation, might be expended in the construction of roads and bridges, specially for the benefit of the gold fields; but what about the £50,000 of indirect taxation? As regarded the total amount raised from the miners by direct and indirect taxation, this expenditure of £17,000 was a mere *bagatelle*; and he thought the House should be afforded some explanation as to the expenditure of the further sum of £50,000. In the other colonies this tax was imposed when mining operations were altogether of an alluvial nature—when little or no capital was required, and when large amounts of gold were obtained with little expenditure. The miners could, therefore, easily pay the export duty, in order to obtain for them the additional protection, they, at that time, required. But the nature of mining operations had since changed. Instead of alluvial mining, it was now principally quartz mining, which required the investment of a large amount of capital. In Victoria, where the miners had many privileges, in the shape of district mining courts, and courts of appeal, and a special staff of officers—which privileges the miners in this colony did not possess

—this tax had been abolished. Now, that being the case, he thought that if Victoria could afford to do away with this tax, this colony could also afford to do so. In the *Town and Country Journal*, which was published in New South Wales, a correspondent, writing from Cleveland Bay, said that miners were not wanted in Queensland, and that they should not go there; because, while they had to pay the same amount for a miner's right, as in any of the other colonies, there were also heavy *ad valorem* duties, gold export, and other duties, in excess of those levied in other colonies, all of which prevented the miner from profitably prosecuting his enterprise. It would be in the recollection of honorable members that a resolution was passed by the House, for the purpose of rewarding the discoverers of new gold fields; but he believed that the present Government had taken no action upon it. If the honorable the Secretary for Works gave a satisfactory explanation as to that, it would enable him (Mr. MacDevitt) to know as to how far he should comply with the resolution now before the House. It had been said that the gold miners received too much sympathy, and that their only desire was to take as much out of the colony as they possibly could. Well, the same thing could be said of others, and, therefore, so far as that argument went, there was no reason why the House should not treat the miners with the same measure of liberality as they treated other inhabitants of the colony. It had also been said that miners were here to-day and away to-morrow. Well, no doubt they were a very migratory class, but it should be borne in mind that, where a gold field was found to be payable, the miners remained there for years. He should certainly support the Bill, because, before he could do otherwise, it must be shewn to him why miners should be selected, as a class, from the rest of the community for special taxation.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said he was sorry to find that a measure of this kind could not be discussed without some honorable members indulging in personal remarks, such as the honorable member who had just sat down had been led into making. He maintained that there was nothing whatever, in the speech of the honorable member for Clermont, to justify the personal remarks which had been made respecting him by the honorable member for the Kennedy. He regretted that that honorable member who had earned a good name for himself in the House, for able debating and for correct speaking, should have spoken on the present occasion in so personal a way as he had done; and he believed he would not have done so, but for the way in which he was cheered in the course of his speech by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley. The honorable member for the Kennedy would yet find cause for regret, if he allowed himself to be led away by the cheering remarks of other honorable members, to indulge in personal remarks. The question was one in which he

himself took as deep an interest as any other honorable member in the House; and no one in the House, or out of it, had a stronger desire than he had to see justice done to the miner. If he could see a more equitable way to obtain a fair measure of taxation from the miners, than by this gold export duty, he would espouse it; but he thought that any other mode of taxation would bear unjustly upon them. It was the duty of the Government to take care of the revenue of the colony; and none knew that better than some honorable members on the Opposition side of the House, who, abandoning the principles they had previously advanced on this question, now supported the Bill before the House. The honorable member for South Brisbane, for instance, was well aware that the House should not at this period of the session—before the Colonial Treasurer had made his financial statement—take any action that would tend to interfere with the financial arrangements of the Government. The honorable member, however, seemed to be prepared to abandon all his previously expressed opinions for party purposes, and to occupy the miserable position he now held in the House. He could not understand, why any honorable member could vote on any question, diametrically opposite to the way he voted only about six months ago; and that merely for party purposes or for the sake of office. However, he was not at all astonished at anything that honorable member either said or did. Still, he was sorry to find him attempting to induce a young member of the House—as the honorable member for the Kennedy—from the path of probity and propriety. To come to the subject of the Bill, he maintained that, by this tax, they only taxed the man who got gold, and who was therefore the best able to pay a tax of this kind. Now, it had not been shewn by any of the supporters of this Bill, why the revenue should be called upon to dispense with the amount of revenue which it yielded. This gold export duty was at first imposed in New South Wales, at the express request of the miners in that colony. At one time, the Government of New South Wales imposed a heavy license fee; but the miners desired that the license fee should be reduced, and that a small export duty of this kind should be substituted for it. He had never heard this duty complained of except by the honorable member for Wide Bay, who seemed to be always hunting up the grievances of diggers. The honorable member for Wide Bay asked that there should be a sort of a differential duty on gold exported—that while so much might be charged for pure gold, a smaller amount should be charged for gold that contained a certain amount of silver or other metals than gold. But honorable members must see that it would be very difficult to make any distinction; and besides, if a distinction were allowed, it might be taken advantage of to defraud the revenue. He would be very glad of the opportunity of

investing, say £1,000 in one of the mines in which the honorable member for Wide Bay was concerned, and to pay the export duty on the gold obtained from it. The only miners who objected to this gold export duty were those who were making thousands of pounds per annum. The honorable member for Wide Bay seemed to make it his business to go about ferretting out the grievances of miners—but no deputations had waited upon the Government, nor had any petitions been forwarded to the Government, by the miners on the subject. The honorable member had made long quotations to shew what vast diggings there were throughout the colony, and what a splendid revenue was derived from them. In reply, he (the Secretary for Works) had to inform the honorable member and the House, that he, fortunately, had a report prepared by the Auditor-General, an officer of Parliament, in response to an order of the House; and in that report he found that the richest gold field, Gympie, had cost the colony, from its beginning up to the date of the return, £52,976 9s. 11d., and that the whole returns derived from it, including gold revenue and customs, was £38,620 15s. 4d., shewing in round numbers, that as far as Gympie was concerned, the colony had apparently lost over £14,000.

Mr. KING rose to a question of privilege.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What was the question of privilege?

Mr. KING: The question of privilege was, that the Minister for Works committed a breach of the privileges of the House, by laying a false return on the table of the House.

