

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 1872

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 16 January, 1872.

Mr. Pring's Contempt.—Elections and Qualifications.—
Ministerial Explanation.—Supply.—Suspension of
Standing Orders.—Treasury Bills Bill.—Precedence of
Government Business.

MR. PRING'S CONTEMPT.

Mr. Pring having been called by Mr. SPEAKER, in pursuance of the Order of the House, that he should attend in his place, this day, and not being in his place,

The SPEAKER said: It is now my duty to acquaint the House with the course taken in compliance with the resolution passed in reference to the honorable member for Brisbane, on Wednesday last. I caused the following order to be served upon the Honorable Ratcliffe Pring:—

“ Legislative Assembly,

“ Brisbane, 10th January, 1872.

“ To the Honorable

“ Ratcliffe Pring, M.L.A.,

“ &c., &c., &c.

“ SIR,—I do myself the honor to communicate to you the Order of the Legislative Assembly, made this day:—

“ “ That the leave of absence granted to the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pring, be rescinded, and that he be ordered to attend in his place on Tuesday next.’

“ I have, &c.,

“ (Signed.) F. A. FORBES,
“ Speaker.

"The above is a copy of the order served by me upon the Honorable Ratcliffe Pring.

"E. B. UHR,
Sergeant-at-Arms."

I may state that before that was served, I had received from the honorable member his resignation, which I will read to the House:—

"Queen street, Brisbane,
January 11th, 1872.

"To the Honorable The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

"SIR,—In accordance with the provisions of clause eight of the Legislative Assembly Act of 1867, I do myself the honor by this, my writing, addressed to yourself as the Honorable The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, to resign my seat as one of the Members of North Brisbane.

"Sir, I have the honor to remain,
Your most obedient servant,
"R. PRING."

It remains with the House to take what action they may deem fit in dealing with this matter.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Speaker—There is no wish whatever, sir, on my part, to do in any way anything that might look like persecution of the late honorable member for Brisbane, Mr. Pring; or, still less, is there any inclination on my part, or, I hope, on the part of any honorable member of this House, to make him a martyr. But, sir, a gross indignity has been offered to this House—an insult which, I feel, it would be a disgrace and a reproach to every member of the House, if we allowed it to pass—if we allowed a member of the House to commit it, and then to absolve himself by simply resigning his seat. Sir, if conduct of this sort is allowed to go on—if there is no redress for an insult offered to this House—it would be perfectly possible for any person sent to this House, any member, in a state of excitement, to assault any other honorable member of the House, and to have his resignation ready written in his pocket, and absolutely to throw it to you, sir, as he was going out of the House, and thereby purge himself of all contempt. I think that honorable members will agree with me that this is a state of affairs which it is our duty to prevent by our action in this House upon the conduct of the honorable gentleman. Indeed, I regret exceedingly that the Parliament, which, I may say, and do say with the greatest truth, has hitherto been exemplary amongst all the Australian colonies for the orderly manner in which its business has been conducted, should have brought upon it so great and so deep a reproach as the conduct witnessed by almost every honorable member of this House last Wednesday night. I feel, sir, that if we were to allow the mere fact of that honorable gentleman having resigned his seat to purge himself from contempt of this House, we would be acting in a most improper and unconstitutional manner.

MR. FYFE: No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would be quite competent, sir, for any honorable member who might choose to act in such a disreputable manner, to repeat the offence on another occasion—by simply resigning and trusting to his constituency to send him in again.

MR. FYFE: The constitution protects him.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is a state of affairs that I feel it is the duty of this House to protest against. I have therefore to move:—

1. That the Honorable Ratcliffe Pring having, on the 10th of January instant, been declared guilty of contempt, and having been ordered to attend in his place this day; and the said Honorable Ratcliffe Pring not being in his place as so ordered, and having thereby disobeyed the lawful order of this Assembly, is guilty of further contempt.

2. That Mr. Speaker be hereby directed to commit the said Honorable Ratcliffe Pring to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

MR. FYFE said it was impossible to arrest a member of Parliament, or even one of his servants. If the House established such a precedent as was proposed, there would be no security of privilege for members of Parliament. The honorable gentleman was not the late member but the present member for Brisbane, until his seat was vacated by effluxion of time, or, unless the House allowed him to resign: he was still a member of Parliament. That was one of the questions in constitutional law which were of great importance, and especially to a young colony like Queensland. The honorable member for Brisbane could not resign his seat without the consent of the House, for the reason that he was placed under arrest in the House;—and he could not be arrested, as a member of Parliament, out of the House. This argument was founded on constitutional history, and particularly upon circumstances under the reigns of James the First and Charles the First. The House ought to be sure, unquestionably, that they had the power to arrest Mr. Pring. In his (Mr. Fyfe's) opinion, there was no power, no instance, no example, no precedent, in the history of the British Constitution, since in its establishment in 1264, for such a proceeding. The House could not, by their voices, expel an honorable member. It was a dangerous experiment they were asked to try. The honorable member had escaped, but he might come back and make an apology. The Speaker's warrant had issued; but no one could carry it beyond the threshold of the House against the honorable member. The Speaker had no power to accept the honorable member's resignation, without the consent of the House. He (Mr. Fyfe) feared that the next thing would be, if a member should become objectionable to the majority of the House, a motion would be made to expel him. Public opinion should have its weight, and it struck him that the Govern-

ment would lose their power unless they recognised it.

The **SPEAKER** said that the honorable member was wandering from the question.

