

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 11 MAY 1875**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, 11 May, 1875.*

Difficulties of Travelling.—Alienation of Crown Lands Act Amendment Bill.—Presentation of Petitions.—Supply (The Financial Statement).—Matrimonial Causes Bill.

## DIFFICULTIES OF TRAVELLING.

Mr. DE SATGE said he would take that, the earliest opportunity he had had, of apologising to his constituents for his absence from the House on the opening of the session. He thought also it was due to honorable members that he should explain briefly to the House the difficulties he and the honorable member for Clermont had found on their way down from that outside district.

The SPEAKER said there was no question before the House.

Mr. DE SATGE said he intended to conclude by moving the adjournment of the House. The honorable member for Clermont and himself had had to fight against almost every description of difficulties in finding their way down, and although they started in plenty of time they were unable to reach Brisbane in time to be present at the opening of the session. He thought this explanation was due to his constituents, and also to the House, and to members on the side of the House upon which he sat; especially as he was debarred from any criticism on the policy of the Government at the present time. He moved that this House do now adjourn.

Mr. C. J. GRAHAM said he also, like the honorable member for Normanby, had been prevented by the elements and the state of the roads in the district which he had the honor to represent, from being present at the opening of the session, and he regretted it very much, because he had thereby lost the opportunity, which he should gladly have taken advantage of, of expressing his views on the policy of the Government as announced in the Opening Speech. He trusted that now they had a Liberal Government in power they would have their roads so much improved, that the means of transit from the important district in which they both resided would be such that they would be able, whatever the state of the weather might be, to reach the House in time to hear His Excellency's Opening Speech.

Question put and negatived.

ALIENATION OF CROWN LANDS ACT  
AMENDMENT BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, in reference to the notice of motion standing in the name of the honorable the Minister for Lands, for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the laws relating to the alienation of Crown lands, that in the absence of that honorable member, and as he understood the honorable the Speaker was prepared to rule that the notice of motion could not be moved by any other Minister, although that course had been adopted in that House before, he wished to withdraw it and give fresh notice of motion,

in his own name, for to-morrow. He thought it was quite right on this occasion to mention that he drew a distinction between orders of the day and notices of motion. There was no doubt with regard to orders of the day, that any member of the Government might move the order, but it was different with regard to notices of motion. He believed members of the Government had been permitted to move notices of motion for each other, but he did not think it was right or exactly consistent with Parliamentary rule, and for that reason he would withdraw the notice given and give notice for to-morrow.

## PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS.

Mr. McILWRAITH presented a petition from William Coote, of Salisbury, setting forth a claim in relation to the industry of sericulture under "*The Encouragement to Native Industries Act of 1869*;" referring to the action taken by the House with reference to such claim during last session; and praying the House to take the premises into consideration, and to permit him to submit proof in reference thereto. He moved—

That the petition be received.

Mr. GROOM moved—

That the petition be read.

Upon the question being put,

Mr. J. SCOTT desired to point out to the Speaker that, if the latter motion was treated as an amendment on the former, and if, upon question put, the amendment was affirmed, the reception of the petition would be impracticable.

Mr. McILWRAITH: If it was consonant with rule, he had no objection to adopt the amendment.

Mr. GROOM: If the honorable member wished, he should withdraw his amendment, on that condition.

The SPEAKER was understood to say, that until the petition was received, it could not be read. It was absolutely necessary that, before it could be read, a motion must be made and seconded, and passed, that it should be read.

Mr. PALMER said, without wishing to impugn the Speaker's ruling, that the practice of the House had been to have a petition read when the reading was called for. How were honorable members to know that a petition ought to be received, until it was read? If the Speaker's ruling was carried out, before the House could ascertain what the petition was, they must receive it.

Mr. GROOM: It had been the invariable rule, as long as he was a member of the House, to have a petition read upon its presentation, if asked for by any honorable member, and to have it read before the question of receiving it was passed.

The SPEAKER said he knew that had been the practice; but, at the same time, he had repeatedly said that it was not in accordance with the Standing Orders and was contrary to

the practice of the House of Commons. He ruled that a petition, before it could be read, must be received; and that a motion must be made, seconded, and carried before it could be read. There were instances of petitions having been received and read, and afterwards removed from the records, being improperly worded.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** The Speaker had a right to put from the chair the motion that the petition be received. Was it to be understood that, if the amendment that the petition be read should be carried, the petition could not be received? That appeared to him to be the effect of the question as put by the Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** No. The way in which he put the motion, that the petition be read, did not, if that motion was negatived, do away with the motion that the petition be received.

**MR. PALMER:** If it was carried as put, it would do away with the original motion.

**THE SPEAKER:** No; the original motion had to be then affirmed or negatived.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** If the amendment was carried, of course the original motion was superseded.

**THE SPEAKER:** I think the honorable member is wrong. The way I put the question is: It has been moved, that the petition be received; since then it has been moved, That the petition be read. If this is carried in the negative or in the affirmative, it is competent then for the original motion to be put. The one precedes, but does not supersede, the other.

**MR. PALMER:** If all the words after "that" in the original motion were left out, the amendment must supersede the original motion. It was a mere point of practice. He was sorry to interpose; but if the Speaker considered further, the honorable gentleman would find that he (Mr. Palmer) was right.

**THE SPEAKER:** Until the motion is put, it is impossible to say whether the petition can be received.

**MR. PALMER** contended that a very dangerous precedent was being laid down.

After further deliberation,

**THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL** directed attention to Standing Order No. 211:—

"Every such petition not containing matter in breach of the privileges of this House, and which, according to the rules or usual practice of this House, can be received, shall be brought to the table by the direction of the Speaker, who shall not allow any debate, or any member to speak upon, or in relation to such petition; but it may be read by the Clerk at the table, if required."

**THE SPEAKER:** I do not gather from that Standing Order, quoted by the Attorney-General, that the petition can be read without a motion; while, on the contrary, I find that, in the House of Commons—and this is one of the instances which have guided me on previous occasions—a petition cannot be read

except upon motion made and question put and passed:—

"Sir J. Pakington rose to present a petition from the House of Assembly of Jamaica, and also a petition from the West India body in this country, complaining of the present position of the colony, owing to the colonial legislation and the British Parliament. The honorable gentleman was stating the purport of the petition, which alleged that the petitioners were under risk of utter ruin, when he was interrupted by cries of 'order' (the rule on presenting petitions being that members may state the purport and the prayer of the petitioners). If he were not allowed to take the usual course, he should move the suspension of the Standing Order, which prohibited unrestricted speaking on the presentation of petitions. [Mr. Roebuck: 'You cannot do that without notice.'] He said he should, then, if further interrupted, move that the petition be read by the Clerk at the table."