The SPEAKER: That was not a question of privilege.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The return was, as he before said, laid on the table, in reply to an order of the House. The officer who had prepared it would be able to shew cause why it was so prepared; and he (the Secretary for Works) should be able to shew, at the proper time, whether he had committed a breach of privilege or not. It was the first time he had ever heard a Minister accused of committing a breach of privilege for laying any return on the table. It was not likely that any return would please the honorable member for Wide Bay, which he did not prepare himself. The House should authorise the honorable member to go into the Government offices to prepare any return he wanted, just as the honorable member had gone up into the reporters' gallery, and distracted the attention of the shorthand writer, for his own advantage. A fellow-feeling might have made him more careful. He (the Secretary for Works) had not conceived it, but it was a fact, which the return shewed, that the colony had lost £14,000 odd by Gympie. As regarded the commercial advantages of the gold fields to the colony, he knew that that was not the case; but he had quoted the figures to shew

that the diggings were not such a great gain to the colony, merely as diggings, as some honorable members would have the House believe. No doubt they led to great profit in other ways; but that had nothing to do with the return asked for. What he advanced bore on the argument whether the diggers were entitled to the remission of the export duty on gold, or any charge upon them, on account of their great productiveness to the colony. Something had been said to the effect that sufficient should be exacted from the digger by making him pay a license fee. Honorable members who advised that, knew very little of the subject, or too much. The Premier was perfectly correct in what he had said, that it would require an army of policemen to exact a license fee from the diggers. No money that the colony could afford would suffice to exact fully from the miners on our various gold fields at this moment the proper amount of license fee. He would give an illustration. He might say, before it, that it was one of the chief duties he had taken upon himself, since he became Minister for Mines, to increase the revenue by making the miners honestly take out their licenses. He had been successful to some extent; but he maintained that, with all his efforts, he had failed. The numbers were as one who took them out, to three who ought to do so, and did not, over the mines of the colony. The other day, he had had to attend a meeting of shareholders, and the new manager gave a return of the state in which he had found their claim, and—would it be believed?—he said that when he came to muster the men and to examine them as to their miners' rights, although there were nine men working on the claim, only two of them held miners' rights! That was a state of things which the honorable member for Wide Bay must know, as an interested party. However, with that knowledge, and as an old Commissioner at Gympie, was he contented to rely upon the miner's right as a fair charge upon the diggers of the colony? He (the Secretary for Works) would much rather see the miner's right swept away altogether. It was a law or regulation passed simply to be evaded, though the evasion might lead to severe loss. For instance, if the public had been aware that the claim he had mentioned, and in which there was a great deal of money, had been represented by seven men out of nine with no miners' rights, it would have been jumped.

Mr. KING said that claims held by proprietors could not be jumped. The Act provided for that distinctly, and imposed a penalty of five pounds upon the leaseholder and his representative, also, who worked without a miner's right.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said he was obliged to the honorable member, who was much better informed than he on the subject. It was some new regulation that had not come under his cognisance. But there was

a clear evasion—a clear defeat of the revenue, in that single case. He hoped it was an exaggerated case. But it would be best altogether to sweep away the regulation which the Government were too feeble to enforce. He was certain that, to some extent, that claim was imperilled. The honorable member for Wide Bay had quoted from the evidence taken by the Commissioner on the gold fields, to shew that two or three witnesses did speak against the collection of the escort duty. It struck him (the Secretary for Works) that those witnesses belonged to that holy band of brothers who, on a few gold fields, seemed determined for a long time to have their own way, to frame their own regulations; and he could not help thinking that the honorable member knew something about them. But what struck him most was that the honorable member did not quote a number of witnesses who did not press for the abolition of the duty, and who had been asked by the Commissioner to make any suggestions they could. Why did not the honorable member point out that none of the Gold Commissioners recommended its abolition? Why, if the diggers felt that it was an irksome tax, pressing on them unduly, did they not ask that it should be abrogated? It was the duty of the Commissioners to point out to the head of their department that the duty was objected to. Not one of them ever did so; and in the evidence given before the Royal Commission not one had touched upon it. That did not shew a wish that the duty should be done away with. This was simply a crotchet of the honorable member for Wide Bay, who was determined to make himself popular by it, and determined to bring it before the House as a grievance. The honorable member for the Kennedy had asked why the House did not follow the example of Victoria in this matter, and do away with the duty. Would the honorable member point out why they should follow the example of Victoria, rather than New South Wales? Surely they had a right to follow the parent colony rather than Victoria? He (the Secretary for Works) saw nothing to shew that Victoria was wiser in her generation than New South Wales, who still exacted the duty; or wiser than Queensland. Vast as the degeneration of New South Wales was, in her legislation, he still preferred to follow her. What he had stated on a former occasion about the mining population had been quoted in this debate. He maintained that all he then said had been abundantly proved since. In that day the diggers received far more consideration than they deserved, because they were the most unsettled class of the community. There was then no reefing; the diggers were on the move, rushing from one part of the colony to another continually, and leading the Government of the day into extravagance. Those remarks did not apply to the diggers now in the colony, who were a comparatively settled

population, comprising men of capital, and men of worth in every way;—they had become Queenslanders. The honorable member who had quoted him should have pointed out the vast difference in the times and in the circumstances of the colony. The honorable member for South Brisbane had been particularly unlucky in his arguments. He (the Secretary for Works) supposed it must always be the case, when a member was found, within six months, to have utterly ratted from the position he formerly took up. The diggers would laugh at his distinctions between alluvial and quartz miners, and his application of the present question to their circumstances. If any men should be taxed, they were the alluvial miners; though it must be admitted they could not afford it, getting a living only from hand to mouth. They could not get employment, but for the lucky reefers, who got plenty of gold and made fortunes. But the honorable member for South Brisbane would tax the poor digger heavily. No sooner did a power arise in the colony than that honorable member fell down and worshipped it. That was well understood. The poor unlucky man was to be taxed, in contradistinction to the rich reefer and proprietor. There was nothing surprising in what the honorable member for Fortitude Valley had said, after the happy arrangement which was exemplified for two nights this week. The honorable gentleman was coming up again after the style of his old game of "Down with the squatters." The railway cry had been got up. But the honorable member would be ashamed of it all in a few days; and he must get up another cry. He must go in for the diggers, now. He was going in for popularity again. The honorable, learned, and lucky member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pring, had got into such good spirits, too, at finding himself securely seated again, that he had gone in for the people. He (the Secretary for Public Works) did not know whether he should be travelling out of the question by alluding to the remarks of the honorable member for Maroon upon the expenditure that was going on at Dalby. That illustrated, very well, the warning which he gave to the House, that as long as there were railways there would be expense. The House had voted a sum of money to make the approaches in Dalby—

Mr. MILES: You are going beyond that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He was endeavoring to do, as faithfully as he possibly could, what the House had ordered. The honorable member should be sure that there was something absolutely wrong, before he charged him with wrongdoing. As to what had been said about increasing the miners' rights, he maintained that if that were done, the present revenue from that source would be decreased. The higher the charge for a miner's right, the more it would be evaded. He had nothing more to say. It mattered not whether one, or ten, or twenty

thousand pounds was derived from the export duty; the question was one of principle, whether it was right for any honorable member to anticipate the Treasurer's budget?—whether he was justified in attempting to deduct a sum from the revenue, without shewing that the country could stand it fairly, or shewing some other means of supplying what was deducted? The honorable member for South Brisbane was particularly unfortunate when he alluded to the flourishing revenue, and from that argued that he was justified in voting for this proposed reduction of it. The honorable member knew well, that flourishing as the revenue was, there was a heavy charge against it, of his own creation, which had not been provided for. No one knew better than he that the Treasurer would have to meet the Treasury Bills which were issued when that honorable member appeared to be such a patriot. There was a lump sum of £40,000 to be paid out of the general revenue, if the credit of the colony was to be maintained; and that credit could not be maintained if the House knocked off £20,000 by such a motion as the one before the House. The honorable member had shewn by his conduct, to-night, that he was willing to sacrifice the true duties of a statesman, in order to assure to himself the support, during this session, of the honorable member for Wide Bay. The only way to meet the Bill before the House was by moving "the previous question."

