

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 4 JULY 1873

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,

Friday, 4 July, 1873.

Elections Act of 1872 Amendment Bill.—Payment of Members.

ELECTIONS ACT OF 1872 AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. GRIFFITH moved—

That this Bill be now read a third time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, when he agreed to allow this Bill to go into committee, he stated that, if he found it necessary, he would oppose the third reading. Now he had received communications from almost every clerk of petty sessions in the colony, at any rate all who could be got at by telegram, and he found that the longest time any of them required for getting out the voters' rights was thirty days; the time ranged from four to thirty days, and in no instance was a longer period than thirty days required. He therefore felt it his duty to oppose the third reading of the Bill.

Mr. LILLEY : What about Brisbane ?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Six weeks would be required from the time they gave notice, and they could give notice to-morrow. There would be no delay.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he must press the question to a division, so that they might be able, by that means, to see who wished the Elections Act of 1872 to be carried out in its entirety, and who did not. He said in its "entirety" advisedly, because the spirit and intention of the Act would be carried out by passing the Bill now before the House, but the letter of it might be given effect to the other way. They had been told that the reason why the Bill was to be refused was, because it would be possible for the clerks of petty sessions to issue the voters' rights

in thirty days. But he would ask, was it intended that the issuing of these rights was to be the act of an officer of the Government; and was it not to be carried out by the action of the electors themselves? It would appear that they were now given to understand that this matter was to be left in the hands of the clerks of petty sessions, who were to issue the voters' rights, or appoint deputies to issue them. Now he would like to know how many clerks of petty sessions were there who had no politics, or how many deputies might be employed who would have no politics? Suppose, for instance, their political views induced them to call at the residences of their opponents when those opponents were absent from home, the consequence would be, that the electors' rights could not be issued. What would be the result of the operation of the Elections Act, if this Bill were not passed? Instead of it being an Act to prevent personation, and to enable every man who had resided a certain time in the colony to exercise the privilege of the franchise, it would be turned, by an accident of circumstances, into a measure which would deprive half of the population of the colony of the franchise at the next election. He believed that some honorable members had changed their opinions with respect to this Bill, but how they could have done so he could not understand, because the arguments which were valid yesterday-week were just as valid now. Now, the twenty-eighth clause provided:—

“When from the extent of any electoral district or the distance of parts thereof from any clerk of petty sessions it shall appear to the Colonial Secretary impracticable for electors to attend”——

Apply that to the case of Brisbane. Could it be said that from the extent of any of the electorates round about Brisbane, or the distance thereof from any clerk of petty sessions, it was practicable for the electors to attend? That was not the case provided for by the Act. The Act contemplated that there would be one clerk of petty sessions in every district, instead of there being only one of these officers for nine electoral districts containing an aggregate of over 6,000 persons on the rolls. It was a matter of simple arithmetical calculation how long it would take to issue the electors' rights in this particular instance. Considering that each person had first to be identified; that he had then to answer certain questions, and sign his name three times; and that entries had then to be made, he thought that they should allow five minutes for every man, or say about ten to the hour. It should be remembered that there could be no deputy in Brisbane, because there was no power to appoint one, except to visit distant parts of electorates; and, if one were appointed, they might be told that the electors' rights issued by him were void, and the votes, for that reason, might be refused. The man who was to do duty as clerk of petty sessions at Brisbane

had to devote so much of his time to the issuing of voters' rights as would enable him to issue 6,500 within a month, but even by working day and night he could not do so. Ten an hour would give about fifty or sixty a day, and how many working days would it take? About one hundred, and that was twenty weeks, or nearly half a year. It was, therefore, arithmetically shown to be physically impossible for the Act to be carried out in its entirety in the electorates surrounding Brisbane. Was that the intention of the Act? He contended that it was not, and that those honorable members who wished to see the spirit of the Act maintained, and not absolutely violated, and who did not wish to see the elections thrown into the hands of any one man, or one set of men, must support the Bill for the purpose of making this amendment. He did not suggest, nor did he think, that the honorable the Colonial Secretary himself intended to do anything but what was right and fair; but he was convinced that it was impossible to do so, as the case now stood. As to the other persons throughout the colony, he did not give them the same amount of credit. He did not believe that ever a deputy could be found who would do what was right and fair to both sides alike. Such a thing had never yet been found, since persons had been employed for political purposes, and he did not believe it ever would. He maintained it was perfectly monstrous, that after several years' agitation, and after obtaining a re-distribution of electorates, just as a general election was approaching, advantage should be taken of an accidental majority in that House, which did not represent the people, to pervert the course of these elections. It would result in nothing but a total perversion of the elections. He did not blame the honorable the Colonial Secretary personally, but he blamed some other honorable members opposite, who must know the truth, and the conclusiveness of the argument he had adduced; who were at one time satisfied on the point, but who had now changed their views, he supposed, because the honorable the Colonial Secretary told them that the clerks of petty sessions could issue the electors' rights in thirty days. But what right had the clerks of petty sessions to send round these electors' rights, which were to be deposited with them, and for which any elector might apply within twelve months. It was a distinct violation of the spirit of the Act, and as for any temporary advantage which might be gained by it, he did not think it would be much. Although he would not like to see any obstruction to legislature when the new Parliament came in, still it must be obvious to all men, that if, after the elections, it was found that a large proportion of the electorates had been disfranchised, it would be declared by the unanimous voice of the people, that the new Parliament did not represent them, and they would again be