Mr. **FYFE** maintained that the question was one of public opinion, and that he was fairly discussing it; but, adverting to the land laws—

The **SPEAKER** said the honorable member was still out of order. If he persisted in his disorderly conduct, he (the Speaker) would call him by name.

Mr. **FYFE** said he was bound to obey the ruling of the Chair; and, with the Speaker's consent, he might find some other occasion of expressing his opinion.

Mr. **LILLEY**: I am not about to discuss the matter of the resolution, but merely to offer a suggestion which, perhaps, may be acceptable to the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government. If he were here, well; but it would be a very serious matter to Mr. Pring if he were arrested at Roma, where he is in the discharge of his professional duties. What I wish to suggest is, that an extension of time might be allowed—if we might not stay the execution of any warrant until some time, say, till the further order of the House, or for a certain number of days—so as to enable him to discharge his professional duties there. If it be acceptable, I will move:—

That the warrant lie in the office of the Speaker until the further order of the House.

The **COLONIAL SECRETARY**: I think that no member of this House—I am sure—has any wish to push this matter further than is necessary. I do not think that the motion of the honorable member will be carried. If the warrant is put into the hands of the Speaker, it must be unconditionally. But the House may advise the Speaker. I have no doubt that the Speaker will accept that advice, to delay the warrant for ten days. With that understanding, I will consent to follow the suggestion thrown out.

Mr. **LILLEY**: Hear, hear.

Original question put and passed.

ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS.

Mr. **ROYDS** brought up the report of the Elections and Qualifications Committee, and asked that it be read by the Clerk at the table.

Mr. **FYFE**: As a member of the committee, he said emphatically that he did not attend more than one or two of its meetings, because he had thought that, to a certain extent, it had come to a foregone conclusion. He did not wish to be any further a member of the Elections and Qualifications Committee; because it appeared to him to be like this:—There were four members from the Government side of the House, and three from the Opposition side; and the Chairman was from the Government side. Whatever it might

be—he would not certainly impugn its authority to a further extent.

Mr. **FERRETT**: After what the honorable member had said he would offer a few words. It might be that the honorable member had attended the committee once or twice, for a short time; but the second time he was present, he was interrupting the committee, and the way he did so was by expressing his opinion, whilst they were taking evidence.

Mr. **ATKIN**: That was a foregone conclusion.

The **CLERK** read the report, which set forth that the sitting member for Warwick, Charles Clark, Esquire, was duly elected.

Ordered to be printed, with the accompanying papers.

MINISTERIAL EXPLANATION.

The **COLONIAL SECRETARY** said: Mr. Speaker—Before proceeding to business, I wish to make a Ministerial explanation. It will be in the recollection of yourself and this House that on the last occasion when we met here, a certain proposition was made by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, the leader of the Opposition, to myself as leader of the Ministry. That proposition was to this effect, sir:—That, if we would withdraw our Electoral Districts Bill and introduce a Bill for the redistribution of the whole electorates of the colony, what has been called the “dead-lock,” as I understand the matter, should cease, and that they would be prepared to proceed with the business of the country—in fact, both sides;—the Opposition would be ready to proceed. The Government have always been ready. I thought it my duty on that occasion to take time to consider the proposition; and I stated then that the honorable member for Fortitude Valley had a considerable advantage over me at the moment, because he had had time to consider the proposition himself, and he had had time to consult with members who generally act with him; while the proposition he made was by me totally unexpected. I have taken time, that was so kindly given by the House, for the consideration of that proposition; I have given it very serious consideration; and I have come to the conclusion, sir, that, it being the duty of the Government to endeavor to carry on the business of the country as well as they can, and to give way in many things, so far as they can, without sacrificing a principle for that purpose—that considering that we do not sacrifice any principle in accepting the offer of the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, redistribution being in fact the principle of the Government Bill, and his proposition only carrying that principle of redistribution further than the Bill originally intended, or than the Government thought they would be able to pass through the House—we are, under certain circumstances, prepared to introduce a Bill for the redistribution of the whole elector-

ates of the colony. In order that there may be, at any future time, no dispute or misunderstanding on the main principle of the Bill that I will introduce—that I hope to introduce—I may as well state, at once, that it will be the principle of single electorates; that no electorate in the colony will return more than one member; that I will endeavor, so far as in me lies, to draft what I consider will be a fair Bill for the whole colony; that I will endeavor, in drafting that Bill, to throw electors with the same interests and the same sympathies, as far as possible, into the same electorates; that I will keep the number of members proposed to be introduced by this Bill as near as possible to forty. I believe, sir, that the country is not in a position to return a very large number of members to this House. I believe that very great difficulty exists in getting candidates to come forward, even at present, and that any very large extension of the number of members returned to this House is not desirable; I cannot say within one or two, but my object in drafting the Bill will be to make the number of members about forty, as near as possible. I consider that in yielding this much I would be entitled on the part of the Government, and of this side of the House, to ask the House to pass the Estimates; but, sir, although I feel that with a majority such as I command on this side of the House, we might have that right, and might feel called upon to press our right to pass the Estimates, before doing any other work, I yet feel that I will shew to the House and to the people of this colony that I value the prosperity of the colony more than I do any merely party triumph; and I shall be satisfied, sir, by the House voting the Supplementary Estimates for 1870 and 1871, and giving us three months Supply. As a matter of course, sir, which I think I need hardly mention, we shall pass the Treasury Bills Bill. That is a matter I have hardly felt it necessary to allude to: it was nearly escaping my memory; but I took it as a matter of course. We have felt, sir, that the principle of stopping supplies is bad; but having asserted it so often, I do not feel that it is at all necessary for me to go further into the subject, to-night. I have stated what I am prepared to do, and I have very full confidence that the bitterness, as I may express it, of party feeling, which I have endeavored to meet and to alleviate as much as I can, will be no longer experienced; and that the waiving of the right inherent in the majority will meet with proper appreciation from the other side of the House. I have been asked by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, the leader of the Opposition, how soon I will introduce the Bill such as I propose. The honorable gentleman, I must do him the justice to say, pressed me hard to get it introduced as soon as possible; but I told him, and I now tell you, sir, that such a Bill as I propose to introduce will