Question—That this question be now put.

Dr. O'DONERTY said it appeared to him that there was considerable force in the objection put forward by the Government against passing a Bill of this kind just before the Treasurer's financial statement was made. If the return obtained from the gold export duty amounted to £20,000, the Bill would probably very seriously interfere with the arrangements which the Treasurer was making for the next year's expenditure. But, on the other hand, it appeared to him that it would be next to impossible that any really active reform could be carried out unless private members brought forward motions of this kind. If a tax was found to weigh heavily on one class of the community it seemed to him a question of doubt whether the House ought to consider the convenience of the Government more than the desirableness of abolishing the unjust tax. Under the circumstances, the Colonial Treasurer should be prepared to yield to the wish of the country or the House, and to endeavor to make his arrangements accordingly. He (Dr. O'Donerty) must confess that he did not see the force of the argument that no private member should bring forward a motion for the abolition of a tax; or, that, if he did so, he should be prepared to substitute something else for it, to make up the revenue. It was palpable that no private member could be in the position to provide the substitute. Except those honorable gentlemen who occupied the

Treasury bench, no one in the House was in a position to propose a tax. As regarded the gold export duty itself, he had very little to say without travelling over the same arguments that the House had heard only a few months since. Listening to the speeches of honorable members, now, he recognised the same arguments which he had listened to then. The gold export duty was a special tax on the digger, calculated to check the mining industry of the colony. On that ground, he thought it would be wise and politic to do away with it. The House could not recognise the slightest difference between it and what had been so often, and he believed justly, objected to, a tax on wool. It had been urged by honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House that the gold duty was levied upon those only who exported gold—upon those only who found gold. If a tax were placed upon the export of wool, would it apply to those only who produced wool successfully? It was known that for every one of the pastoral tenants who exported wool from Queensland with considerable advantage to himself, there were a dozen who had great difficulty in making both ends meet. Notwithstanding, the colony exported a very large amount of wool. For the same reason here suggested, the tax levied upon gold exported bore with very great severity upon the large proportion of those of the population who were employed in the work of extracting gold from the soil. Another reason he would urge was, that the Queensland gold fields differed very remarkably from those of Victoria and New South Wales, there being little alluvial digging, but almost entirely quartz reefs. The working of the reefs differed very little, he was told, from ordinary mining; and the people who did the work were a settled people. Why there should be a special tax upon them to meet any particular exigency on the part of the Government, he could not conceive. It had been properly said that on the ordinary alluvial diggings of the neighboring colonies, such a tax was a just one, because there large masses of people were rushing about the country, necessarily involving the Government in very great expense to maintain order, and supply the necessary police for the protection of life and property. Instead of imposing taxation upon the mining population of this colony, the gold fields should be made as attractive as possible, so that people should be encouraged to come and assist in the development of the country. He recommended the Government to adopt other taxes in preference to any tax upon the miners, and to adopt the policy sketched out in the Homestead Act, which would be beneficial to the colony, by settling people round about the diggings wherever situated, and thus securing an indirect revenue far beyond the paltry sum received from the gold export duty, which acted as a check to settlement. He supported the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. EDMONDSTONE said he should support the motion. It was very singular, that when the Bill was introduced at the end of last session, it was too late; and now, when it was introduced this session, previous to the delivery of the Budget, it was too early. The time for such a Bill never was opportune, in the opinion of the Government. The Minister for Works had stated that the repeal of the export duty was not required, as it was never petitioned against by the diggers. Petition after petition had been received by the House in favor of railway extension, but no heed was taken of them. The Government preferred to stand still; and there seemed no doubt about its being next to impossible to move them to meet any public requirement. Something had been said, also, about the loss to the revenue from parties not taking out their miners' rights. If the right was not abandoned, it was the duty of the Government to see that all parties took it out in compliance with the law. If the gold fields commissioners had not advised the Government that the export duty was regarded as an irksome tax and should be abolished, it was because they knew they must not do so. He (Mr. Edmondstone) should like to see the commissioner who durst recommend such a thing;—he would not be long without being snubbed, and most likely he would very shortly lose his position. He could not regard mining, as carried on in Queensland, as a system of gambling. Why put an impost upon the miners, when so much was to be gained by offering inducements to people to come to the country and settle? The Government could soon make up the amount of revenue which would be lost by the abolition of such an irksome impost as the gold export duty. It might be a troublesome matter for the Government to have the tax abolished suddenly. Then let them adopt the reasonable suggestion of the honorable member for Clermont, to reduce the duty gradually until it was extinguished. But it was generally believed that the revenue of the country was growing, and that, in all probability, the loss would be so small as not to be felt sensibly. He trusted that the Government would see their way to let the matter go.

The previous question was put, and the House divided, with the following result:—

Ayes, 15.	Noes, 15.
Mr. Croon	Mr. Palmer
Edmondstone	Walsh
" Mellwraith	" Thorn
" Miles	" Bell
" Stephens	" Cribb
" Fyfe	" Johnston
" Morgan	" De Satgé
Dr. O'Doherty	" Moreton
Mr. Jordan	" Scott
" Ping	" Wienholt
" Lilley	" Ferrett
" King	" Bramston
" MacDevitt	" Royds
" Atkin	" Forbes
" Handy.	" Thompson.

The SPEAKER said: It now becomes my duty to give the casting vote in this matter. I shall at once refer to the authorities on which I intend to give my vote. As I have formerly voted upon this question as a private member of the House, I may say that I should, if in that position to-night, repeat that vote. But the course of action I have laid down for myself, while in this Chair, is to be guided entirely by Parliamentary rule:—

"If the numbers should happen to be equal, the Speaker (and in committee the Chairman), who otherwise never votes, must give the casting voice. In the performance of this duty, he is at liberty to vote like any other member, according to his conscience, without assigning a reason: but, in order to avoid the least imputation upon his impartiality, it is usual for him, when practicable, to vote in such a manner as not to make the decision of the House final, and to explain his reasons, which are entered in the Journals."

I will trouble the House with a few authorities:—

"On the 12th May, 1796, on the third reading of the Succession Duty on Real Estates Bill, there having been a majority against 'now' reading the Bill a third time, and also against reading it that day three months, there was an equality of votes on a third question, that the Bill be read a third time to-morrow, when the Speaker gave his casting vote with the ayes, saying 'that upon all occasions when the question was for or against giving to any measure a further opportunity of discussion, he should always vote for the further discussion, more especially when it had advanced so far as a third reading; and that when the question turned upon the measure itself,—for instance, that a Bill do or do not pass,—he should then vote for or against it, according to his best judgment of its merits, assigning the reasons on which such judgment would be founded.' Mr. Pitt, however, abandoned the measure."

So there is one case in which the Speaker is permitted to vote according to his own opinion:—

"On the 24th February, 1797, Mr. Speaker Addington gave his casting vote in favour of going into committee on the Quakers Bill, assigning as his reason, that he had prescribed to himself an invariable rule of voting for the further discussion of any measure which the House had previously sanctioned, as in this instance it had, by having voted for the second reading; but that upon any question which was to be governed by its merits, as, for instance, 'that this Bill do pass,' he should always give his vote according to his judgment, and state the grounds of it."