plunged into a struggle similar to that which had now been going on for years. But, it would be a struggle of a much more serious character, because the universal cry of the colony would be that the Parliament had not been fairly elected, and it must be again dissolved. He could look forward to no other means of preventing this most unfortunate result, and these distressing struggles and quarrels for a long time to come, except by the adoption of this Bill. No injury could be done by the passing of the Bill, except the possible risk of personation. He thought he had clearly shown that it would be physically impossible to carry out the arrangements stated by the honorable the Colonial Secretary. The persons who were to discharge the duties of deputies, might be selected on account of some peculiar personal qualification, or, perhaps, for incompetence; or, perhaps, for certain political proclivities; and these would be the persons who would have the conduct of the next elections. The forthcoming general elections were the most important elections that had ever yet taken place, and yet the right of a large portion of the people of the colony to exercise the franchise, would be in the pockets of the honorable the Colonial Secretary, to be issued, not as that honorable gentleman pleased, because he (Mr. Griffith) had no doubt he would hand them over to others, but as pleased the deputies who happened to be selected. He feared the Bill would be lost, but he was convinced that every member on the other side of the House who voted against it, would live to regret the day he did so.

Mr. GRAHAM said, as one of the honorable members of the House who had been referred to by the honorable member for East Moreton, as having to some extent changed their opinions on the subject, he wished to explain the reasons why that change had taken place, so far as he was concerned. When the matter first came under his notice, it appeared to him that the Elections Act could not be carried out, because it would be impossible for the electors to get their voters' rights in time. He believed the feeling of the Government, when the matter was first brought under their notice, was, that the Act could not be repealed or amended with any show of decency, until it had a fair trial, and that if it were possible to work it without any amendment, it was desirable to do so. He thought that opinion was shared by every member, because the House would otherwise stultify itself and acknowledge its own incapacity by having to amend a measure they had passed before it came into operation at all. He believed it was in consequence of the representation made by himself and other honorable members that the Colonial Secretary said he would look further into the matter, and that in the meantime he would consent to the second reading of the Bill, introduced by the honorable member for East Moreton. Since then he (Mr. Graham) had

been convinced, and he believed other honorable members might be convinced if they looked carefully into the matter, that the Act could be worked without the proposed amendment. Whether it was a good Act, and whether it was desirable that voters' rights should be issued at all, was another question altogether. But the House had decided that voters' rights should be issued, and unless there was a wish to repeal the clauses of the Act relating to those rights permanently, he did not see any occasion to suspend these portions of it at the present time. When the rolls were revised, six weeks would be allowed for the issue of voters' rights, and as the Government had power—and the honorable the Colonial Secretary had stated that that power would be exercised wherever there was any difficulty in the clerks of petty sessions issuing them in person, by appointing a sufficient body of men to issue them—he felt satisfied that they would be taking the proper course by carrying out the Act as it now stood.

Mr. KING said, in reference to what the honorable member for Clermont had just stated, he would observe that it was impossible to carry out the Act at the present time, because it allowed twelve months for electors to obtain their voters' rights from the clerks of petty sessions, and the argument of the honorable member was substantially to the effect that unless they obtained these rights in six weeks they would be disfranchised. Only six weeks was to be allowed, while the Act contemplated twelve months, and he maintained that this extraordinary reduction in time was a sufficient reason why the Bill now before the House should be passed. The real opposition to the Bill was, however, patent to every member of the House, and to every elector in the colony. The Elections Act was never intended to be an enfranchising Act, but a measure which, while it pretended to extend the franchise, would in reality reduce it considerably. He was convinced that at the next general election a much smaller number of votes would be polled, notwithstanding the increase in population, and the so-called extension of the franchise, than at the last general election. No attempt had been made to meet the arguments of the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Griffith, with regard to the position in which the electorates about Brisbane would be placed, where one clerk of petty sessions would have to issue voters' rights for eight electorates. The honorable member had shown that it would be perfectly impossible for that officer to issue rights to the whole of the electors on the roll within the time mentioned. If he did nothing else but issue these rights at the rate of twelve an hour, it would take the whole six weeks to get through about one-fourth of the electors on the roll; and under these circumstances one-half or three-fourths of the electors around Brisbane would be disfranchised, simply because they