take one month, really hard work, if I had the time to devote to it. I also feel that this House has been some time in session—an angry session, without much good result—and that it will come to its duties in a much better spirit than now, perhaps, if we prorogue for a short time before bringing this Bill on for consideration. Another additional reason why this course should be followed out, is this: It is now the hottest time of the year—that may have had something to do with a little bad temper that some of us have shewn in the House—and, after a short prorogation, we may come back with improved temper, in an improved temperature, and get on better with the business of the country than we have done. I shall, therefore, propose to the House to carry out only the most important business on the paper, at present; and if the House agree with me, I will say, sir, that I look upon the Elections Bill as the most important measure on the paper. It will be of no use, sir, for honorable members—and I ask them to remember this in their private business—to crowd a quantity of motions on the paper which we cannot possibly clear off, without protracting the session; because, if I carry out the business I have named, any Bill that has not had time to go up to the other House, and to come back to us, will be among the “slaughtered innocents,” which would lead to no good result. There is one Bill which passed this House last session, and was advanced in the other House; and, this session, it has been passed by the Council, and has now come back to us; and that Bill, I believe, we may pass, now. It is the Brands Bill. It is of great importance to the country. I wish to get that through; but, with the exception of these two Bills that I have named, and of Supply, as far as I have stated, I do not wish to go any further. That is all the business I propose to do on the Government side of the House, during the remainder of the session. I propose that these Bills shall leave this House and go to the other House, this week; and they will come down from there, next week. I propose, then, to prorogue this Parliament until the beginning of April. There will then begin a new session for 1872. I shall be prepared by that time, I hope, the very day the House meets, to lay my Bill on the table. I hope that it will be such as both sides of the House will feel they can accept. I shall, as I said before, make it my business to give, so far as my lights enable me, as fair a Bill for the whole colony as I possibly can; but I cannot promise that it will be acceptable to every member on both sides of the House. As far as I can, I will carry out a thorough redistribution, and endeavor to make a fair Bill for all parties. We will then, meeting in April, get into the session at the proper time. If there was any other reason wanted for such a course as I propose, I may say that I have felt that honorable members on

this side of the House, many of them, have spent a great deal of time here, and not to much purpose, this session; and, having to come back to another session which will probably keep them for some time, which will most likely be a protracted session, for the quantity of work to be done—the Estimates for 1872 and 1873 will have to be voted—I feel that a little rest and a little time to attend to their own business will be of service to them, and to us all. I have stated the intentions of the Government; I hope they will be received as they are intended, and that instead of the apple of discord being thrown amongst us, we will find the olive branch, and accept it as our emblem.

Mr. LILLEY: I may say, sir, I think, on behalf of the Opposition and of the very large number of colonists whom we represent, that the statement just made by the honorable the Colonial Secretary is in no degree one at which we can cavil. I feel that the honorable gentleman has displayed a discretion and a spirit of fair-play in his statement which we should do very wrong in any way to accept in an ungracious mood. I will be very happy to meet him upon the terms that he has proposed. I do not think I can add anything, except to suggest, on behalf of those who hold the same opinions as myself, that, in following out the proposed redistribution, the value of population will not be forgotten in apportioning the proportion of members. Having stated so much, I cordially agree with the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government that we ought, even during the few days we shall meet together for the despatch of business, to banish all bad feeling and bitterness engendered during the late struggle. I shall do it, for my part, and will meet the honorable gentleman, and those who support him, with a fair, honorable, and generous spirit in the discharge of the public business of the colony. I am glad he has proposed to pass the Elections Bill, because I believe that to be the most important measure before us; and, as it has been discussed in the past, there can be no difficulty in carrying speedily and effectually the whole business suggested.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I wish, sir, before the subject on which honorable members have been addressing the House is disposed of, to add, that I wish to introduce to the notice of honorable members a little Bill that I have some anxiety about. I wish to get through the Savings Bank Bill. The honorable gentleman at the head of the Government omitted it in his speech, and I now mention it.

Mr. LILLEY: Hear, hear.

SUPPLY.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved into Committee of Supply.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Scott—It is now my duty to make the financial statement of the Government for the year 1871; and, in doing so, should I depart somewhat from one of the customs of this House—if I should refer to a more copious set of notes than usual—if I should do more—if I should read the speech which I am about to make, I trust that honorable members will bear with me upon this occasion. The latter course, the one which I shall adopt, unless it is objected to, will not be found in any way to sacrifice the convenience of honorable members, nor will it, I trust, detract from the brevity, and I hope the clearness, of the statement I am about to make.