Showing that it is the practice of the House of Commons that a motion shall be made. I am quite sure that there are other instances; but I am not aware of their whereabouts to-night. The practice is, that petitions are never read without a motion put and carried. If honorable members will remember that a petition might be sufficient to take up the time of the House for an evening, or even a session, they will see that it is necessary that they shall be in a position to approve or reject a motion that their time shall be taken up by the reading of a petition. There is another case, that my attention has been called to:—

"Mr. Ferrand presented a petition, and was said by Mr. Roebuck to be reading it, under pretence of stating its substance. The Speaker . . . said, that if the honorable member wished the petition read at length, he should move that it be so read by the Clerk at the table."

I cannot see anything in our Standing Orders that allows a departure from that practice.

**MR. PALMER** observed that the question was a new one that had arisen without notice. Perhaps the honorable the Speaker would defer his decision on it. To-night, there was no necessity for his giving his decision, as the amendment was withdrawn. He thought the question was one of some importance, as regarding the new practice laid down; and the Speaker might take a little time to consider his ruling. It would be well to come to a clear understanding.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY** agreed with the honorable member for Port Curtis that it would be as well to come to some arrangement; because the rule now laid down was contrary to the practice of the House. Whatever might be the practice of the House of Commons, if the Legislative Assembly had Standing Orders of their own to justify the usage they had adopted, they were sufficient for the guidance of the House:—

"210. Every member offering to present a petition to the House, not being a petition for a private Bill, or relating to a private Bill before

the House, shall confine himself to a statement of the parties from whom it comes, of the number of signatures attached to it, of the material allegations contained in it, and to the reading of the prayer of such petition."

That was all. It was distinctly laid down. When a member had got the length of offering to present a petition, simply, this followed:—

"Every such petition not containing matter in breach of the privileges of this House, and which, according to the rules or usual practice of this House can be received, shall be brought to the table by the direction of the Speaker, who shall not allow any debate, or any member to speak upon, or in relation to such petition; but it may be read by the Clerk at the table, if required."

So that the reception of a petition did not come in to interfere with the reading of it. He thought that, when the honorable the Speaker had thought about the matter, he would agree that the course pointed out by the Standing Orders was perfectly correct.

Mr. GROOM said that the course pointed out by the Premier was exactly that which had been followed by the predecessors of the honorable the Speaker. When a petition was presented, and a motion made that it be received, any honorable member could get up and ask that it be read, and it was read; and then the motion was put that the petition be received. That was the usage observed up to the other day, when he noticed that the Speaker was inclined to depart from it; and then he made up his mind to raise the question.

The SPEAKER: I admit that that had been the practice, and I said so the other evening. But upon examination I found that it was not what I think should be our practice, and it was not in accordance with the practice of the House of Commons. I took exception to it, and I thought the House concurred in my ruling. I am obliged to the honorable member for Port Curtis for the suggestion he has made, which is a very good one, that I should further consider the matter. Do I understand that the honorable member withdraws his motion?

Mr. GROOM: Yes; because the honorable member for Maranoa offered to withdraw his motion for the present, and to move that the petition be read.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That would get rid of the difficulty.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he should have done it at once willingly, because there was no principle at stake, whether the petition was received or read first.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The principle was, that a petition might contain matter which would lead the House to object to receive it upon hearing it read.

With the permission of the House the original motion was withdrawn; and upon motion made and question put and passed, the petition was first read, and then received.

Mr. MACROSSAN presented a petition from Benjamin Henry Palmer, of Cooktown, store-keeper, alleging sundry grievances and miscarriage of justice in connection with certain criminal proceedings instituted against him at Cooktown, and praying relief. He moved—

That the petition be read by the Clerk.

Question put and passed, and petition read.

Mr. MACROSSAN moved—

That the petition be received.

Mr. GRAHAM rose and said he really expected that the leader of the House would have objected to the reception of the petition. Of all the petitions that had come before the House, this was the most unsuitable to be received. A dissatisfied litigant or an unsuccessful suitor in the Police Court should not appeal to the House for redress, but should go to the proper tribunal. The time of the House would be wholly occupied by such petitions if they received them; and he objected to the motion on that ground alone.

Mr. PALMER said he should simply negative the motion. The honorable gentleman at the head of the Government was the proper person to object to the petition, after he had heard it read.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The objection should have come, first, from the Speaker. The petition had been forwarded to his honorable colleague the Treasurer, who could not well present it; so it was handed over to the honorable member who represented the district in which the petitioner lived. He knew nothing about it. At the same time, he thought every man was entitled to come to the House by petition; and for that reason, he did not desire to object to the reception of the petition. He should take the necessary steps to inquire into the facts alleged in it.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he thought all petitions should be received by the House as a matter of course; and he should vote for the motion.

Question put and passed.

#### SUPPLY.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he did not know, if the House went into committee and the honorable gentleman made his financial statement, and then moved a vote and carried that vote, whether the debate on the financial statement would be thereby stopped. There seemed to be some doubt about the matter. He should, therefore, ask the Treasurer to state to the House that he did not mean to take the debate on the financial statement to-night. Of course, the honorable gentleman was aware that honorable members were quite unprepared to go into the subject.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he had no intention to force on the debate, but simply

proposed to make what was known as the financial statement, to move at the end of it, and to carry, a formal vote—the salary of the Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor. That was the practice, and he was not aware that it touched the rights of honorable members to discuss the financial policy of the Government on a future occasion. He believed that the proper course was, that the general policy of the Government should be discussed on the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair, and not on the motion to vote a sum of money for the service of Her Majesty. It was immaterial to the Government how it was done. They had no idea of stifling discussion upon the financial statement.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he understood that, immediately the Colonial Treasurer obtained from the Committee of Supply a formal vote, he would then move the adjournment of the committee, that the financial statement might be discussed on a future occasion.

The COLONIAL TREASURER and other HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Question put and passed, and the House went into committee.

#### THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Morgan—In making what is known as the financial statement, I do not intend to trouble the House with any remarks of a prefatory nature. I propose, first, to explain to this committee what is the present position of the finances of the colony; secondly, to state in detail what have been the past year's transactions; and, thirdly, what are our prospects for the coming year, and what the Government propose in connection with the finances; and I shall conclude with a general review of the condition of the colony. It will be within the recollection of honorable members that when I last had the pleasure of addressing the Committee of the Whole on this subject, I explained that on the 1st January, last year, about the time that this Government assumed office, the revenue of the colony was in credit to the amount of £367,468 5s. 4d. At the same time that I dealt with that credit balance I showed how it had been created through the transfer of £350,000 from loan to revenue account, by the funding of short dated Treasury bills. During the years, 1866, 1867, and previous years, a series of deficiencies had arisen which had been temporarily provided for by the issue of Treasury bills, which had been renewed from time to time. Those Treasury bills were, I think, properly, under the circumstances of that time, included in the Loan Act of 1872, and permanently added to the funded debt of the colony. And it was in consequence of this transaction that the revenue was in that satisfactory condition on the 1st January, 1874. After providing for interest due at that date, we started with

a credit balance of £240,228 15s. 4d., which honorable members will find if they refer to A in the tables which I have caused to be circulated for the information of honorable members. Of this sum £240,000 was placed to the credit of a separate account, and was specially appropriated for various services which were of such a nature that, under ordinary circumstances, we might properly call upon posterity to share the burden with us. Taking into consideration the manner in which this so-called surplus had its origin, the Government proposed, and the House supported the proposal, not to treat it as ordinary surplus revenue available for the reduction of taxation, but rather to devote it to services of a more permanent nature, which, under ordinary circumstances, are charged against loan. This sum was therefore placed to the credit of a separate account, called the Surplus Revenue Fund, which will be found in Table B. The revenue for 1874 amounted to £1,160,947 15s. 6d., and the expenditure, including the interest due on the 1st January of the present year, to £1,121,710 4s. 1d. leaving, with the balance unappropriated on 1st January, viz., £228 15s. 4d., a credit balance on the transactions of the year of £39,466 6s. 9d.;—that is to say the revenue exceeded the expenditure by this amount. Starting, sir, with this balance of £39,466 6s. 9d., at the beginning of 1875, and bringing the accounts down to the end of the first quarter, the latest date to which the public accounts have been made up, we find that the revenue for the three months ending on the 31st March last, was £285,519 17s.; and the expenditure during the same period was £220,375 3s. 3d.; leaving a credit balance on 31st March of £104,610 10s. 6d. This, honorable members will understand, is what is known as the Consolidated revenue account. We now come to the surplus revenue fund, to which I have previously referred, amounting to £240,000. Of this amount there has been expended, to 31st March last, £130,199 5s. 4d., leaving a credit balance of £109,800 14s. 8d. This the committee will understand is the unexpended portion of what is known as the surplus revenue fund. The following table, C, will enable honorable members to see at a glance what is the position of the loan account:—On the 1st January, 1874, this account was overdrawn to the extent of £340,111 18s. The expenditure from 1st January, 1874, to 31st March, 1875, was £604,988 13s. 8d. Debentures have been sold realising £867,929 19s. 1d., the result being that on the 31st March, 1875, this account was overdrawn £77,170 12s. 7d. Debentures had been sent home shortly before this Government took office, and other debentures have since been sold in the colony, as well as in London; and the full particulars of the transactions will be found in the foot-note to the first page of the tables. It will be seen that debentures to the nominal value of £988,300 have been

sold in this colony and in London, realising the net sum just referred to by me—namely, £867,929 19s. 1d., or an average of £87 15s. per £100 debenture. When the Loan Act of 1872 was passed, it included a provision not usually found in our Loan Acts; this was, that instead of the Government being authorised to issue a certain number of debentures, they were authorised to raise by the sale of debentures a certain specified sum set down in the Loan Act. The debentures, however, bearing only 4 per cent. interest, honorable members will perceive that there must be necessarily a great deficiency between the amount realised on the sale and the nominal amount of the debentures representing the loan. I believe it was the intention of the authors of the Loan Act of 1872 that fresh debentures should be issued to the public until the authorised amount of the loan had been raised; and such is the reading of the Act, showing that such was the intention of its framers. However, after frequent consultations with the Union Bank, more especially with the London branch of the Union Bank, whose management represented in very strong terms to the Government the objection that was entertained by the London Stock Exchange to these depreciation debentures, as they were called, the Government decided, instead of issuing them for sale, to exchange them for debentures of equal value lodged as security in the Government Savings Bank. Accordingly, £150,000 debentures which had been deposited in the Savings Bank of the first issue of the Loan of 1872, were temporarily exchanged for the same amount of depreciation debentures, and disposed of as follows:—Sent to London, £100,000, about two months ago, and no news has yet been received in regard to them. £6,800 worth have been sold in the colony. £15,000 worth were taken by the Savings Bank. The balance in hand amounts to £28,200. The depreciation debentures lodged with the Savings Bank will be replaced by other debentures, so soon as the Loan Bill of the present session is passed. Towards the close of last year, from frequent applications by persons in the colony who were desirous of investing in Queensland debentures, it was thought that a very considerable portion of them would be taken up by persons in this colony or in the adjoining colonies. However, the action of the banks, almost since the beginning of this year, in offering such exorbitant interest on deposits as they are giving, has entirely closed the door against the sale of debentures, unless at such a price as the Government do not feel inclined to let them go at. Of debentures, as I have already said, only £6,800 have been sold, at £90. As the Government are not in any way pressed for funds, they do not feel inclined to make any sacrifice in price simply in consequence of the action of the banks. If

honorable members will look at the next page of the tables, they will see the statement of the Savings Bank account:—The cash balance (exclusive of sums invested), on 31st December, 1873, was £116,289 0s. 10d.; and the receipts from that date to the 31st March, 1875, amount to £650,679 9s. 6d. The disbursements for the fifteen months amount to £588,804 1s. 6d.; leaving a balance, on the 31st March, 1875, of £178,164 8s. 10d. In the foot-note will be seen the manner in which the amount standing to the credit of depositors is invested. In Government Debentures, £401,324; on mortgage, which I may say, is a legacy left from the old Moreton Bay Savings Bank, as our Savings Bank Act does not allow any Savings Bank funds to be lent on mortgage, £3,655; the bank balance being £178,164 8s. 10d. The following table will show at a glance the position of the Trust accounts; and a detailed statement of the various trust fund balances is at the foot—they are all included in the general denomination of Trust accounts—giving a total credit balance of £39,632 4s. In the following table, F, honorable members will see how these various balances are disposed of:—Credit Balances—Consolidated Revenue Account, £104,610; the Surplus Revenue Account, £109,800 14s. 8d.; the Government Savings Bank, £178,164 8s. 10d.; and Trust and other Accounts, £39,632 4s. Against these there is the Loan Account Overdraft, £77,170; leaving the following cash balances:—in the Union Bank, £320,037 5s. 5d.; and in the Bank of Queensland, £35,000. In the Union Bank, London, at the date of the latest advices, when these tables were prepared, there was £170,470, and in Brisbane, nearly £150,000; so that the Government have at their disposal at the present time £355,037. I think, sir, that I have now disposed of the first part of my subject—What is the present position of the finances of the colony?—and the answer is, that at the present time, we have a credit balance of £355,037; and in addition to that we have about £120,000 of debentures not yet realised. In the following table, G, will be found in detail the transactions of the year 1874; in the left-hand column will be found the Budget estimate, which I presented to the House this time last year, and in the right-hand column will be found the sums actually received under each head of revenue. The only items to which I need draw particular attention are the Customs receipts, and revenue from lands and railways, because I think it will be admitted that in each of the other items of revenue my calculations were not very far astray. The total sum which I estimated to receive, under the operation of the old tariff, was £1,223,000, and the actual sum received under the operation of the new tariff, was £1,160,947 15s. 6d., showing a deficiency of a little over £63,000, part of which is due to reduction in taxation, and part to an over-estimate of