would not be able to obtain their voters' rights. He would like to know in what districts the deputies were likely to be sent round with these rights. No doubt they would be sent to stations, in order to get all the station hands on the rolls; but in the electorates immediately around Brisbane there were settlements nearly 100 miles from the Court of Petty Sessions. For instance, there were parts of Caboolture and Maroochie about ninety miles from Brisbane by road, and he supposed that electors there were expected to come into Brisbane, to wait for a few days until the clerk of petty sessions could attend to them, and perhaps lose ten days or a fortnight, besides paying the cost of living in Brisbane, to obtain the voters' rights necessary to entitle them to the privilege of voting at the elections. In the district of Wide Bay the voters' rights would be issued by the clerk of petty sessions at Maryborough, although that place was on the outside of the district. Gympie was in the middle of the district, but it was in a separate electorate, and electors on the Upper Mary would have to go past Gympie nearly one hundred miles to Maryborough to get their voters' rights. He believed that this was the very thing intended by the framers of the Act—to place such difficulties in the way of electors getting their voters' rights that they would be disfranchised. He contended that since it was not practicable to allow the twelve months provided by the Act for electors to obtain their voters' rights, they ought to be relieved from the necessity of producing them at the next election, and that the portions of the Act relating to these rights should be suspended. Honorable members opposite might possibly obtain a majority in the next elections by means of a sharp dodge, by disfranchising populous districts, and by a large increase of electors in the outside squatting districts. That had been done, and, in addition to that, another trick of something the same kind was to disfranchise a number of electors in the populous districts, so that the Government might have a chance of sticking in a member here and there in electorates in which, if the elections were fairly conducted, a squatter would never be returned. He was perfectly certain the result would be as the honorable member for East Moreton had said. There was not the slightest possibility—if honorable members opposite obtained a majority by these means—by disfranchising constituencies, by the operation of this Act—of their being able to carry on the Government of the country in peace or quietness. If this Act were carried out in the way it appeared to be intended to enforce it, they were bound to have strong agitation in the new House for a further redistribution of the representation, in order that the Wide Bay and Burnett districts might be fairly represented; and he was satisfied that they would have agitation throughout the colony for another general

election, when the electors would be able to exercise their undoubted right to have a voice in the government of the country. He did not think it was wise on the part of the Government to continue this course. They had already held office for three years by means of fraud, and he thought it was time—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Order.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is certainly out of order in charging members of the Government with fraud.

Mr. KING said he was quite aware of what the ruling of the Speaker would be when the Colonial Secretary called him to order.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I rise to a point of order. The honorable member is getting into the habit of using language insulting to the Chair. He did so last night; and I certainly expected the first thing he would do when the House met to-day would be to apologise for that language; but, instead of doing so, he now seems inclined to repeat it. He ought to be kept in order, sir. He appears to have no idea of apologising.

The SPEAKER: If the House will protect me in trying to maintain order, I will be able to do so.

Mr. LILLEY said it would be as well to look at both sides of the question. He was astonished at the quiet submission of the honorable the Speaker to the direction of the honorable the Colonial Secretary, with respect to his duty. No doubt that honorable gentleman knew his duty, and it was not for the honorable the Colonial Secretary to read him a lecture upon it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I was not reading a lecture.

Mr. KING: If he had said anything offensive to the Chair, it had been called forth by the interference of the honorable the Colonial Secretary with the duty of the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I will not allow any honorable member of this House to interfere with my duty. I have, as far as possible, endeavored to discharge my duty impartially on all occasions, and I will not be dictated to.

Mr. STEPHENS said that was a question upon which every honorable member was able to form his own judgment. In fact, every honorable member was pretty sure to do so, even if he did not express his opinion.