The estimated receipts and expenditure for the year 1870 were set down by my predecessor, Mr. Ramsay, in the last financial statement delivered to the House, as follows:—

Revenue (exclusive of land orders)	£739,830
Expenditure	769,024

Estimated deficit for the year	£20,194
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The revenue actually received during the year proved to be	£743,058	6	7
And the expenditure	771,999	14	1

Giving a deficit on the year's transactions of	£28,941	7	6
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or, within £253 of the late Treasurer's anticipations.

The accounts for the year 1871 (just closed) are as follows:—

Cash revenue received between 1st January and 31st December	£799,005	3	8
Expenditure between the same dates	779,031	15	6

Excess of receipts over payments	£19,973	8	2
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being the first time, since 1860, that the revenue has covered the expenditure.

The total increase of revenue in 1871, as compared with 1870, was £55,947, of which Customs and Excise contributed ... £38,489

Land	4,307
Gold	3,990
Stamp Duty	2,228
Harbor and Light Dues	2,433
Railways	4,352
Miscellaneous receipts	2,910

On Postage and Electric Telegraphs, and most other heads of revenue, there was a slight decrease.

The expenditure in 1871 exceeded that of the previous year by £7,032 only. Although the railways and some other services were conducted at a reduced cost, last year, this

comparatively small increase is mainly due to the fact that £18,260 less was paid for interest and exchange in 1871 than in 1870. In consequence of the last loan, however, the interest to be paid, this year, is again increased by £21,000.

Deducting the saving on the past year from the debtor balance at the close of 1870, we get the sum of £284,542 19s. 1d. as the overdraft on the 31st December last, and, adding the six months interest due and payable on the following day—viz., £121,435 10s.—we have a total of £405,978 9s. 1d. as the actual revenue overdraft on the 1st of January, 1872.

Before entering upon the accounts of the present year, it may be well to say a few words upon the subject of this over-expenditure.

The only satisfaction in connection with this annual overdraft in the past has been that it has for some years been steadily decreasing. It was in 1865, £47,000; in 1866, the year of the crisis, £118,000; in 1867, £56,000; in 1868, through the influx on account of the Gympie diggings, it was reduced to £15,000; in 1869, it was £37,000; in 1870, £27,000; and, as I have recently informed the committee, in 1871, there was a surplus of £20,000. Indeed, I see no reason why, with moderate care and economy, this House should ever be again called upon to make provision for a revenue overdraft. Whilst, however, believing that the revenue of the present and future years will suffice for current expenditure, it is, in my opinion, hopeless to expect to save sufficient from the revenue of the immediate future to pay off the accumulated deficit of the past; and it is, therefore, necessary that Parliament should make some other provision for its liquidation.

Honorable members are aware that towards the end of 1869, Parliament authorised the issue of £350,000 of Treasury bills to cover the then deficiency. These bills have been issued and were made payable: £100,000 on the 31st of December last, £100,000 in December, 1872, and the balance in 1873. Now either we must go on renewing and renewing these short-dated Treasury bills every three or four years, as they fall due, which can only be done at considerable cost for brokerage and exchange, &c., or we must fund the debt—in other words, borrow the amount on long-dated debentures.

After due consideration, the Government decided to ask authority to renew the £100,000 bills which were recently met from funds temporarily advanced from other sources, making them payable not later than 1873 (with the balance of the bills now in circulation), in order that the whole sum owing may be included in an early Loan Bill. The loss on the sale of the last Treasury bills was £3,225, and whilst admitting that it is, under ordinary circumstances, very undesirable that current revenue deficiencies should be made a permanent charge, and allowing it to be

correct in principle that over-expenditure in one year should be met by a corresponding saving in subsequent years, it is, nevertheless, inexpedient to go on paying at the rate of £1,000 a-year to brokers and others in support of a theory to which no practical effect can be given; and therefore it is that we have arrived at the decision I have stated to the committee. We have, perhaps, some excuse for adopting this course, inasmuch as the ordinary revenue of the colony has been taxed in cash and land orders for immigration purposes since Separation to the extent of upwards of £750,000, besides the land fund having contributed £72,000 in cotton premium orders in aid of the establishment of the cotton industry. The total revenue deficiency being, as before stated, £405,978 9s. 1d., and provision having been made by the issue of Treasury bills to the extent of £350,000, a balance of something under £56,000 will still remain unprovided for, should my present proposal be adopted. This smaller sum the Government hope to remain long enough in office to meet by savings in the future, but they do not consider it desirable, even if it were practicable, to tax the industries of the colony to a greater extent than I have now indicated.

I now come to the revenue and expenditure for the year 1872, and will take the several items of revenue as they appear on the Estimates.

The total revenue expected by my predecessor from Customs for 1871, was £325,000, and we received £324,078, being £35,608 in excess of 1870.

Taking into account the certain loss to the revenue from the increasing consumption of sugar and spirits produced in the colony, and the consequent decreased consumption of the imported articles, I have thought it prudent to set down an increase of £10,000 only on this item for 1872, and have estimated the total receipts from Customs at £335,000. The duty received on colonial spirits in 1871 was £13,308; I have increased this item in my estimate for the present year to £17,000, giving a total of £352,000 for Customs and Excise for 1872, as against £337,386 received in 1871.

Land Revenue.—The Land Revenue for the year just closed considerably exceeded the estimate.

Auction and selection sales, which were expected to yield £14,000, returned £29,939. More than half this sum, however, has been paid by a comparatively few persons, and the transactions are somewhat exceptional. I have, therefore, estimated the receipts under this head for 1872 at £18,000. This sum is pretty sure to be received, and may be considerably exceeded.