For the reasons stated in these authorities, I shall now vote with the "Ayes" in order that this matter shall be further debated. The question, therefore, is resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That this Bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 16.
Mr. Handy
" Pring
" King
" Lilley
" Fyfe
" Stephens
" Jordan
" Miles
" Melliwraith
" Edmondstone
" Groom
" De Satag
" Morgan
Dr. O'Doherty
Mr. Atkin
" MacDevitt.

Noes, 15.
Mr. Ramsay
" Palmer
" Wienholt
" Cribb
" Johnston
" Bell
" Scott
" Bramston
" Moreton
" Ferrett
" Royds
" Forbes
" Walsh
" Thorn
" Thompson.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. KING moved, that the Speaker leave the Chair in order that the Bill should be considered in Committee of the whole House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, no.

Mr. LILLEY: Perhaps the Government would make that a political question and take time to consider.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government, at the request of honorable members on the other side of the House, had refrained from going into Committee on important Bills, and he expected the other side to be equally accommodating to the Government. They did not regard it as a political question at all. It was only by a fluke that the question was carried; one of the Government members (Mr. Ramsay) having been locked out of the division.

The committal of the Bill was postponed to a future day.

GOLD FIELDS HOMESTEAD ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. KING moved the second reading of a Bill for the Amendment of the Gold Fields Act. A measure of a similar kind had, he said, been previously before the House. The object of the Bill was to enable persons resident on the gold fields townships to take up land to the extent of two acres. He believed that at the present time the inhabitants of gold fields townships labored under some difficulties in the matter of getting title deeds for the lands they occupied; and he now brought forward this measure with the view of removing such difficulties. A measure of this kind was particularly required in the case of the inhabitants on the Gympie Gold Fields. There were some valuable buildings and gardens there within the proclaimed boundaries of the township to which the owners of the property could not obtain a secure title. It was very necessary that the provisions of the Homestead Act should be extended to the gold fields townships, so that lands might be taken up within the boundary of the township on as equally favorable terms as land could be taken up at the present time outside the boundary. A Bill of this nature was agreed to last session by the Legislative Assembly; but an amendment was made on it by the Legislative Council, by the striking out the Homestead clauses as regarded the gold fields. Well, the Bill with such amendment

was returned to this House, and had to be agreed to as amended, because it only came down on the last day of the session. By the Bill which was passed by this House it was provided that the Homestead clauses should not take effect upon the gold fields until it was proved that a hundred persons had been resident on the ground for at least six months. The Upper House, however, struck out those clauses; still the understanding was, that when a hundred persons had been resident for six months on a tract of auriferous country, the inhabitants should have a right to require that the district should be proclaimed a gold field, and that the discoverer or discoverers should receive a certain pecuniary reward from the Government. The honorable the Secretary for Works, however, had not, since his accession to office, taken any action in that respect; and he (Mr. King) personally knew of several gold fields upon which there had been a hundred miners resident for upwards of six months, which had not yet been proclaimed as gold fields, and for which the discoverers had not received any reward. On some of the oldest gold fields in the colony there were miners who, though entitled to the benefits of the Homestead Act, could not, under the provisions of the Act, obtain possession of the lands they had occupied and improved. He believed it was very well known that there was a great objection on the part of the present Minister for Mines, to allow miners to take up land. He had no wish to occupy the time of the House any longer, and he would therefore now conclude by moving—

That the Bill be read a second time.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he objected to the Bill before the House, upon several grounds. In the first place, he did not see why they should pass a measure that would give special privileges to persons resident upon gold fields townships to take up two acres of land. In other townships only one acre was allowed under the Homestead Act, and he did not see why any special advantage in this respect, should be allowed in the case of the inhabitants of gold fields townships. One acre, he held, was quite enough. Then, again, he objected to the extensive powers which it was proposed by the Bill to be given to the gold fields commissioners, to deal with the lands of the colony. If the Bill were passed it would have the effect of setting up a number of land offices in different parts of the colony. At the same time, if he thought that the Bill would have the effect of settling population throughout the colony, and that it would be taken advantage of, *bonâ fide*, for that purpose, he would be quite willing to give way on some minor grounds of objection he had to the measure. But, as he was convinced that it would not be taken advantage of in that way to any extent, he felt bound to oppose it. He believed that the whole number of applications that had been made under the

Homesteads Act was little more than half-a-dozen; and the amount which accrued to the revenue, from the settlement which had taken place under the Act, came to something like £10 per annum. The Bill provided that the amount derived from the alienation of lands for homestead purposes should be set aside for the construction and maintenance of roads to the gold fields. It must be clear, therefore, that the Act was a total failure for the purpose for which it was intended; and this Bill, if passed into law, would, he maintained, be as great a failure. Nothing would content the miners, or anyone else, who took up land, unless they obtained a fee-simple to it, which would enable them to transmit it to their children. There was nothing whatever to prevent people in and around Gympie obtaining what amount of land they desired in the ordinary way; and plenty of land could be obtained there under the provisions of the Homestead Act. Why they should pass a measure, with the view of inducing people to settle on the gold fields in this way, he did not know. The honorable member for Wide Bay might himself wish to take advantage of this measure, if it should be passed into law. Of course, he could not say, positively, if such was the case or not; but, at any rate, he had found the name of the honorable member in the list of applicants for lands under the Homestead Act. Now, he would like to ask the honorable member if he had not a direct interest in the passing of this Bill; and, if so, whether, therefore, he thought he would be at liberty to vote in favor of its being read a second time.

Mr. KING said he had no personal interest whatever in the passing of the measure.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If the honorable member said that his application would not extend into the township of Gympie, of course there was an end to the matter.

Mr. KING: It would not, to my knowledge.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Well, he did not see why the House should pass this Bill, for the special benefit of some few persons who were resident on Gympie, especially as he saw it would have the effect of reducing the township area. A little time ago he stated that there were only about half-a-dozen applications for land sent in under the Homesteads Act; but he had since been informed that there were fourteen, and that there was only one objected to. He did not see that this Bill would work well; and, moreover, he did not think it was desirable that they should play into the hands of those who wished to secure two acres of land in any gold fields township. There were lands in the township of Gympie, which, in a few years, might be worth £1,000, and yet it was asked that the Government should now part with them at a nominal rental. If there was any opportunity of the Government afterwards obtaining a fair price for the land, it might be all very well—they could then go upon the prin-