Mr. KING: Well, he thought honorable members opposite ought to be satisfied with having maintained themselves in office for three years by the means—well, by the peculiar means by which they had maintained themselves in power. He thought it would not be advisable for them to continue their manœuvres for another three or five years, but that they ought to rest satisfied with what they had done. If they were wise in time, they would come to the conclusion that the time had now arrived when they should allow the people of the colony to express their opinions freely and independently, and to have a voice in the government of the country, without any attempt to trick

them out of the rights which the law and the constitution intended to confer upon them. The Elections Act was intended, it must be presumed, by the majority of the House, to extend the franchise to the people, who had before been without that privilege; but the manner in which it was proposed to administer that Act by the honorable gentleman who had the control of the Executive power, at this time, was calculated to deprive a large number of persons of the franchise which they had held for years before, and to greatly reduce the number of electors at the next elections. He contended that under these circumstances, if the Ministry were able to carry their point and disfranchise one-half the people of this colony at one blow, when a general election was at hand, they would not gain much by doing so. They would only plunge the colony into a continuation of the struggle in which it had been engaged for years; and from what they had seen of the manner in which the affairs of the colony were now conducted, there could be no doubt that the character of the Ministry would suffer in the eyes of the country if they continued the policy they had adopted. He believed the people of the colony had their eyes open by this time, and they were perfectly well aware that the policy which the present Ministry were holding office to carry out, was one opposed to the interests of the colony at large. They would not, therefore, be disposed to acquiesce quietly in any attempt, by means of a legislative trick, to deprive them of the franchise to which they were entitled. He was perfectly certain that the people of this colony, who were entitled to the privilege of voting by this Act, would support their representatives in the forthcoming Parliament, in making a most determined opposition to every attempt on the part of the Government to maintain the power they now held, by the perpetration of such a fraud on the people of the colony at the next general election.

The question—That the Bill be now read a third time, was then put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 9.	Noes, 16.
Mr. Miles	Mr. Palmer
" King	" Walsh
" Lilley	" Ramsay
" Macalister	" Thompson
" Fyfe	" Bell
" Stephens	" Buchanan
" Griffiths	" Morehead
" Edmondstone	" Wienholt
" Thorn.	" Ferrett
	" Bramston
	" Royds
	" J. Scott
	" W. Scott
	" Graham
	" Clarke
	" Handy.

PAYMENT OF MEMBERS.

On the motion of Mr. GRAHAM, the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole for the consideration of the following resolutions:—

(a) That every Member of the Legislative Assembly shall be entitled to receive, in payment

of his expenses in attending Parliament, the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, together with the sum of one shilling and sixpence per mile for each mile actually travelled by land by the nearest route, and cost of passage per steamer, from and to the place of nomination for his electorate and the place where Parliament may then be sitting; and the same shall be payable out of the Consolidated Revenue to every such Member, from the time of his taking his seat until his resignation thereof, or his retirement by effluxion of time therefrom, or the dissolution of the Parliament, as the case may be; anything in any Act to the contrary notwithstanding. Provided that no member, whilst in receipt out of the Consolidated Revenue of an official salary, or any annual payment, shall (to the amount of such salary or payment) be entitled to receive such reimbursement aforesaid.

(b) That the Act for giving effect to these Resolutions shall commence and take effect on and from the day of the first meeting of Parliament after the general election, now next ensuing, of Members of the Legislative Assembly, and shall continue in force until that Parliament is dissolved.

(c) That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to recommend to this House the necessary appropriation from the Consolidated Revenue for the purpose of a Bill to give effect to the above Resolutions.

Mr. GRAHAM (whose remarks were very indistinctly heard) said, before proceeding to the main question, he would direct the attention of the committee to a slight omission in the first resolution, which he proposed to amend. It now read to the effect that the travelling expenses to be allowed should be one and sixpence per mile for each mile actually travelled by land by the nearest route, and he proposed to insert the words "to any seaport or railway station." Of course, in introducing resolutions of this kind it would be expected that some reasons should be given for their introduction. He thought that was the first step necessary in all legislation; and, with regard to this subject, he thought the debate which took place last session on similar resolutions, and the public statements of candidates at elections and on other occasions, was sufficient proof that something of this kind was required. He believed that the necessity for some such provision was generally admitted by the people of the colony, and, in support of this, he might allude to a large public meeting which was held at Rockhampton in the early part of this session. Although the object of that meeting was not to deal with this question, but to express an opinion with regard to the vote of want of confidence which was moved in the House against the Government, the opportunity was taken to declare as emphatically as possible, not only the approbation of the principle of payment of members, but also the absolute necessity for it, in order that every electorate in the colony might be properly represented. But besides this, Parliament had recently passed two very important measures by means of which