Rents under the Act of 1866 I have put down the same as for the present year, viz., £20,000.

Rents under the Act of 1868, received in 1871, also shew a great increase on the esti-

mate for that year, selections having been made at a greater rate than was anticipated. In 1870, the revenue received was £56,742. In 1871, it was £78,145; and in 1872, after allowing for any selections that may be forfeited, I expect it to yield at least £87,000, which will probably represent about 2,000,000 acres of land occupied under the deferred payment system.

The foregoing figures added to £10,000, expected from survey fees, give a total of £135,000 as the revenue from the sale and survey of land expected in 1872.

Pastoral rents and assessments fell far short of the estimate for the year 1871, in consequence of a considerable quantity of country, upon which rent was formerly paid, having been abandoned. The total sum received was £112,000; and I anticipate about £115,500 in 1872—the increase being expected from the sale of forfeited leases.

The land revenue, recapitulated, is, therefore, as follows:—

Auction and other sales	£18,000
Deferred payment selections	107,000
Survey fees	10,000
Pastoral rents, &c.	115,500

Total... .. £250,500

or, just £7,633 in excess of the annual interest at present payable on the public debt of the colony. The charge on account of the sinking fund—now about £16,000 per annum—will cease with this year; so that, unless from any cause the annual interest should in the meantime be increased, the land revenue for 1873 will not only pay the interest on the public debt, but, in all probability, the cost of the Survey Department as well.

The land revenue is complicated by the land orders in circulation, which amount at the present time to £13,897 cotton and other transferable orders, and £17,086 non-transferable orders, exclusive of £48,936 lodged with the Government under advance. The figures given by me are the estimated cash receipts over and above any land orders which may be received at the Treasury in payment of land. Besides the land orders already spoken of, there are outstanding non-transferable forty-acre land orders issued under the Immigration Act of 1869 to the extent of 30,620 acres. On the other hand, the Government hold immigrants' undertakings to pay on account of their passage-money to the extent of £44,370. How much of this sum will be eventually paid, it is difficult to say. £9,558 is now due, and the Government have received on this account, since the Act was passed, £756.

Gold.—The next item is gold, the revenue from which appears in the Estimates at £27,500, or £6,000 more than for the present year. This estimate is based upon the existing rate of export duty. As, however, the Government have decided to recommend the abolition of this duty, by an annual reduction in

the tax of 6d. per ounce, the duty for 1872, should the Government proposition be carried, will be 1s. instead of 1s. 6d. the ounce, and my estimate must be correspondingly reduced, and will stand as follows:—

Export duty	£13,000
Miners' rights and business licenses	4,500
Escort fees	4,000

In all £21,500

The Government Bill now before Parliament asks for authority to make regulations for ascertaining the amount of rebate of duty fairly allowable upon the exportation of gold, mixed or alloyed. The average value of gold varies at different diggings. For instance, the value of gold, per ounce, at Kilkivan, is only £2 10s.; whereas at Peak Downs, it is £3 18s. A uniform duty, therefore, is manifestly unjust.

Should my estimate be realised, it will show a yield of gold in 1872 (taking it at £3 10s. per ounce), of £910,000, as compared with £650,000 in 1870. This, with the annual yield of coal and copper, coupled with the returns from the cotton and sugar plantations, speaks well for the future of Queensland.

The cotton crop last year was unusually good, 8,959 bales, of 300 lbs. each, having been inspected by the Government officers. The sugar plantations are expected to produce, during the year ending 31st March next, 3,500 tons of sugar, and 120,000 gallons of proof spirits;—added to which, wine and tobacco, of a superior quality, are now being made in the colony, and will soon be produced in such quantities as to demand more than a passing notice from the Finance Minister of the day.

The remaining items of Revenue are estimated much the same as for 1871, and are as follows:—

Railways	£85,000
Stamp Duties	22,000
Postage	20,800
Harbor and Light Dues	8,500
Electric Telegraphs... ..	12,000
Licenses	26,000
Fees and Fines	10,000
Miscellaneous and other Receipts... ..	11,500
Giving a total Cash Revenue of	£825,800

anticipated for 1872; and I believe that the sum received this year will more probably exceed than fall short of this estimate.

The gross Revenue and Expenditure for 1872 are as follows:—

Estimated Cash Revenue	£825,800
Ordinary Expenditure, as per Estimates-in-Chief... ..	£528,198
Interest and Sinking Fund	258,867
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	787,065

Difference	38,735
Estimated Lapsed Votes	35,000

Available Balance to meet unforeseen Expenses £73,735

With regard to this estimate, I can only repeat that I believe the Revenue to be within the mark. As to expenditure, every item has been carefully considered by the Government, and the result, as shewn in the detailed Estimates of Expenditure, is before the committee. The sum payable on account of interest and sinking fund, is, in consequence of the loan of last session, over £21,000 more than that paid last year, and with the growth and settlement of the colony, increased ordinary expenditure is inevitable; and so, also, with every care, are Supplementary Estimates, although, from the fact of the Estimates-in-Chief having been prepared late in the year, the Supplementary Estimates should be less than usual. These for the past year, in the hands of members, amount to £63,573 14s. 4d., a very heavy sum, which I found it impossible to reduce to any extent; nor, indeed, can I now say that the present Estimates are final: it is more than probable they are not. The Government, however, will do all in their power to prevent any excessive supplementary votes for 1872 being asked for; and I have every reason to hope that the Revenue for the year will not only cover the year's expenditure, but will, in addition, do something towards paying off a portion of the £56,000 unsecured deficit of previous years. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the present financial year is already heavily weighted, and it will require the strictest economy in each department of the Government, in order to realise the hope I have expressed.