ciple of first come first served; but under a Bill of this kind they would have the old corner allotment system revived—with which honorable members were so well acquainted. The only system they should have in the matter of the alienation of the lands was one by which every intending purchaser might have a fair chance of competing for the land he wished to obtain. That he thought was the only way by which also the Government would receive a fair revenue from the alienation of the lands of the colony. There were several ways by which persons who improved lands in townships could obtain them on favorable terms. Such lands, for instance, would be put up by the Lands Department for sale by auction, with the value of the improvements added, and any person entering into competition with the original holder would, therefore, have to pay the full value of the improvements. Now, to that extent the price, as regarded the occupier, would be remitted, and in that way he would have a preference over anyone else. Then, again, if the land passed from him, he would obtain the value of the improvements he had made upon it. He did not see, therefore, what necessity there was for this Bill; and it was well known, that the man in possession had nine-tenths of the law on his side. When once a person got possession of the land, he came to view his occupancy as somewhat in the nature of a fee simple—and it was very difficult to get rid of people who held lands, on terms other than those of purchase. This difficulty was one which he felt the Parliament would have to deal with some day, sooner or later. Every one almost knew that under the quit-rent system of New South Wales, the Government of that colony could not, ultimately, obtain payment of the rents; and it came to this, that they had to part with the land; and it was well known, that under the free selection system, the selectors did not intend to pay more than the five shillings per acre which they had already paid. Under such a Bill as this, they would have a large number of persons taking up two-acre allotments in gold fields townships, not for the purposes of *bona fide* settlement and occupation, but for the purpose of subsequent sale, when the value of the land came to be considerably increased. Then, again, if diggers wished to buy land in the vicinity of the gold fields, they could do so without competition; and that was done almost daily at the Lands Office. He said this much in reply to the charge which had been made against the Government, of wishing to prevent people from settling on the lands of the colony. Why, it was the clear and unmistakable duty of the Government to secure the settlement of the country as extensively as possible; because, in doing so, they would secure a large tax-paying population, and another effect would be to reduce the burden of taxation upon every one at present in the

colony. In doing that, they would only be carrying out the primeval command to subdue the land and to multiply and increase the population.

Mr. MORGAN said he would support the second reading of the Bill, because he believed that it would have the effect of settling a large population in and around the gold fields townships and elsewhere; and he was sorry to find that the honorable the Minister for Lands seemed to be afraid of the passing of a measure which, in his (Mr. Morgan's) opinion, could not fail to have such an effect. As to the number of applications which had been sent in for land, under the provisions of the Homesteads Act, he knew that, on one day, nine applications were sent in from persons resident in the district he had the honor to represent; and he believed that, but for the orders which were issued from the head office, there would have been twenty-nine applications sent in. He was free to admit that he did not know anything whatever of the quality of the land in the Wide Bay district; but, with a view to the promotion of the settlement of the country, he would support the Bill now before the House; though he might take the opportunity of suggesting that certain amendments should be made upon it in committee—if it should reach that stage. Now, he could tell the House of the case of a man named Alexander, who had earned some money, as an employee on the railway. That man was residing at Warwick, and he applied for certain lands to the local Crown Lands Commissioner. Well, his application was accepted, by the local Commissioner, in the first instance; but it was afterwards rejected by the Minister for Lands.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he did not think that the honorable member for Warwick could have been correctly informed as to the facts of the case he was referring to. He was sure that if the honorable member had been correctly informed on the subject, he would not have made the statement he had just made.

Mr. MORGAN said he begged to inform the honorable member that what he was stating was in print. It was in one of the newspapers of the colony.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS wished to inform the honorable member for Warwick that if he put in the paper he was referring to, the quotation he made from it could be accepted as evidence, but otherwise it could not.

Mr. MORGAN: Well, at any rate, it was something strange that if the poor man wanted an acre of land for agricultural purposes the Government was up in arms against him at once; but, if the pastoral tenant wanted several thousands of acres at any time, the Government supported him in his application. He should certainly support the motion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said, that when a measure similar to this was before the House last session he opposed it, because

he did not see why miners should be enabled to take up land on more favorable terms than any other class of the community; and he was sure that if honorable members fully informed themselves on the whole subject, they would admit that he was justified in the course he then took. Very little advantage had been taken of the Homesteads Act; but, besides that, he objected to the gold fields commissioners being allowed to deal with the lands of the colony in the way which this Bill proposed to give them power to do. But, further than that, he did not see how the Government could be justified in consenting to a Bill which would allow of large portions of the lands of the colony, which might turn out to be highly auriferous, being taken up in the way proposed. Besides that, however, the Act was worded in such a way that, he was afraid, the best intentioned Government that could possibly be in existence could not prevent its being tortured to express other than its real purpose. He thought it would be manifestly absurd to afford unusual facilities for the alienation of Crown lands that might be considered to be auriferous. It might take fifty years before they could ascertain the amount of wealth that was embowelled in the lands of the colony. Was it not a fact, for instance, that some of the reefs which were supposed to have been run out had been further tested, and had turned out to be richer than they had formerly been found to be. Now, that, he thought went a great way towards proving that some of the lands on Gympie were far richer than honorable members, or any one else, were aware of. He would have honorable members to bear this important fact in mind, that while the Government could resume lands for certain specified purposes, they could not resume lands set apart for mining purposes; because of the omission from the Act of the words "mining interests." Now, there was nothing whatever to prevent the miners from taking up lands under the Homestead Act in the vicinity of any gold fields township. Although there were several thousand miners on Gympie, the number of applications from that district for land under the provisions of the Homestead Act—and that within two months after the Act came into operation—was only eight, though there were men there possessed of almost untold wealth, and the total area applied for did not amount to more than 192 acres. Now, the honorable member for Wide Bay, who, he believed, had taken a long lease of a town residence in Brisbane, was one of the applicants, and his application was for twenty-one acres. This gentleman, who put himself forward as so anxious to have this Bill passed, for the settlement of the diggers on the land, had actually himself sent in an application for nearly one-ninth of the whole of what had been applied for.

Mr. ATKIN: If there were only eight applicants altogether, an application for one-

ninth of the whole could not, he thought, be considered anything extraordinary.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Well, he thought that that was far too much for any absentee to be allowed to obtain under the Homesteads Act. The local commissioner who sent down the honorable member's application, went into a laboring explanation to shew that a portion of the lands applied for were not within the town reserve. Now, that was a question which had yet to be decided by measurement. For his own part, he would not be a party to the passing of a measure by which anyone would have the opportunity of obtaining an unusual extent of auriferous land. He might inform the House that he was aware of a piece of ground, not far from that which had been applied for by the honorable member for Wide Bay, which was alienated for a comparatively small sum, but which afterwards turned out to be worth some thousands of pounds. He had no doubt that the land applied for by the honorable member, would, in a few years, turn out to be about the richest in Gympie. He considered that the honorable the Minister for Lands was fully justified in the remarks he made respecting the danger that might occur from giving the commissioners of gold fields power to accept applications for the alienation of Crown lands from the mining population. All the other inhabitants of the colony had to send in their applications according to a regulated form; and no matter how small the extent of country applied for might be, their applications had to be submitted to the Executive Council before a sale could be assented to: but by this Bill, if carried into law, some of the most valuable lands in the colony might be alienated on the mere dictum of the local gold fields commissioners. Now the commissioner at Gympie had recommended that some of the applications contained in his list should be accepted, and that others should be objected to; and it was somewhat strange that the application of the honorable member for Wide Bay, including two acres of disputed ground, should be recommended by the commissioner for acceptance. On that ground alone, if there was none other, he maintained that the honorable member for Wide Bay was not justified in bringing forward this measure. The applications which had been made under the Homestead Act amounted in three instances to forty acres, in one instance to seventy acres, and in another instance to two acres—making altogether only 192 acres; and most of the applications were from persons resident in Gympie; and from persons who were not likely to make use of the lands for the purposes of *bonâ fide* settlement. The honorable member for Wide Bay, before introducing this Bill, should have been in a position to shew that the Bill of last session had been taken advantage of to a large extent, and in a way in accordance with the intentions of Parliament in passing it. He