the people of the colony might be better represented in that House—first, the Elections Act of 1872, under which the franchise would be extended to a very much larger number of people than those who previously held it; and second, the Electoral Districts Act, which divided the colony into single electorates, and provided for the return of an additional number of members to the House. The only object of these Acts was that the people of the colony should be better represented than they had been hitherto, and these resolutions would, he believed, materially assist in achieving that result. It had frequently been said before, and he might now repeat, that experience had shown that the system of members paying their own expenses prevented many of the distant electorates from being really represented at all. The people of these electorates might elect members to come to the House under the name of their representatives; but it was only on very rare occasions that they could find men who knew anything of the districts or their requirements, who were able to spare the time and incur the expense of attending the House. In all parts of the country except seaport towns, every man was engaged in getting his living in some shape or form; because, as soon as a man became rich or attained a position of independence, he invariably either left the colony, or came to reside in or near a seaport town. He was aware that there were several objections to this measure, one of which was the expense. Of course that was a reasonable objection, but at the same time, he thought the amount he now proposed to be paid to members was no more than the colony was quite able to bear; and he thought both sides of the House would allow that if the effect of this would be such as to enable electors to elect those they really wished to elect, it would be money well laid out, and of considerable advantage to the country. He would also point out, in answer to another objection, that when England was a comparatively poor country, to some extent like Queensland, the representatives of all electorates were paid, and it was only when the means of locomotion were so much improved, and the safety of travelling was pretty nearly perfect, and when the country was crowded in all its parts by wealthy men from whom the people could choose their representatives, that the system of payment was suspended. He believed that it was the law of the land in England at the present day, but it appeared by custom, more than anything else, to have dropped out of practice. He therefore thought the resolutions he proposed were in their spirit emphatically English. The statement that the payment of the expenses of members would lower the tone of the House, was a mere matter of opinion, and upon that he could only say, as he had said before, that in his opinion, so far from lowering the tone of the House, it would have the effect of raising it considerably. At present

the only men who could come to the House were those who were independent, as far as means were concerned; those who were paid by their constituents; and pure adventurers who had nothing to lose, but everything to gain by having a seat in the House. Substantial residents of inland towns and districts were too much engaged in getting an honest and honorable livelihood, and, perhaps in the making of money, to afford the time or expense of coming down to the House; but by adopting this system they would be able to do so, and electors would have the advantage of being represented by men who resided amongst them; and they would get rid of that objectionable class of adventurers to whom he had referred. That was his argument as to the tone of the House, if resolutions of this kind were carried. He contended, not that it would open the way to an objectionable class, but that it would open the way to the very best class of people in the colony—those who now resided and got their living in the districts they would, in the future, represent. He had made a few trifling alterations in the resolutions previously introduced by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley. In the first place, he had made a verbal alteration, which embodied, to his mind, the best view of the matter, and might render the resolutions somewhat more acceptable. Instead of saying “members of the Assembly shall be entitled to receive for their services,” he put it in the form of payment of expenses. That was the form he had adopted; not that members should be paid for their services in the same way that Ministers were paid for their services to the country, but simply that they should receive such moderate amount for expenses as would enable those to become members who were now prevented, only by want of sufficient means, from coming down from distant parts of the colony to the House. Had he been bringing a measure for payment for services, he would have put down a much larger sum than was mentioned; but this allowance was agreed to last year, and he quite coincided with the view that £150 a-year and travelling allowance would be sufficient to meet the extra expenses of men who were not now in a position to come to the House, although they were perfectly independent so long as they remained at home and attended to their business. He had left out all reference to the Legislative Council—first, because on principle he could not include that body; and secondly, because he believed honorable members of that House were gentlemen of independent means, and that they had a great objection to be included in such resolutions. It would be remembered that a Bill for the payment of members, which was sent up to that Chamber last year, was defeated by a large majority; but he had reason to believe that since that time the subject had been thought over by honorable members of that House, and that they, and also several mem-

bers of this House—and he was certain the greater number of the more intelligent portion of the residents throughout the colony—had come to the conclusion that payment of this kind was absolutely necessary, if the electors in the outside districts were to be placed in a position to elect the men they wished to represent them. He would not detain the House any longer, as the subject had been before them so often, and he would now conclude by moving the resolutions.

The question having been put,

Mr. GRAHAM said, he desired to insert certain words in the resolutions. Was it competent for him to do so, now, that they might be embodied in the Bill which would be founded on the resolutions?