The principal items of increase on the present Estimates, as compared with those of 1871, are:—

Police	£4,600
Juvenile Reformatory	1,000
Education	3,000
Charitable Allowances	2,000
Volunteers	2,390
Customs	2,000
Border Patrol... ..	1,500
New Telegraphic Lines and Stations	5,500
Roads	2,000

These, added to the increased charge for interest, give a total increased expenditure to start with of £45,000, nearly the whole of which is beyond the control of the Government.

I have now completed my remarks upon the ordinary revenue and expenditure for 1871 and 1872. These remarks I have purposely curtailed as much as possible, and have only to add that the figures given by me, on both revenue and expenditure account, are the sums estimated to be received and paid at the Treasury between the 1st of January and 31st of December, in each year—as distinguished from sums received and paid on account of the year. This plan (originated, I believe, by Mr. Stephens, and followed by my immediate predecessor, Mr. Ramsay) is

far more simple than the other plan referred to, and differs little in the practical result. The total sum paid in the early part of 1870, on account of votes for 1869, for instance, was £41,918 14s.; whilst that paid in the present year on account of 1870, was £46,698 6s. 4d., a difference of £4,779 12s. 4d. only.

Clause 20 of the Audit Act empowers the Government to apply a portion of any sum voted by this House for any particular purpose in augmentation of any other vote under the same subdivision of the Estimates. In order to prevent misunderstanding or abuse of this power, I have appended a foot note to page 10 of the present Estimates, defining what shall be considered a subdivision for the purposes of the clause of the Act referred to; and I hope to see this plan followed in all future Estimates, in order to ensure the intentions of this House as to money votes being carried into effect.

The Customs Duty Act of 1870, under which many articles were transferred from *ad valorem* to the special duties list, and the *ad valorem* duties were increased from eight and a-quarter to ten per cent., has, in its financial results, answered the expectations of those who assisted to pass it through the Assembly.

The total Customs receipts, including Excise for the year 1871, amounted to £337,386, or £38,489 in excess of the same period of the previous year. Of this increase:—

Brandy contributed... ..	£7,563
Other Spirits, exclusive of Rum ...	1,663
Wine	37
Beer	4,196
Tobacco and Cigars... ..	790
Opium	446
Tea and Coffee	1,598
Salt and Rice	1,024
Articles removed from <i>ad valorem</i> to fixed duties	20,749
<i>Ad valorem</i> duties	5,850
And Excise	2,880

On Sugar, there is a loss of £3,155, and on Rum imported, £5,208.

By the recent Census, the population of the colony is assumed to be 120,000, so that, the Customs and Excise receipts for the past year having been £337,386, the contribution per head was at the rate of £2 16s. 3d. per annum—paid in the following proportions:—

	£	s.	d.	
Wine, Beer, and Spirits... ..	1	4	2	per head.
Tobacco and Cigars	0	6	9	"
<i>Ad valorem</i> duties	0	12	9	"
Fixed duties	0	6	3	"
Tea, Coffee, and Sugar... ..	0	6	4	"

TOTAL £2 16 3 "

If to this are added the only other items of revenue which can fairly be denominated taxation, viz., Gold export duty, Stamp duty, and Fees for publicans and other licenses, we get a total annual taxation,

according to present receipts, of £3 8s. 3d. per head of population, of which exactly £2 is required to meet each individual's share of the annual interest on the public debt, leaving £1 8s. 3d. contribution towards the general expenses of Government.

Border Customs Patrol.—The Border Customs Patrol reached their stations, and commenced the collection of duties, early in February of last year; it is said after the Border stations had received their season's supplies; so that the collections up to the present cannot be taken as a fair average of what may be hereafter expected. The total duties collected on the Border between February and the 31st December, amounted to £1,473, or at the rate of £1,600 per annum. The estimated annual cost of the Patrol in the future, is £1,532, which would give only £68 per annum as the increase to the revenue through the establishment of the Patrol. The Government, however, are advised by the Collector of Customs that the establishment of this Patrol has resulted in many storekeepers and stations on the Border procuring their supplies from merchants and others in Queensland, instead of, as formerly, from Maitland, and elsewhere without the colony. The Inspector is preparing a report upon the subject, and steps will be taken by the Government to obtain reliable statistics respecting the past and present Border trade, and the probable effect upon trade and revenue resulting from the establishment of the Border police.

Public Debt, Debentures, &c.—I will now say a few words upon the Loan and Trust Funds, and such other subjects as I think will be of interest to the committee.

The total debt of the colony at the present time is £4,106,378 7s. 3d., and is made up as follows:—

Total sum authorised to be raised by debentures ...	£3,782,786	0	0
Total sum authorised to be raised by short-dated Treasury bills ...	350,000	0	0
Balance of revenue over-draft, not provided for ...	55,978	9	1
Cost of the steamer "Governor Blackall," not provided for ...	18,481	5	3
Total ...	£4,207,245	14	4
Deduct amount to credit of Sinking Fund ...	100,867	7	1
Total net liability of the colony ...	£4,106,378	7	3

being £34 4s. 4d. per head of population.

Of this amount the sum of £111,000 is unexpended, and available for the construction of roads and bridges and other services.

The loan of the last session (£765,600) was disposed of as follows:—
£445,700 sold in London and the colonies at a net premium of £10,884 14s. 5d.