objected *in toto* to the Legislative Assembly passing a Bill which would only benefit a particular class of the community. He felt that if they were to pass this measure, they would do an injury to the colony. He felt satisfied that lands, for which they were now obtaining only a shilling an acre, would in a few years hence be worth thousands of pounds. From the time that he accepted office as a member of the Government, he determined not to interfere with the operation of the Act; and he had not done so, because he believed that the working of the Act should be beyond the interference of the Government. When he accepted office, he determined that, beyond giving instructions to the local land commissioners to do their duty according to the provisions of the Act, and to give no favor to anyone, they should take nothing more to do with it. But in that respect, he was not sure that he had gone far enough in the matter. He never felt more strongly than he did now, as to the ruthless way in which the most valuable lands of the colony were being taken up under the Homestead Act, and he, for one, would protest against its provisions being extended to the gold fields. He believed that much quarrelling and numerous law-suits would result from the operation of this measure, if it should be passed into law. Indeed, he might say that some complaints had already reached him, respecting the operation of the Homestead Act. The Government were not at all disposed to obstruct the settlement of population on the gold fields of the colony, or on any other part of the colony; and he would, therefore, recommend that the honorable member for Wide Bay should withdraw his motion for the second reading of this Bill, and allow the question to be referred to a select committee, in order that the House might have the benefit of the evidence of the Surveyor-General of the colony on the subject, and of others who were qualified, from experience, to give an opinion upon it, before they took any steps in the way of legislation in the matter. So far, the Homestead Act which was now in existence, had proved to be unsatisfactory, and he hoped the House would not consent to pass a measure that would only have the effect of extending its provisions.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS stated that the exception for the application for lands under the Homestead Act was in the case of a person resident in the Warwick district, and that the land applied for was adjoining some lands possessed by Mr. Clarke, who was formerly a member of the Assembly. Now, he believed that the local commissioner had made a mistake in the matter—and, of course, anyone was liable to make a mistake—especially where he felt that it was necessary to exercise an unusual degree of carefulness. It was not till yesterday that the Government knew anything about the case referred to by the honorable member for

Warwick; and, so far as he at present understood it, the impression of the members of the Government was that the application would have to be granted.

Mr. ATKIN said he would support the second reading of the Bill; but, at the outset, he wished to protest against the conduct of honorable members of the Government, who were at least supposed to set an example of decorum to honorable members, getting up and imputing motives to others, as the honorable member the Secretary for Works had done in the course of his speech on the occasion of the second reading of this Bill. Now, he believed that, by the passing of this Bill, everyone in the colony would be equally benefitted, and no one more than another. The honorable member for Wide Bay would not derive any more benefit from it than any other honorable member, or than anyone of the general public would. Now, it was well known that there was a Pastoral Leases Bill brought before the House almost every session. Such measures were of course for the purpose of benefitting those who had an interest in runs; but honorable members never heard them objected to by honorable members who had an interest in pastoral pursuits; nor did those honorable members decline to vote in respect to those Bills. As to the remarks of the honorable the Secretary for Public Lands, that honorable gentleman, if he thought there was a necessity for a reform in their land laws, should bring down a Bill on the subject. If he did so, and could shew good reason for it, the members of the Opposition side of the House would no doubt support him. Now, he must say that he thought there was some force in the observation of the honorable the Secretary for Public Works when he proposed that this question should be referred to a select committee; for he (Mr. Atkin) must say he did not think that the Bill as it stood would lead to the *bonâ fide* settlement of population on the gold fields of the colony. Different statements had been made by members of the Ministry as to the extent to which the Homesteads Act had been taken advantage of. One honorable member stated at first that there had been only half-a-dozen applications, but he afterwards corrected himself and said there had been fourteen; but another honorable member, the Minister for Works, had informed the House that only eight applications had been made under the Act. Now, which of the statements was correct? For his own part, he believed that if the Homesteads Act had been properly worked, a great amount of land would have been taken up under it. He believed it was wholly owing to the action of the Government, in the administration of the Act, that so little land had been taken up under it. The honorable the Minister for Works had referred to the honorable member for Wide Bay having taken a lease of a house in Brisbane with the purpose of residing here; and that he had

brought forward this Bill, from which, it was said, he might, if it were passed, derive certain advantages. Now, he remembered that the Minister for Works, some time ago, took particular action in the matter of the alienation of certain country in which there were valuable coal deposits. Every honorable member almost knew of the greed the honorable the Minister for Works shewed to obtain possession of the Burrum coal fields. He (Mr. Atkin) had had the whole of the correspondence on the subject submitted to him; and he must say that he was ashamed to read it through. Now, from what he knew about that, he thought that any honorable member of the Ministry ought not to make reference to any personal interest which the honorable member for Wide Bay might be supposed to have in the passing of this Bill. Was it right that the honorable member should have it cast in his teeth that, because he had invested his capital in mining speculations on Gympie, he brought forward this Bill—and that in order to promote his own interests? Such a charge was most undignified; and he was surprised that the honorable the Secretary for Public Works should have used such an expression; but he must say that he was more surprised to find that the Secretary for Public Lands should have been led into following the bad example of the honorable member for Maryborough. He would most certainly support the Bill, and he hoped that, for the future, when the honorable member for Wide Bay had a duty to the country to perform, he would, as that duty demanded, bring forward his motions in the House, and that honorable members would not hear again those paltry accusations which had been so unworthily thrown in his teeth by honorable gentlemen sitting on the Treasury benches.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that if the Government had allowed any leases to be granted on that gold field, they would have acted in direct opposition to the law. If any lease was granted on the diggings of this colony, it was necessary that there should be residence on the gold field for six months. As there were not one hundred residents on the ground, it was beyond the power of the Government to issue leases without going against the law; and, as long as he had a seat in the Ministry, he would endeavor to keep the Ministry within the law.

Mr. LILLEY said it was to be hoped that the honorable member would succeed in his endeavors to keep the Ministry within the law. It had been said that such obstructions to settlement had been imposed as to shew that there was a party in the House unwilling to promote the settlement of any population on the gold fields. That was an accusation made against the party that the Ministry represented—the ultra-squatting and anti-settlement party. He remembered that it was with considerable disgust he had observed the action of some honorable mem-