An HONORABLE MEMBER: Put them *se-riatim*.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said, he believed the resolutions would be allowed to pass without a division, and any alteration that the honorable member wished to make could be made in the Bill. He took this opportunity to state that he was as strongly opposed now to payment of members as ever; and he should take the opportunity of dividing the House on the second reading of the Bill. He told honorable members who were pledging the country to this expenditure, that only a night or two ago they were blaming the Government for not reducing the burdens of the people. Honorable members who now supported such a tax as those resolutions involved acted with great inconsistency.

Mr. FYFE said this was the time for legislation. Two years ago, he gave the whole history of the question, as far as was necessary, when he introduced it first to the Queensland Parliament. Now it was taken up by the honorable member for Clermont, who was only an amateur in politics; and, by a side-wind, the question was to be snuffed out. But it was no use: unless the other House were included, the Bill would never pass. Members were not to be bought; and he, representing the largest constituency in the colony, single-handed, maintained that payment of members by the State was the best way to make representatives independent.

Mr. BUCHANAN said that last session he expressed his reasons for dissenting from the principle of the resolutions. He was opposed to it on the ground that it would lead to unnecessary taxation, and that it would have the effect of introducing to the House a lower class of legislators than it was desirable to see representing the people. He should divide the House on the resolutions, though he stood alone.

Mr. FYFE said he disagreed with the honorable member for Warrego, and he hurled back with indignation and defiance the charge that payment of members would bring a lower class of men into the House.

Mr. FERRETT expressed a hope that payment of members would not have the bad

effect predicted. He hoped the honorable member for Rockhampton would weigh his words well: he (Mr. Ferrett) did not wish to see, on any account whatever, a lower class of men in the House than he now saw. When he spoke formerly on this question he opposed it for various reasons. He should not now oppose it, because it came before the House in a different form. The House affirmed the principle once or twice before, and he should never consider it to be his duty to hamper the House by his opposition, or to delay the progress of business because he individually differed in opinion from the majority. The majority had decided against him, and he must now give way.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY observed that the principle of the resolutions had been affirmed by the House, and a Bill founded upon resolutions somewhat similar had been absolutely passed by the Assembly. Therefore, he thought, it was time thrown away to oppose them. He should endorse them now. Retaining, as he did, all the strong objections that he ever had to payment of members, he still felt that payment was necessary to enable the outside districts to be represented, as they ought to be, by residents in them—by men with local interests.

The pleasure of the committee being expressed to that effect, the first resolution was put in the following amended form:—

(a) That every member of the Legislative Assembly shall be entitled to receive, in payment of his expenses in attending Parliament, the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, together with the sum of one shilling and sixpence per mile for each mile actually travelled by land by the nearest route to a sea-port or railway station, and cost of passage per steamer, from and to the place of nomination for his electorate and the place where Parliament may then be sitting; and the same shall be payable out of the Consolidated Revenue to every such member, from the time of his taking his seat until his resignation thereof, or the dissolution of the Parliament, as the case may be; anything in any Act to the contrary notwithstanding. Provided that no member, whilst in receipt out of the Consolidated Revenue of an official salary, or any annual payment, shall (to the amount of such salary or payment) be entitled to receive such reimbursement aforesaid.

Mr. KING observed that the honorable member who had moved the resolution, had given some arguments why members should be paid. He should have given some arguments why such resolutions should have been introduced this session: because it must be perfectly apparent to anyone that the Bill could not pass. He looked upon the question as introduced *pro forma*, in order that certain honorable members might go before their constituents at the general election, with a cry that they were in favor of payment of members. Whilst he (Mr. King) was in favor of payment of members, he was against the half-and-half measure now brought forward. He should support the resolutions,

but with the intention of altering them when the Bill embodying them should come before the House. In his opinion, the amendment introduced by the honorable member for Clermont on the resolutions brought in last session by the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, was a mistake. He considered that if members were to be paid at all, it was for service to the country, and not for the expense they were put to in rendering that service. Why should the expenses and not the individual be paid? The only right or claim that members of Parliament had to be paid was for service rendered. The payment of members was simply analogous to the payment of Ministers of the Crown, who were employed the whole year, and were paid the higher therefor; while other members of Parliament were employed for only a part of their time in the service of the State. If, unhappily, the honorable member for Clermont preferred to state it otherwise in his resolutions, he (Mr. King) should not now take the trouble to divide against it. But it would be better, in all ways, and more consistent with the dignity of the House, that the payment should be made for services rendered in Parliament. The payment should be in reality, not a half-and-half payment, or an insufficient payment. He appealed to the honorable member for Clermont, who was able to tell the House, whether £150 a-year would pay him for coming down from Clermont to attend Parliament during the session? If it would not, then he contended that the resolutions ought to guarantee a sufficient sum to pay members. He appealed both to that honorable member and to the honorable member for Rockhampton, whether the sum named in the resolutions was sufficient: they were paid by their constituents.