revenue. I estimated that the alteration proposed in the tariff would involve a reduction of about £30,000, instead of which it involved a loss of about £40,000. With the experience of the past, I have no hesitation in saying that the original estimate of £540,000 was an excessive one. However, we had enjoyed two or three very prosperous years, and the Customs receipts had increased very rapidly, so that I do not take very much blame to myself, nor do I think the permanent officers of the Customs department are entitled to much blame, for having over-estimated this amount. With regard to the items on the other side—the expenditure—I am not in a position to place before honorable members the same amount of information which I can in reference to revenue, and for this reason:—In the Treasury statements actual facts only are taken into consideration; we deal with expenditure irrespective of the year on account of the service of which the expenditure was voted. For instance, the expenditure of £1,121,710—the actual disbursements from the Treasury during the year 1874 include expenditure on account of 1874, and expenditure on account of votes for 1873, which come in for payment during the first few months of that year; and honorable members, if they look at the foot-note, will see that £67,757 16s. 4d., is included in the total expenditure for 1874, which really belonged to the previous year. However, this in a matter which, so far as the Treasury is concerned, is of no moment whatever; because experience has shown that unexpended votes in one year amount to very much the same as the unexpended votes for the year following. Thus, in 1874, we spent nearly £70,000 on account of 1873; and we spent about £20,000 in excess of this amount in 1875 on account of 1874; so that, as far as the Treasury is concerned, it is a matter of perfect indifference on account of what year the expenditure is incurred. On the following page honorable members will find a comparative statement of the revenue for the years 1873 and 1874, showing the increase and decrease under each head; they will see that in the Customs proper, irrespective of *ad valorem* duties, there is an increase of £45,881 in 1874 over 1873, and I may mention that on the unaltered items in the tariff, there was an actual increase of nine per cent. Now, had there been no alteration in the tariff, it is reasonable to presume, that that increase would have run through all the different items included in that tariff, and, therefore, we should have had an increase of nine per cent. on the collections of the previous year. The collections of the previous year, including *ad valorem* duties, amounted to £480,000, nine per cent. on which would be £43,200, and that would have been the increase which we should, in all probability, have received had there been no alteration in the tariff. The increased estimate was about £60,000, and, as I have previously said,

that was an over-estimate; about £43,000 increase was all we should have received if the tariff had remained unaltered. The increase actually received was only about £5,000, and I think we can fairly attribute the difference between £5,000 and £43,000 to the alteration in the tariff, and we may, therefore, say that the taxpayers have been relieved to the extent of nearly £40,000 by the alteration in the tariff and the reduction of the *ad valorem* duties. The next item of revenue is that arising from land, and it is certainly not so satisfactory as the committee would like to see it; but if honorable members will look at Table I. I think they will see the reason for this. They will see that there has been a gradual but small falling off in the rents on first selections during the past two years, and the reason of that is obvious—there has been no good land open for selection.

HONORABLE MEMBERS on the Ministerial benches: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: And consequently the first year's rents—the new rents—have not kept up as they ought to have done. That is, of course, a matter over which the Government have no control. If the House, or the Parliament I should say, will not offer to selectors facilities for taking up land suitable for the purposes for which they require them, it cannot be expected that the first year's rents will keep up as they ought to do. I have no doubt whatever that if the resumptions which have been carried by this House meet with a more happy fate than their predecessors last session, the estimated revenue under the head of "Lands" this year will be largely exceeded; because it is, I presume, within the knowledge of every honorable member that there is and does exist a very large demand for land for settlement, especially in certain districts. The next item to which I shall refer is Electric Telegraph receipts, which show a small decrease: this may be accounted for entirely by the action which the Government took immediately on entering office, which was to establish a uniform rate of one shilling for messages in every part of the colony; and, I think, in a country like this, where, in many districts, communication is so difficult and so frequently interrupted, anything the Treasury loses in that respect is more than counter-balanced by the general gain to the community. The Railway receipts are more gratifying, showing an increase of £12,000, coupled with a small but actual decrease in the working expenses; and I think that one of the most gratifying features in connection with the railway department. While the gross receipts have increased, the working expenses have not increased, but have shown a very slight decrease. If honorable members turn to the following page, page 5, they will see the receipts and working expenses of our two lines, with the net earnings, or annual loss in connection with both of these

public undertakings; and the only remark I wish to make in regard to this is, that these tables bear out the experience of, I believe, all the other colonies, which is, that short railways do not pay. Until we get our railways some distance into the interior, they are, to a very great extent, "white elephants." The experience of New South Wales and Victoria strongly corroborates this; I remember the Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales, in the last financial statement he made to the Parliament of that colony, particularly pointed out that in the case of every railway line carried into the interior the working expenses per mile decreased, while the revenue increased; and I think that ought to be an encouragement to us to push our railways into the interior.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: It is very evident that short lines of railway are about the very worst undertakings any Government could go into. They require a large departmental staff to work them, and the corresponding advantages are very difficult to find out. Table L will show to honorable members the actual expenditure on account of public works and buildings, roads and bridges, etc., during the last three years, exclusive of departmental expenditure, and exclusive also of railways, to which I shall presently refer. They will see that the actual expenditure during 1872 was £100,551 15s. 0d.; 1873, £185,607 10s. 3d.; and 1874, £234,013 1s. 2d., which was distributed as follows during the last year:—In the southern division, £101,252 4s. 7d.; in the Wide Bay division, £32,858 12s. 1d.; in the central division, £49,085 1s. 11d.; and in the northern division, £50,817 2s. 7d. These sums are for the following services; that is—harbors and rivers, lighthouses, public works and buildings, roads and bridges, and electric telegraphs. Then there is the expenditure for railways, which in 1874 amounted to £380,482 3s. 4d., and in 1873 to £179,430 16s.; giving a total expenditure on public works in 1874 of £614,495 4s. 6d. I think that should be a sufficient answer to those who complain that the Government were not spending money with that rapidity which possibly some constituencies might wish to see, and I am satisfied of this, sir, that if the Government had endeavored to expend, in one year, the whole of the funds placed at their disposal by Parliament, they would have drawn labor from every other occupation in the country, even if that labor had succeeded in carrying it out. I think that will be sufficient to satisfy all honorable members on that point. The unexpended balances of votes for 1874 amount to £96,000, of which £80,000 belongs to the Works department alone; the unexpended votes on surplus revenue account are over £100,000, leaving altogether out of consideration unexpended loan votes. I think it will be admitted