bers on their side when the original Bill was passing; because he believed that it was to the serious disadvantage of the country that such a narrow spirit should have actuated honorable members, and that there should have been manifested such a want of enlightenment, on their part, as prevented the throwing open of the land when there were several large gold rushes to this colony. He did not mean to say that all the honorable members who sat on the Ministerial side of the House were infected with that narrow spirit. He wished to repudiate, most distinctly, the assertion which had been made by the Minister for Works, at an earlier stage of the proceedings, to-night, that he had raised the cry of "Down with the squatters." He did not believe in such a thing. The House were indebted to enlightened squatters for preventing a great deal of bad legislation on the land question. From the very first hour of his public life he recognised the value of the assistance of the pioneer squatters who had preceded us in subduing the wilderness, and preparing the country for settlement; he thought the squatter should hold his place so long as he was willing to give up the land, when it was required for the settlement of the people and for agriculture; and he would not prevent him from having the land upon fair terms until it was so required in the progress of the colony. No man wished the squatters to succeed more than he, and he always endeavored to promote their success in common with that of the rest of the community. In 1869, he gave the squatters the largest and most liberal measure that they ever had in this colony. That was admitted, he believed; if not openly, it was evidenced by the fact that so large a number of them had surrendered their leases under previous enactments and taken fresh ones under the Act of 1869. It was true that he took care, when that Act was passing, to secure the interests of the general public. He believed that Act was better than the Act of 1868 in one respect, that the Government could resume the runs for public purposes, and for settlement, whenever they required, and that it rested with the House to dissent from the action of the Government. He sincerely regretted the accusations that had been made by the Minister for Works against the honorable member for Wide Bay. He could hardly think that the honorable gentleman had made those accusations with seriousness. The honorable gentleman often indulged in such flights of fancy, when he was in the mood invective, and he soared beyond the regions of sober fact. He (Mr. Lilley) did not like the Bill; it presented some features that he could not cordially assent to. But he should vote for it in the hope that between it and the present Act the House might strike out some measure more beneficial to the general public than the honorable member for Wide Bay had succeeded in providing.

Mr. DE SATGE said the Minister for Lands had told the House that only some few applications had been made under the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The number was fourteen. He had made a mistake before.

Mr. DE SATGE: He did not think that the legislation for only fourteen applications could be amended by such a Bill as that brought before the House by the honorable member for Wide Bay. He could see nothing in the Bill to meet in any measure the public requirements; and he thought that the more the land laws were tinkered with, the more they got into confusion. The honorable member for Wide Bay was assisted last year in passing his Gold Fields Homestead Act in the fairest possible spirit, and he received from the Ministerial side of the House the most cordial support; and he should not now come before the House to amend that measure without some better reason than he had shewn. The gist of his complaints was that certain gold fields had not been proclaimed. He (Mr. De Satgé) could complain of the same thing. There were certain gold fields in his neighborhood that had not been proclaimed. But to say that the House ought to extend the provisions of the Homestead Act to the gold fields townships, when there were only fourteen applications under that Act, was somewhat strong, as that fact led him to believe there was no need for the Bill. The gist of the Bill was in the third clause, declaring what should be gold fields, whether proclaimed or not. There would have been many more applications under the Act of 1870 if the gold fields had been proclaimed. He (Mr. De Satgé) had been very much disappointed at finding that Mr. Daintree, instead of carrying out the geological survey of the North, according to the vote of Parliament, had gone off with specimens from Gympie. That was one of his complaints. His constituents had never clamored for land to be thrown open to them. They were content to buy it if they wanted it. At the last two land sales not one-third of what had been offered was purchased; and, therefore, he did not think the people required land to be thrown open, as had been urged. The honorable member for Wide Bay had certainly failed to shew any good reason for his Bill. When honorable members complained that all the measures of the session were for the benefit of the pastoral tenants, they should observe that this evening they discussed simply gold fields measures, which dealt exclusively with one class of the community. Perhaps the House were too much engaged in class legislation. He should vote against the Bill, because not one word had been said which shewed that it ought to be supported. It was merely to interfere with the due settlement of the township lands, which were thrown open in the usual way; and it would be a very pernicious measure if passed.

Mr. STEPHENS said that rather more had been made than was justified of the fourteen applications under the Act. Honorable members had been speaking as if the Act had been in force some time; but it came into force only two months and a-half ago, on the 14th March. The applications were all made in that month, and they were all that the office had been advised of up to the 3rd May. It appeared from the return that advices had been received at the Treasury to the effect that collections had been made at Calliope and Rockhampton gold fields, but the Commissioners had not yet sent in their reports to the office; so it seemed that there were more than fourteen applications. He did not wish to lay too much stress upon this, but to his mind it took off all the stress that had been laid upon the argument that the Bill, or the Act of last session, was not required. He thought that if the Act was left to its operation there would be more applications under it. He agreed with the honorable member for Fortitude Valley that the direct tendency of their legislation should be to settle the people on the lands. He should support the second reading of the Bill.

Attention was called to the state of the House, by Mr. GROOM; and, a quorum having been formed,

Mr. FORBES said he should oppose the Bill because it would be bad policy to interfere with the gold fields townships, and it would be a dangerous privilege to lease allotments of two acres of land in these townships at a nominal rent. This would be advantageous to individuals who got the first pick, and it would be a source of considerable disagreement. If the diggers themselves were consulted on the matter, he believed they would be found adverse to the Bill. He could conceive of no good effect that it was likely to have. Honorable members who had spoken in support of the Bill had not pronounced it an altogether good one.

Mr. JORDAN said he should vote for the second reading of the Bill, although he thought there were one or two points in it on which amendment might be made. He rose in answer to some remarks of the Minister for Works, who was constantly accusing honorable members on the Opposition side with being enemies of the squatters. He was sure that the honorable member for Fortitude Valley was one of the last who should be accused of crying down that estimable, valuable, and respectable class of colonists; for he had passed an Act which gave the squatters everything they had asked for. For himself, he objected strongly to an honorable member getting up, and, for his own amusement, accusing those opposed to him of being actuated by any foolish feelings against any class of colonists. When he sat in the first Parliament, and while he was in the colony, he never participated in that narrow and contemptible antagonism to the squatters which had been referred to. No one

ever heard him opposing them, as squatters. He held that there were many of that class to whom the colony was much indebted for liberality, especially in dealing with the land laws of the colony—indebted to them as the pioneers of civilisation, who had the hardihood to go out and invest their capital in their primitive occupation in advance of settlement. But he knew that the Minister for Works was not in earnest; he had been amusing himself in saying that honorable members who were on the other side of the House from him were the enemies of the squatters; and there was not the slightest foundation for the accusation.

Mr. GROOM said he felt very much in the position of the honorable member for East Moreton; that was, he had no very friendly feeling for the Bill. It was very puzzling. Though he should vote for the second reading, it was in the hope that when the Bill went into committee it might be made a useful measure in accordance with the statement of the honorable member for Wide Bay. He confessed that he did not care much about it. But he had risen on account of the extraordinary statement which had been made by the Minister for Lands, and which he very much questioned. It was not often that that honorable gentleman made a statement which was not justified by facts, but he had stated that the free selectors of New South Wales had only paid, up to the present time, five shillings for their lands, and that they had made up their minds to pay no more. He (Mr. Groom) happened to have read the speech of the Honorable John Robertson, to the electors of West Sydney, upon his recent election after taking office, and that honorable gentleman then praised the free selectors up to the skies, as being a useful class of colonists—that they were paying up their dues with the greatest regularity, so much so, that a great amount of revenue was derived from their occupation of the lands; and he prided himself upon the particular Act which opened the country to them. He should like to know where the Minister for Lands got his information for a statement made in the House which was calculated to do so much injury to the free selectors in this colony. He was inclined to think that the honorable gentleman had got hold of the wrong story. Mr. Robertson was not likely to make his statement in Sydney, where he was certain to be corrected by the greatest minds in the country, if it were not in accordance with facts. He (Mr. Groom) was inclined to support the motion, because he thought the honorable member for Wide Bay had some good object in the Bill; and leaving out altogether personal considerations, he should vote for it on account of the severe opposition the honorable member got from the Ministerial side of the House, since he had the good sense to act freely and independently. He reserved to himself the right to vote for

certain amendments on the Bill in committee.