£250,000 sold to the Savings Bank at par.
£85,000 lodged as security for the Sinking Fund.

But for the urgent necessity to realize funds to meet Treasury bills falling due on the 31st December, the Loan Bill having only passed on the 8th of that month, doubtless a much better price for the debentures sold in Sydney would have been obtained. Those sold in London were quitted at an average of something over 106, a rate considered satisfactory. Of the premium realized, £4,221 5s. 11d. will be appropriated to defray the charges and loss incurred in realizing the several issues of Treasury bills; and the balance, as far as it will go, to meet a portion of the cost of the steamer "Governor Blackall," which is still unprovided for.

There being a balance of the vote available after the erection of the Sandy Cape and Bustard Head lighthouses, the Executive approved of the appropriation of a portion of that sum for the erection of a light at Oyster Rock, at the entrance to Port Curtis. This work has been successfully carried out, and the light is regularly exhibited. It is now proposed, with the balance still available, to erect an improved light at Lady Elliott's Island, and a light at Cape Bowling Green, where a lighthouse is reported to be much needed.

From the Supplementary Estimates it will be seen that the Government propose to seek parliamentary sanction to cover certain loan expenditure rendered necessary for the completion of the telegraph Gulf extension—for immigration and public offices at Rockhampton—and other services. The reason for these extra services not having been included in the last Loan Bill, and for their present urgency, will be given when the Estimates come on for discussion.

In addition to the sums included in the present Estimates, the first Loan Bill will also include sums for the telegraphic extensions, estimated as follows:—

	Miles.
Springsure to Tambo ...	140
Tambo to Charleville ...	130
Charleville to Cunnamulla...	110
Roma, <i>via</i> Surat, to St. George ...	115
Cunnamulla, to connect with New South Wales line, from St. George	70
Inkerman to Ravenswood ...	50
Total ...	615

Making in all, 615 miles, at £43 per mile ...	£26,445
For completing Norman extension	16,000
For providing for short extensions	3,255
Total ...	£45,700

It is only necessary for me now to state that it is not proposed to introduce any Loan Bill during this session, beyond the Treasury Bills Bill, necessary for the purpose of pro-

viding funds to meet the £100,000 bills recently retired by the Union Bank, acting for the Government. No Loan Bill proper will be asked for until next session. In connection with loans, the advantages or otherwise of consolidating our Public Debt—and of endeavoring to retire the 6 per cent. debentures of the colony, now in circulation, with 5 per cent. or even 4 per cent. bonds, having a uniform due date—has attracted public attention. The Government have given the subject their consideration, and they hope to be in a position to bring forward a scheme with that object when the first Loan Bill proper is introduced to this House. I think we are all agreed that no more 6 per cent. long-dated debentures should be issued, and the proposed new issue of Treasury bills should certainly not exceed 5 per cent. Unless circumstances greatly alter, the Government of this colony ought, in the future, to readily obtain money at 5, or even 4½ per cent.

Whilst on the subject of debentures I may allude to a measure which was before this House during a previous session, providing for the registration of Government debentures of this colony with the Stock Exchange, London, in the manner advocated by Mr. Westgarth. The Government thought it desirable, before further pressing the Bill alluded to, to endeavor to obtain the feeling of the Stock Exchange upon the subject, and to ascertain whether the necessary facilities would be afforded for giving effect to such a measure. It appears from replies received that the Stock Exchange are unlikely to do anything to promote the scheme, and say that they have no facilities for the purpose; and the result is that the Government have decided not to take the initiative in such a measure, at any rate for the present. I place the correspondence on the table for the perusal of honorable members.

Government Savings Bank.—Another important measure before the House during a previous session, bearing upon finance, was the Government Savings Bank Bill. This Act provides that two-thirds part, at the least, of Savings Bank funds shall be invested in Government securities. A further sum is to be lodged in some bank or banks, on fixed deposit, the balance being kept available as a drawing account to meet contingencies. In accordance with these provisions, debentures representing £254,000 have been vested in trustees, and lodged with the manager of the Union Bank on account of the Savings Bank; £50,000 has been lodged on fixed deposit, in equal sums, with the several banks; and the balance (excepting the sum of £6,900 lent on mortgage) is held available for Savings Bank purposes. The total sum to the credit of Savings Bank depositors is now £407,134, of which £166,640 is in sums of £200 and upwards, which is the sum that will be affected by the Bill now before the House. The Government have had under consideration the comparatively high rate of interest

allowed for these moneys deposited at call, and considering the reduced rate of interest now ruling for money generally, and the tendency the high rate paid by the Government for large sums has to curtail legitimate investments, they have introduced a Bill to Parliament to reduce the interest allowed on sums over £200 from 5 to 3 per cent. No alteration will be made on deposits of less than £200, on which 5 per cent will be allowed. In order to give depositors time to make other arrangements, should they desire to do so, the proposed changes will not take effect until the 1st May next. It is also proposed to give greater protection to deposits made by married women under certain circumstances; these deposits are, under the existing law, entirely at the disposal of their husbands, and cases of great hardship often arise in consequence—an evil which the proposed Bill is calculated to remedy.