by every honorable member that an expenditure in public works of over £600,000 a-year is quite as much as the colony is justified in going into, without withdrawing labor of all kinds from its ordinary occupations. The next table refers to immigration, undertakings under the Act of 1872, and land orders, which materially affect the Treasury at times because, as the honorable member for Maranba stated, it might disappoint the Treasury if a land sale took place, and instead of money finding its way into the Treasury, it was simply a cancellation of land orders that took place. Table M will show what have been our operations in connection with the immigration system. During 1873, we received 7,599 persons from the United Kingdom and Germany, and during 1874, 9,580; showing an increase of nearly 2,000 persons during the last year. Unfortunately, the proportion of persons who pay their own passages seems steadily to decrease, and I am satisfied that it is not from inability on the part of persons emigrating to pay that this occurs, but from the want of the advantages which the colony holds out to emigrants being properly placed before them. In fact, I have heard it said, as a matter to be taken credit for, that people come out here as free immigrants who are in a position to pay their passages, and persons have been told in England, not by the salaried officials of the Government, but by other persons in England, that if they wanted to come out to Queensland, the best course was to say they were agricultural laborers, and they would get out free. I think, when we are paying such large sums as we are every year for immigration, we are entitled to get a larger number of persons at their own cost. Last year, the proportion of these persons was only seven per cent., while seventy-three per cent. came out entirely at the expense of the country; and I am satisfied that a large number of those ought to have come out as assisted passengers at least, and paid a considerable portion of the cost of their introduction. Honorable members have been informed that it is the intention of the Government to propose a measure for the abolition of land orders, and that proposal, so far as I have been able to learn, appears to meet with universal acceptance. I think, whatever advantages the land order system offered in the earlier days of the colony, when large quantities of land were sold at auction, and there was a demand for land orders on the part of persons desirous of taking up land, at the present time they are not in any degree conducive to immigration. That is the opinion of persons here who are competent to form an opinion on the subject, and I think the sooner we bring the system to a close the better. In consequence of the large number of land orders which have been lately received into the Treasury, the amount we have now to deal with is comparatively trifling. The land orders outstanding on the 31st of March, 1875, amounted to only



£20,955 7s. 11d. Now, with regard to undertakings under the Immigration Act of 1872, they have turned out precisely as I pointed out to the honorable member for Port Curtis, when he introduced them, they would turn out. They are not paid, except when it is to the disadvantage of the Treasury that they should be paid. For instance, a large amount of land is sold at auction, and the purchaser has one month within which to pay the balance of his purchase money. Then every effort is made to find out persons who gave undertakings, and funds are supplied them to redeem their undertakings, and get the land order, which the purchaser is then enabled to hand into the Treasury instead of cash. The undertaking, for perhaps £12, being paid, the Government give a £20 land order, which is handed to a third party, who presents it in payment for land already purchased. That is the practical working of the system. So long as no land is offered at auction in large quantities, no one thinks of paying the undertaking; but directly there is a sale of land, commission agents are set to work, and advertisements are inserted in the newspapers, informing persons who have given undertakings that, on applying to so and so, so much will be given to redeem the undertaking; and the result is that the Treasury receives £12 and issues a £20 land order which is received back again as cash in two or three weeks. I think that was not contemplated when this system was first brought into existence, and I certainly think the sooner we bring the system of land orders and everything connected with them to an end, the better it will be for the country, and better certainly for the finances of the country. Before I conclude the transactions of last year, I must refer to the Supplementary Estimates, which honorable members will find at the end of the Estimates-in-Chief. The amount is £44,456, which has been already expended, as honorable members who have been for some time in the House will understand; and in many instances it arises in this way:—Supposing, for instance, there was the sum of £80,000 for police, voted under several different heads, it very frequently happens that there is a saving under one head, and over expenditure under another. This was the case last year in several departments in the same way. For instance, on re-mount horses, or forage, there might be over-expenditure, but an actual saving perhaps in the Executive branch, or some other branch of the department. The lapsed votes amount to £52,317, and the balances brought forward to £96,839, of which £80,000 is in the Works Department, and these large unexpended balances will fully explain the comparative smallness of the Works estimates for the present year. Honorable members will recollect that the estimates for the Works Department for 1874 were unprecedentedly large; that they reached £300,000, a larger amount than ever

voted before, and the Government by no means intimated their intention of continuing that extraordinary expenditure. The object was, to reduce taxation, and to reduce it in so gradual a manner as not to injure the vested interests of persons who had large stocks lying under the old rates of duty, and it became necessary to appropriate this money in some manner. Consequently a large sum was placed on the Estimates for public works, and £80,000 has, as I have said, been brought forward. And I may mention here, that there are large sums standing to the credit of the Northern and Central divisions, on loan estimate; small sums in the other divisions, but large—a large sum—in the Northern and Central divisions, amounting to £27,875, and the honorable the Minister for Works will shortly give notice of a resolution for the re-appropriation of these votes. I believe he has been in consultation with the members representing these districts, in order that they may be able to appropriate it more advantageously than under the present appropriation. Many of the items are down for purposes for which they are not required, and this amount can be much more beneficially expended if re-appropriated, which it is quite competent for this committee to do, in as much as they form no part of the original Loan Bill, but were simply appropriated by resolution of this House. I may mention that the expenditure for Immigration in 1874 was £132,770, and the arrivals in excess of departures from Great Britain were 8,630, giving an average cost of £15 7s. 5d. per head; and I think that large as these figures are and heavy as is the strain on the resources of the colony by this large expenditure for Immigration, it is much better to look the matter fairly in the face and decide what amount we are prepared to vote annually for this purpose than to endeavor to confuse the question by a complicated system of land orders. If honorable members take into consideration that every immigrant who arrives here is a consumer of dutiable goods alone to the extent of £3 per annum, and that immigrants are introduced at an average annual cost of fifteen shillings only—that being the interest on £15 7s. 5d., I think they will agree with me that that is one of the very best purposes for which we can borrow money. In table N, honorable members will see the manner in which these unexpended balances of the surplus revenue funds stand on the 31st of March, 1875. I do not know that this will be an appropriate time to go into details at any length with regard to the various items embraced under this head. With regard to my own department, I may mention that, in consequence of the unfortunate death of the late Engineer of Harbors and Rivers, works in this branch of the department have to a great extent been brought to a standstill; because I do not feel justified in incurring expenditure of this character without really competent advice. I have seen quite enough of the expenditure