Mr. JOHNSTON opposed the second reading of the Bill, upon the ground that it would be a dangerous practice to lease two-acre allotments in gold fields townships. He had some little experience of these matters, and he was aware of the evils that would result from such a Bill becoming law. The practice was, when a new gold field was discovered, to fix on some central spot for the township, and then to mark out lots of about a quarter of an acre each for holders of business licenses. The occupation of a lot under a business license cost about £1, under the regulations. If the Bill should be carried, the result would be that those first on the rush would get the whole of the ground in their two-acre allotments—they would take up the main street, to the exclusion of other parties, and would make enormous profits out of them, at the expense of their fellow colonists who wanted to settle on the gold field. If the whole question was brought up, he should be glad to assist the honorable member for Wide Bay; but he could not vote for the Bill in its present shape. Amongst other alterations, he suggested that the number of residents to constitute a gold field under the Act, should be reduced from one hundred to fifty, which would promote settlement amongst the gold miners.

The question was put, and the House divided.

Ayes, 12.	Noes, 16.
Mr. Lilley	Mr. Palmer
" Morgan	" Walsh
" Atkin	" Thorn
" Miles	" Johnston
" Stephens	" Bell
" Jordan	" Forbes
" Edmondstone	" Moreton
" Groom	" Scott
" Fyfe	" Ferrett
" Handy	" Wienholt
" MacDevitt	" De Satgé
" King.	" Ramsay
	" Royds
	" Cribb
	" Bramston
	" Thompson.

Resolved in the negative.

ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. GROOM rose to draw the Colonial Secretary's attention to the advisableness of adjourning the House until Tuesday week, the 30th instant. Next Wednesday would be the Queen's Birthday, when, of course, the House would not sit; and the subsequent portion of the week was appointed for the Brisbane races, in which several honorable members were interested. Several country members intended to leave town to-morrow morning; and he did not think it would be advisable for them to come down next week to spend one day on the public business. It would be, probably, convenient to both sides of the House, if they would agree to-night that the honorable the Colonial Secretary should move, that the House, on rising, should adjourn over next week. For himself per-

sonally, he might say that he had "paired" with an honorable member on the other side of the House, so that he had no interest in the question, further than a desire to promote the convenience of honorable members generally.

Mr. MILES said he could not return to his district, like the honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba. He had come down to do the public business, and he objected to the adjournment; besides, to-morrow would be time enough to talk of it.

Mr. FERRETT objected to an adjournment for a week. Besides, he had two motions on the paper for to-morrow, which he desired to see disposed of. He moved—

That this House do now adjourn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was entirely in the hands of the House. Ministers would attend the House, to go on with the business of the country, while a quorum could be got together. With reference to the suggested adjournment, he thought it would be a pity to adjourn now over next week, as a good deal of business could be got through in the Friday morning sitting. Yet it was a question, if they should not adjourn for the convenience of honorable members. There might not be a quorum to-morrow. If so, in that case, the House could only be adjourned to the next sitting day; and Ministers and Mr. Speaker would have to come to the House, day after day, all next week, and, perhaps, there would be no quorum.

Mr. ATKIN, agreeing with what had been said by the honorable member for Maranoa, promised to attend every day, if the honorable member would do so.

Mr. DE SARGE objected to the inconvenience to members who had come long distances, which an adjournment for a week would entail.

The Hon. B. B. MORETON said he was glad the honorable member for Maranoa had taken a stand against the adjournment. He could not remain in town, if his time was not required to be spent in the House. The present proceeding was a strong argument in favor of payment of members. He was surprised at the proposal of the honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba, who did not attend the House regularly, and who was only now present because he "smelt a rat."

Mr. GROOM said he watched the business paper; and he did not come down to the House to hear a tirade of abuse which was not for the general good of the country, but to do the public business; and, whenever there was business to be done, he was in his place. He moved, by way of amendment on the motion of the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Ferrett—

That the question be amended by the omission of all the words following the word "House," with a view to the insertion in their place of the words "at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, the 30th instant."

Mr. MILES observed that there was not an honorable member of the House who attended less to his duties than the mover of the amendment, and who was continually making use of the railway, and having telegrams sent to him at his home to come down at particular times. He attended day after day from the opening of the session to the close, and he was now to be kept kicking his heels about doing nothing for eight days, merely to please the honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba, who had had the audacity to make such a proposition. The honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Atkin, wanted to go to some railway expedition. It was unfair to representatives of distant districts, who could not get home, to keep them in town doing nothing.

Mr. ATKIN expressed his sorrow that his honorable friend, the member for Maranoa, was in a fighting humor with him, after he had distinctly stated that he was prepared to attend next week. On a former occasion the honorable member objected to an adjournment such as was now proposed; and when honorable members attended, and could not get a quorum, the honorable member for Maranoa was conspicuous by his absence.

Mr. THORN supported the amendment.

Mr. SCOTT said he should support the amendment, as they had been told by honorable members opposite that they would allow no business to be done, and as there was no probability of there being a quorum.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that his duty was a very plain one, for, if there was any division, he should vote against the adjournment, as it was the duty of the Government to sit there, no matter who attended. He knew from experience that honorable members had used almost the same words on former occasions when opposing an adjournment, and yet had been absent on the following day. He did not believe anything would be done during the next week, but some business might be got through during the morning sitting of the next day.

Mr. MILES rose to enter his protest against the way in which the public business was delayed, and he should divide the House on the question. He thought it was a great hardship that he should come down from a long distance to attend that House, and that just for the convenience of honorable members who lived in the neighborhood, the business of the country should be postponed. Some allusion had been made to his absence, but he had never moved for an adjournment except at the request of another honorable member.

Mr. JORDAN said, from what he had heard, he was almost certain there would not be any quorum; and as to being absent, he might say that, except on one occasion when he was ill, he had never been absent from that House.

Mr. FYFE said he did not want to see legislation stopped altogether. He thought the object in postponing the business was not on

account of the races, but in order to delay the railway question.

Mr. CRIBB denied the statement made by the honorable member for Maranoa that he wished for an adjournment in order to be present at the Ipswich races. The fact was that the honorable member simply wanted to take honorable members to the House on the following morning, when there would be no quorum.

The question, That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question, was then put, and the House divided with the following result:—

Ayes, 16.	Noes, 9.
Mr. Palmer	Mr. Groom
" Royds	" Morgan
" Ferrett	" Bell
" Forbes	" Scott
" Fyfe	" Wienholt
" Atkin	" Johnston
" Lilley	" Jordan
" Thompson	" Thorn
" Miles	" Stephens.
" Moreton	
" Handy	
" Edmondstone	
" King	
" Walsh	
" Bramston	
" De Saigé.	