Loan of 1860.—It is known to honorable members that the first Loan Act passed in Queensland contained a clause providing for two per cent. of the current revenue being set apart annually, to form a sinking fund to meet the loan thereby authorised (£123,800). The sum to the credit of this account is now £100,867; so that, at the end of 1872, the entire loan, which is payable January, 1882, will be nearly provided for. As before stated, the Government have deposited with the Union Bank debentures as security for this fund, and have, through the Union Bank, opened negotiations with the holders in London of series A. debentures, with a view to exchanging them for debentures so deposited. There is little doubt this will be arranged to a considerable extent, in which case, the debentures so exchanged will be cancelled, and the debt of the colony be so much reduced.

Silver Coin.—Some little time since, the number of copper tokens with which the colony was flooded was the cause of considerable inconvenience, and the Government, in consequence, imported £1,200 worth of bronze coin to supply their place. This sum has been all issued, and the tokens have disappeared. A similar inconvenience is now complained of with regard to the silver coin in circulation—the greater part of which is much worn. The Home authorities have undertaken to deliver new silver at the London Mint, and to receive worn silver at the same establishment, or at any of its branches, at its nominal value in either case. The silver in circulation in Queensland is variously estimated at from £8,000 to £12,000. The Government have requested the Mint authorities to supply them with £8,000 of silver of the different denominations; and they hope, in a short time, to be enabled to replace the worn coin with new, at a comparatively trifling cost to the colony.

I now move, sir—

That a sum not exceeding £130,000 be granted to Her Majesty to defray the expenses of the various departments and services of the colony.

The above sum is one-fourth the total sum asked for in the Estimates, after deducting the schedules, the Governor, Judges, &c., and the interest and sinking fund, which are provided for by special Acts of Parliament.

Mr. STEPHENS said that as the honorable the Colonial Treasurer had that evening given them a somewhat short statement, he presumed that the House might expect to have it in print the next day; and that, therefore, it would be advisable to defer any general discussion on it till then. It appeared to him, however, that the honorable the Treasurer had that evening made a deviation from the ordinary rule, by moving a substantive motion for three months' Supply. The speech was generally made on some unimportant vote, and he thought, therefore, that it would be advisable, if they did not enter into the general question of the whole statement, that they should confine themselves to that one vote. It was the more necessary that they should do so, because they had been told that the Estimates-in-Chief would not be submitted to them at present, and probably not during the present session — that was, if he understood the honorable the Premier correctly.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hear, hear.

Mr. STEPHENS: He would therefore set an example, by confining the remarks he had to make solely to the motion before the House. If the honorable the Colonial Treasurer had simply moved for a lump sum of £120,000, or £130,000, he (Mr. Stephens) should not have made any remarks; but the resolution concluded by stating that the sum asked for was exactly one-fourth of the sum required for 1872. Now, it appeared to him that it was not right to commit the House to the individual items as they stood on the Estimates for that year—nor was it necessary to do so. He remembered that, when he was Treasurer, a vote was taken on one of the items of the previous year, and on which there could be no difference of opinion; but if they now voted exactly one-fourth of the whole Estimates, they would be deprived of a free discussion on several new items which appeared on the Estimates, when they came before them. He thought it would be better, therefore, for the honorable the Treasurer so to alter the resolution as to ask for a lump sum of £130,000 for the first three months of the year, leaving with the Government the responsibility of spending that money as they must do, until the new items had been passed by the committee. He thought that, seeing the committee were inclined to meet them fairly, the Government would accept that responsibility. If the honorable the Treasurer would accede to his suggestion, he would say no more; and if honorable members would follow his example, he did not see why they should not go on with the Elections Bill that evening.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was quite willing to amend the resolution in accord-

ance with the suggestion of the honorable member.

Mr. CRIBB said he noticed that there were several new items on the Estimates, and he wished to have it understood that the Government would not expend any new votes until they had been sanctioned by the committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the honorable member at the head of the Government had already mentioned that it was not the intention of the Government to expend any new votes, except for services of great urgency, such as police maintenance, and other things which would be found absolutely necessary.

The motion was then carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will admit of resolutions of Supply of Ways and Means, and Money Bills being initiated and passed through all their stages in one day.

Mr. KING said he did not rise for the purpose of offering any objection to the motion, but to call attention to what he thought was an inaccuracy in the business paper. He thought that the House having been counted out when the motion was last before it, a fresh motion was necessary, in accordance with the 48th Standing Order, as follows:—

“A question may be superseded, 1. By the adjournment of the House, either on the motion of a member, ‘That the House do now adjourn,’ or on notice being taken, and it appearing that a quorum of members are not present; 2. By a motion ‘That the Orders of the Day be now read’; 3. By the previous question, viz.: ‘That this question be now put,’ being proposed and negatived.”

The SPEAKER thought the honorable member had made a mistake in quoting the Standing Orders, as, in the present instance, the House was guided by the Sessional Orders, according to which the motion was in order.

The motion was agreed to.

TREASURY BILLS BILL.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to authorise the issue of Treasury Bills.

And the COLONIAL TREASURER having presented the Bill, it was subsequently passed through all its stages.

PRECEDENCE OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That during the remainder of the session this session, Government business take precedence of all other business.

The honorable member said he had already intimated to the House, at an earlier hour of

the evening, that it was necessary to pass that resolution in order to get through the business on the paper, and to send the Bills up to the other branch of the Legislature, so that they should be returned with as little delay as possible; and he believed that there would be no objection to it on the part of the House. The Government, in asking that their business should take precedence, did not intend to press on any other measures than the Brands Bill; the Savings Bank Bill, and the Elections Bill; and he thought that after those were disposed of, there would still remain plenty of time to get through some of the private business on the paper.

The motion was carried.