in this department to lead me to the conclusion that we had better pay a really competent man, even £10,000 a year, than have the work carried on as it has been done. Table O shows the debtor and creditor balances in connection with loan account, which requires some little explanation. Honorable members will recollect that during the years 1872, 1873, and 1874 sums amounting to £425,100 were voted by this House on what is called loan estimate. We find that the Government were authorised to expend £425,100 for specific services to be included in the first Loan Bill, and this is a very usual course, because it is not desirable that a Loan Bill should be brought in every year. When it is not considered advisable to introduce a Loan Bill, sums are voted on Loan Estimates, and the Government are authorised to make that expenditure. The debtor balances, in the left-hand column, show that the Government were authorised to expend £425,100, and they expended £224,192 2s. 1d.; and the credit balances, on the right-hand side, which is the unexpended portion of former loans, amount to £306,823 5s. 6d. Honorable members will, perhaps, ask how it is that there is this £306,000 unexpended, when there is a debtor balance on Loan Account of £77,000? It is in this way:—There is an expenditure of £224,192 authorised by Parliament, for which no provision has been made in any Loan Bill, and that is charged against Loan Account. Further, there is depreciation in the loan of 1872, which amounts to about £180,000, for which no provision has been made except in the manner I have previously referred to. On this portion of the subject I will be happy to give any further explanation that honorable members may desire, but I think they will easily understand it. The Government were authorised to spend £425,000; the expenditure on account of this sum was £224,192; depreciation of debentures £180,000, and against these amounts there is £306,823 unexpended loan balances, and depreciation of debentures sold, which brings the credit to about £77,000. I think that closes the second part of the subject;—that is with regard to the transactions of last year, and we now come to the future. In the first table, P, honorable members will see the statement of revenue received in 1874 and estimated for 1875–6, showing the increase and decrease under each head; and I may mention, that in all these comparisons I have taken the whole of 1874, and not the first six months for 1875, and for this reason:—Taking 1874 as the basis, we have actual facts to deal with, and if we took the first six months of 1875, we would be simply taking one estimate to compare it with another. I may also mention, for the information of honorable members who were not in the House last year, that the reason the six months' vote was applied for was with a view of altering the financial year, which was fixed to commence

on the 1st of July and terminate on the 30th of June. Now, the first item is that of Customs, and in this branch I have very considerably cut down the estimate of the Collector of Customs, as I found he had shown rather a too sanguine disposition in 1874. I think his estimate for 1875–6 was at least £20,000 in excess of this; but I consider it is better to be on the safe side, and I merely estimate the revenue from this source at £500,000. In Excise there is an increase of about £4,000. With regard to the sale of land, some of the estimates show an increase and some a decrease; there is an increase of £10,578 in auction and selection purchases, and a decrease of £8,774 in purchases of mineral lands; and indeed I may say in reference to this, that unless something unexpected occurs, I doubt that we will receive even the amount estimated, £3,000, because it seems probable that the formation of companies for the taking up of tin and copper selections is pretty well at an end, for the present at all events. The estimate for pre-emptive purchases under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 is set down at £20,000, as against £38,808 received in 1874. This is a purely random estimate: it may be £20,000, or it may be £50,000; there is no means of forming any good idea on the subject. It all depends on the view which the pastoral tenants take of their position. According as they think it to be to their interest or otherwise to make pre-emptive purchases under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, we will get a great deal more or a great deal less. From present applications, however, I think the estimate of £20,000 will be realised. The rents under the Act of 1866 have just come to an end, so that in this item, there is a decrease of £14,361. Under the Acts of 1868 and 1872 there is an estimated increase of £9,087; and, as I said previously, I have no doubt whatever that if the resumptions passed the other evening are agreed to, this estimate will be largely increased. The estimate of rents and assessment of runs shows a considerable increase, £14,081, which is fully warranted by the knowledge the Government have as to what has taken place in this branch. Applications for unwatered runs are not being quite so freely renewed as they were in former times; and I may mention, for the information of the House, that the last sale of unwatered runs realised between £4,000 and £5,000. If these had not been sold the average rent for twenty-one years would have been £1,700, showing a clear annual gain of £2,300 to the colony, if none of them are forfeited. The gold revenue—miners' rights, escort fees, and other receipts—shows a small increase, £2,840; duty stamps, postage, pilot dues, and electric telegraphs, licenses, and other miscellaneous receipts, show in each case a small increase, which I think fully justified by the increase of population and the general prospe-

city of the colony. The estimates of railway receipts stand at £150,000 as compared with £119,377 received last year, and as we may expect to secure some considerable sums from the extension to be opened shortly, I do not think that is an excessive estimate. I may mention that there is an estimated increase of £1,617 in pilotage and light dues, and may inform honorable members that the Navigation Bill, which we spent some time in passing last session, has been referred back for reconsideration on various points of detail, in consequence of objections being taken to some of its provisions by the Board of Trade. I will not occupy the time of the House by going into details of the estimate of expenditure for 1875–6, which is £1,155,835, as against £1,121,710 actually expended in 1874; showing an estimated increase of £34,125. Supposing the Government estimate to be realised, it will leave £77,000 surplus on the transactions of the year, which will be reduced by the payment of such portion of interest on new loans as may come in for payment during that period, and by the payment of such unexpended balances as may be brought forward—the balances to which I have already referred. Portions of the payments on account of last year will come into this year; and, in the same way, portions of the votes of 1875 will go into the following year: but as these amounts are generally just about the same, it makes very little difference whether it is on account of one year or the other. It does not affect the Treasury calculations. I may mention that honorable members will, perhaps, observe that in the annual report of the Board of Education it is stated that they will ask for £120,000 for the service of the present year. Now, the Government do not feel justified in putting such a very large sum as that before Parliament. Although the recommendation of the Board of Education is entitled to some consideration, I think they have taken up rather a peculiar position; and the Government, in placing the estimate before Parliament, do not feel warranted in increasing the vote to £120,000. If we take into consideration that the actual expenditure in 1863 was under £50,000, I cannot see anything to warrant such an extraordinary jump—from £50,000 to £120,000. I believe a very large proportion of this is intended for the erection of new schools, but we know that in the larger towns of the colony, where people are better able to contribute funds for this purpose than people in other parts of the country, schools of a most expensive character are erected and not a single contribution is made by the inhabitants. There are facts which I think the House should be informed of before they think of sanctioning such a heavy expenditure as £120,000, of which I believe no less than £40,000 is intended for new schools. I believe every honorable member will be disposed to accept the statement