Mr. FYFE: They don't pay me.

Mr. KING: They guaranteed to pay the honorable member for Rockhampton, and the honorable member for Clermont was paid, £300 per annum.

Mr. FYFE: I have not got it.

Mr. KING: If that was the case—if the constituents of those honorable members gave, or guaranteed to give, them remuneration at the rate of £300 per annum; and if they subscribed that amount, and considered it was proper for their representatives—

Mr. FYFE: £15 is all I got this session.

Mr. KING: If that was the case, then he considered that £150, as stated in the resolutions, was not enough; unless, perhaps, for the remuneration of such as had been characterised by the honorable member for Clermont as "loafers." He did not think that £150 a-year would induce any man who was carrying on his business in a distant district to leave his business for, say, four months in the year, to come down to the House. In fact, if the Bill should be framed, limiting the payment as proposed, it would simply lessen the expenses of the class of men who were now in the House; it would

not make any change in the constitution of the House. As to the remarks of the Minister for Works about increasing the burdens of the people while demanding a reduction of the taxation, he (Mr. King) held that the payment of members would introduce a class of men into Parliament who would be the most likely to assist materially in reducing the taxation of the country. Under the resolutions, the expenditure would be about £4,000 a-year. At £300 a-year, the payment of members would lead to an expenditure of about £8,000 a year. On the higher scale, the constituencies would be able to have a choice of men; and he ventured to say that if such men sat in the present Parliament they would, this session, have saved the country about £200,000 unnecessary expenditure. The amount of their remuneration would be saved over and over again by such men as would be returned to represent the electorates of the colony if payment of members on a proper scale became the law. The weakest argument that could be adduced against payment of members was, that an inferior class of men would be returned. The choice of representatives would be enlarged, and those who would be returned would be of a class who would reduce expenditure, and therefore recoup the country for their salaries. He hoped that when the Bill was before the House, the honorable member for Clermont would see the desirableness of increasing the payment to a sufficient amount, so that members would not require the amount they received from the State to be supplemented by the contributions of their constituents, or by any contributions whatever. Under present circumstances, there could be no objection made to members of Parliament receiving payment from their constituents; but there was the greatest possible objection to their being paid partly by the State and partly by their constituents. Payment by the State ought to obviate payment by constituents.

Mr. FYFE said nothing could be more dangerous than payment of representatives by their constituents in a manner to influence particular votes. He was the father of the question in this colony, and he introduced it in Victoria in 1855; and he had examined it in every way. He wanted a pledge from the head of the Government that the honorable gentleman would do his best to get the Payment of Members Bill passed by the Upper House. The question would have been adopted three times by the Assembly; and if the honorable gentleman would bring his influence to bear in another place there was a chance of its being passed there.

Mr. EDMONDSTONE said the question had answered its purpose—it had occupied time. To expect that it would get farther appeared to him utter nonsense. A few months ago a Bill for payment of members was rejected by the Upper House. Was there any reason to think honorable gentlemen in another place

had changed their minds, or that they would now turn round and do what they had so recently refused to do? So far as the arguments on the question of payment of members went, he was wholly in favor of it, and he should vote for the resolutions. He agreed with the honorable member for Wide Bay that few men could be found who would care to leave their business to represent their fellow-colonists for the sum named in the resolutions; and he thought that £300 a-year was a small enough amount to ensure the highest objects aimed at by the adoption of the principle of payment of members of Parliament. In fact, he should say it was insufficient. For those reasons he was inclined to vote in favor of a measure similar to that which passed the House last year.

Mr. HEMMANT considered that the House had nothing to do with what might be done in another place. It was not because the Bill was rejected once in another place that it was always to be rejected. There was quite sufficient difference between the measure passed last year and that which it was sought to pass now, to count upon a different decision in the Upper House. Let the principle of payment of members be established, and the present resolutions were sufficient for that. Therefore he should support the resolutions.

Mr. MILES said it was his intention to support the resolutions, because he believed that it was impossible for distant constituencies to get local men to come down four or five hundred miles to represent them without those men received payment for their services. He and others had seen the effects of constituents paying their members, in the telegrams passing to and fro—"Vote for This," and "Vote for That"—and in the undue influence brought to bear upon the action of honorable members and the proceedings of the House. Nothing was more convincing than recent events that the State ought to step in and pay members for their services. Payment of members from the public treasury was the best means of counteracting undue influence with the independence of representatives. He alluded to the honorable members for Clermont and Rockhampton, as he was under the impression that a little pressure from outside had been brought to bear on them.

Mr. FYFE: Not the slightest, as far as he was concerned.

Mr. MILES: It would be a saving to the country to pay members; in illustration of which he pointed to the fact that those who supported the proposal for increasing the expense of the Civil Service were men of wealth.

Mr. FYFE said he should put the telegrams before the House which had been sent to him—because he had been referred to—to show whether a member who was supposed to be paid by his constituents could act independently, as he claimed to have acted. He could think for himself, act for himself, and vote for himself; and, whatever some of

his constituents might feel or fear, from time to time, he could do that which was best for his constituency, and maintain his character as an honest man and a perfectly independent politician. Here was one telegram:—

"Pray support Ministers, to-morrow. Rockhampton depends upon your vote."

Here was another:—

"Funds being collected. Fair prospects cheque by to-day's boat."

Again:—

"Bridge only of small importance. You must not vote against Palmer ———."

HONORABLE MEMBERS on the Opposition benches: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hear, hear.

Mr. FYFE: He was called upon to support the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, on the motion of want of confidence; and told

"Your seat is only safe by so acting."

What did he care? Here was another:—

"You must support Ministry. Don't rely on Opposition doing most for Rockhampton. We are all for Palmer. Wait for his policy, and stick to him. Reply paid."

Again:—

"Public meeting here strongly in favor of Ministry. If you cannot support, do not vote against them. A change of Ministry would be fatal to Rockhampton interests."

Seriously speaking, all those telegrams had no influence over him in the slightest degree. He had represented Rockhampton three years, and he was the "paid" member: his constituents knew how well. He was rich once, and he was poor enough now; but he was independent.

Mr. GRAHAM said that since he had been down that session, he had not received a single telegram from his constituents except on commercial business; so that when the honorable member for Maranoa said a pressure had been brought to bear upon him, he stated what he could not possibly know, and what was not consonant with fact.

Mr. MILES explained that the honorable member for Rockhampton stated that he had paid no attention to the telegrams he received, and so he thought that the honorable member for Clermont might have treated telegrams received by him in the same way. His object in referring to the subject of telegrams at all was to show, that the passing of the resolutions would have the effect of making honorable members more independent, and would prevent them from being bothered with telegrams.

Mr. FERRETT: The honorable member for Maranoa gave as his reason for voting for the Bill, that it would make honorable members more independent of those who sent them to that House; his opinion, however, was, that if a person was sent to that House he was sent to represent his constituents and not to do whatever he thought proper. It was

rather a dangerous doctrine for honorable members to send forth to the public.

Mr. MILES would say again, that any member who was compelled to communicate with his constituents upon every vote he gave, ought not to be in that House. Any member who represented his constituents and who sneaked out of the House at division time, ought not to be there either.

Mr. FERRETT thought the honorable member was out of order. When he went out of the House, it was on business, and he had not time to get back to vote; that was not a matter for the honorable member to comment upon, but he (Mr. Ferrett) could answer his constituents upon that and anything else that he had done.

Mr. KING said, in reference to the telegrams which had been sent to the honorable member for Rockhampton, that honorable member's conduct had been sufficient to show his independence. The rottenness of the whole thing was, that those telegrams were not sent by the constituents who elected the honorable member, but by people who were interested agents of the Government.

Resolution *a* was then put, and the committee divided with the following result:—

Ayes, 12.	Noes, 8.
Mr. Palmer	Mr. Walsh
" Bell	" Wienholt
" Fyfe	" Royds
" Thompson	" W. Scott
" Graham	" Morehead
" Hemmant	" Buchanan
" King	" Clark
" Handy	" Bramston.
" Ferrett	
" Griffith	
Dr. O'Doherty	
Mr. Stephens.	

Mr. KING said in reference to resolution *b*, that he should consider it perfectly consistent in the ensuing Parliament to introduce a measure for the payment of themselves, without having another dissolution, inasmuch as a measure for the payment of members had already been passed in one session by that House, and had now been again affirmed. Should he be in the next House, he should take the opportunity of expressing the same opinion.

Resolutions *b* and *c* were passed.

The House resumed, and the Chairman reported the resolutions to the House.

Mr. GRAHAM moved—

That the resolutions as reported by the Committee be adopted.

The motion was put and carried.