that when any Board or department has so large a sum as £100,000 to deal with, it is quite time the institution was placed under the control of a Minister responsible to this House.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Now, in the following tables honorable members will find a comparative statement of the revenues of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, for the year ending the 31st of December, 1874. This statement has been prepared in the Treasury, and I think honorable members will find it useful for reference. I will only call attention to one or two items in it in connection with the alienation of the public estate. Of course, we all know that New South Wales has carried into effect—and very successfully carried into effect—a free trade policy, so far as Customs duties are concerned; but when honorable members consider that in that colony about one-third of the revenue is derived from land, they will pause before adopting such a policy.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: In Victoria the per centage of revenue derived from land is 15, in New South Wales 33, and in Queensland 17. In Victoria taxation proper, that is from Customs, excise, and inland revenue, amounts to £2 5s. 4d. per head; New South Wales, £2 1s. 2d. per head; and Queensland, £3 11s. 9d. per head. I have frequently seen it stated, during the recess, in public newspapers, which, on some subjects, are comparatively well informed, that there are no inducements for persons to emigrate to this colony from the United Kingdom, on account of the overwhelming weight of taxation. Now, it appears from these tables that in Queensland the charge in this respect is £3 11s. 9d. per head, and I was looking the other day at a very instructive paper, published by Mr. Göschén, a late member of the Administration at home—a work on taxation, in which he says that Imperial and local taxation in the United Kingdom amounted in 1869—that was the latest date up to which the figures had been compiled—amounted in that year to £90,000,000, with a population of 30,000,000; so, that in the United Kingdom, where people are much less able to bear heavy taxation than in this country, they are taxed to the extent of £3 per head. In this colony, with the exception of municipal rates, we have no local taxation, and I think that ought to be taken into consideration by writers when they compare the positions of the two countries, and point out that the colony offers no inducements to people to emigrate, above what they enjoy in the home country. Before I proceed to the next table I would like to say a few words in reference to the lean estimates, which honorable members have had in their hands for some days. It will be seen that there is £425,100 for services authorised by this Parliament during the last three sessions; for the continuation

of the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway, and for other services which will be found in detail. There is the depreciation of debentures, to which I have already referred; and immigration, £250,000. I hope the House will see its way to pass this amount, because I think it is far better to establish the system on a proper foundation, and abolish the land-order system, which we have found from experience cannot be successfully carried on in this colony, and which has resulted in the loss of a considerable sum every year. I believe in New Zealand last year the expenditure on account of immigration almost reached, if it did not exceed half-a-million sterling; but I think this sum of £250,000 will last us for the next two years and a-half. I believe if a proper system of lecturing were carried out we would considerably increase the proportion of those who contribute towards the cost of their own passages, and that would enable this vote to last considerably longer than we could otherwise expect. At the present time the expenditure is very large, because as it is the immigrants are confined almost entirely to those who come out at the expense of the Government. Under the head of railways, I would like to say a few words. The first item it will, perhaps, be better to discuss when the Continental Railway Bill comes under the consideration of the House. It is proposed that the sum of £250,000 shall be advanced under that Bill, and I may explain that, if the Bill is carried, the plans and all information are ready to be placed on the table of the House, and this sum will enable the Government to call for tenders for 60 or 70 miles of the line, in anticipation of the sales of land, which will not come into operation until next year, in consequence of notice having to be given to each pastoral lessee who may be affected by the proposed Bill. The next item is £25,000 for the completion of the Brisbane and Ipswich line. Now, I have no doubt honorable members were under the impression that we had heard the last of this Brisbane and Ipswich line; but the fact that the Government have now to come down and ask for an additional vote of £25,000, when they, last session, had to ask for an additional £203,000, and the original estimate was only £192,000, should, I think, be sufficient to justify the House in refusing to carry out railways until they have had accurate and definite information as to what the ultimate cost will be.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am sure it was the impression, although I believe the gentleman who was then Minister for Works, Mr. Walsh, has declared that the estimate he gave was not given as the final cost—I am not going to cavil about that—but I am sure every honorable member who was in the House at the time believed it was asked for the completion of the line, and the money was voted accordingly; but the ultimate cost,

when all the accounts come in and are paid, will be nearly £450,000, instead of £192,000. In connection with this I should like to say a word with reference to the railway from Warwick to Stanthorpe. This is a railway in which the Government thoroughly believe. We believe it is one of the lines which forms part of our general railway system; we believe that we ought to extend railway communication to the borders of New South Wales. There is a traffic of something like 100 tons a week coming down from the tin mines, besides considerable return traffic in the shape of supplies for the tin mines and the surrounding country; and we believe that, if this line were carried out, we would also get considerable traffic from New England and the north-western parts of New South Wales. But while the Government thoroughly believe that this is one of the railways that should be undertaken, they are not in a position to ask for a vote for that purpose this session, because the nature of the country, through which the proposed railway would pass, is of such a broken character, that any error in the survey, or want of complete surveys, might involve the country in unnecessary expenditure in the construction of the line of hundreds and thousands of pounds. The Government are going on with the survey of that line, and I wish the House explicitly to understand that, although the Government do not feel warranted in recommending the work at the present time, it will by no means be allowed to drop out of their programme. It is only postponed until we can bring before the House an estimate we will be prepared to adopt, and to ask the House to adopt. The next item is:—Railway from Maryborough to Gympie, fifty-six miles, at £2,000 per mile. It will be in the recollection of honorable members, that last session the honorable member for Aubigny moved for a select committee to inquire into and report upon the best means of constructing cheap lines of railway or tramway; and that committee recommended that an experiment should be made, leaving it to the discretion of the Government to select some suitable spot, subject, of course, to the approval of the Parliament. The Government believe that there are peculiarities in the Wide Bay District, which specially fit it for the adoption of such an experiment. The quantity and cheapness of timber there is one of the circumstances which justify the Government in asking the House to select this particular district as suitable for the purpose of experimenting in this way. I have no hesitation in saying for myself, Mr. Morgan, that I very much question that railways can be constructed in this colony for £2,000 per mile; but at the same time, gentlemen who are better qualified to form an opinion on the subject than I am, are perfectly satisfied that railways in that particular district can be constructed for even less than the amount asked for. And I think the House will agree with me that if

the problem be solved, and it is found that we can construct cheap lines of railway with moderate speed, the railway question will assume quite a new phase in the colony. If we are to have railways extended throughout the colony, and we cannot have them constructed at a less rate than £10,000 and £12,000 a-mile, which has been the cost of the majority of our railways, it will preclude residents in many parts of the colony, whose claims to railway communication ought to receive some consideration at the hands of this House, from receiving that consideration; it would be entirely precluded by the cost. The other items I need not refer to; they will be fully discussed when the loan estimate is properly before the House. I am glad to see the honorable member for Rockhampton present, because I may state, with regard to the Northern Railway, that there is an unexpended balance of £236,631 available for the continuation of that line—I say continuation, not completion, because this is another instance of a fallacious estimate. The engineer, Mr. Ballard, leads the Government to believe that, to carry it to the proposed terminus, will require a sum of £203,000, in addition to the sum of £180,000 originally voted by this House. Now, I believe the late Ministry disclaim any responsibility with regard to these estimates, in the same way that they do in regard to the Brisbane and Ipswich line. They say it was not an estimate of total cost, but simply an approximate vote on account. But without taking up the time of the committee by going further into that question, the fact remains that the engineer will require over £200,000 before the Great Northern line can be carried to its Parliamentary limits. However, there is no necessity for making provision for that during the present session, because, at the rate of expenditure that has been going on during the last year, £11,000 a month, the funds available will last over twenty months. Now, if honorable members will look at the next table, R, they will see what has been the addition to our population, and the sources from which that addition has been derived. The tables will be available for future reference, and the only point to which I would especially draw the attention of members at the present time is this:—That, coupled with the large increase of population from the United Kingdom, we have also had a large increase from the neighboring colonies; and I think that fact clearly disproves one of the arguments we very frequently hear against immigration. It has been said that we are simply importing people for the benefit of the other colonies; but whatever may have been done in one isolated year, in last year, apart from the increase of population from the mother country, it has been largely augmented by the excess of arrivals over departures from the southern colonies. Our population was estimated in 1873 at 146,000; and at the end of last year it was estimated at 163,000, showing

about 16,000 as the excess of arrivals over departures, and the increase of births over deaths. I will now call attention of the committee to the following table, S, which shows at a glance what have been our trading transactions since the commencement of the colony; and although I am aware that implicit reliance must not be placed on the Customs statistics, still I think it is of great value as a means of comparison. Honorable members will, perhaps, observe that during the past year our exports have largely increased, not only in comparison with the previous year, but also per head of the population; and this is very noticeable in connection with the export of gold, which rose in one year from £717,540 to £1,356,071, or nearly double. The other items do not call for any special mention. There is a small increase in wool, and a decrease in some other items. There is a large increase in the export of sugar, which is now assuming, and probably next year will assume, very large proportions. From the report of the Inspector of Distilleries, who has just returned from the Mackay district, it appears that the crop is estimated there at something like 5,000 tons for the present season. The imports have risen slightly in value, but have fallen in proportion to population. The imports in 1873 amounted to £18 13s. 6d. per head, and in 1874 to £17 7s. 3d. per head. This will explain to honorable members partially how it is that the Customs receipts have not realised the expectations of this department. It was because their calculations were based upon a continuance of the very large and excessive imports in 1874. At any rate, I think these figures will certainly convince those who are open to conviction, that the position of the colony is thoroughly sound. Here we find that in this country we export £22 19s. 7d. per head, and import only £17 7s. 3d. per head. Now, if honorable members look back to what were the exports in the dark period of this colony, they will find that in 1865 and 1866, we imported as much in one year as we exported in two, and the consequence was an immense amount of over-trading, from which the colony took two or three years to recover. Now, at the present time, although there has been a great deal of internal over-trading, there is no perceptible amount of over-importing, and if there is no over-importing, the question of internal over-trading very soon regulates itself; because, if importers find their stocks more than sufficient to satisfy the demands of legitimate customers, they will not increase them, and there are none of those reckless hazards which are always connected with over-importing. I may mention to the committee a few facts which will be of interest as showing what has been the progress of the colony during the past year, and which will not be found in a collected form in the tables before them. The increase in the value of imports in 1874, as compared with

1873, was £93,881; and the increase of exports, £594,248. The increase in the tonnage of shipping trading to the various parts of the colony was 181,233 tons; the increase in bank deposits, £306,979; and the excess of exports over imports in 1874, £916,234, or about £6 per head. I think that conclusively shows that the population introduced into the colony have found profitable employment in developing the productive resources of the colony. We find that the exports per head have actually increased, notwithstanding the great inducements held out to many to seek employment in the public works of the colony; and I think, sir, when we find the exports per head are holding their own, we may feel perfectly sure we are not carrying out public works to too great an extent. The decrease in the imports during the same period amounted to £1 6s. 3d. per head, which appears to me to show conclusively that we are recovering from the excessive importation which certainly took place in 1872 and 1873, shortly after the discovery of the tin mines, and the rise in the price of wool. I shall now invite the attention of the committee to table T, showing the average liabilities and assets of the banks in the colony of Queensland for the December quarter in each year from 1860 to 1874, and giving the deposits per head of the population. From this it will be seen that while in the years 1864, 1865, and 1866, when large amounts were overdrawn from the banks and reckless speculation of all kinds was going on, deposits ranged from £7 to £8 per head; whilst last year, the deposits rose to £14 11s. per head. Although I know it will be asserted that in the amount of deposits are included large sums belonging to the Government, yet, as a means of comparison between the different years, there can be no force in the objection; because there has always been, in every year for which these returns have been compiled, about the same amount to the credit of the Government; so that it does not enter as a disturbing element into the comparison. The next thing I wish to call the attention of the committee to is very important—and it is about the last—that is, the comparative statement of the assets and liabilities of the banks in four of the colonies; because, I think many honorable members have been, or, at any rate, the public outside of this House has been, led away somewhat by a peculiarity of the banks lately in giving a remarkably high rate of interest for deposits. We know, I believe, that 6½ per cent. has been given for money by the different banks. It might be assumed, or it might be sought to be assumed, from that, that we are on the verge of something very dreadful; but I think these figures will show that the demand for money has not been at all a local demand, forced by the position of this colony. This colony has quite enough money within itself to carry on its own business. What do we find? From this return, we find

that our own deposits are £2,374,823 14s. 10d., in all the banks, and the banks have advanced, that is, they have lent out those deposits and other funds to the extent of £2,680,091 17s. 9d., which, in reality, is only about £305,000 in addition to the deposits which they hold, and against this must be set a note issue, that is, promissory notes issued by the banks to the public to the extent of £351,322. Taking the deposits and the note issue into calculation, the banks have not really made any advance to this colony at all. Let us look at the position of some other colonies; Victoria, for instance, about which we have heard from the honorable member for Maranoa and some other honorable members who have lately visited that colony, and who have not given us a very glowing account of its prosperity. Victoria has only £12,438,586 of deposits, with a total of £16,518,244 advances. If we look at New South Wales, which I think is the next prosperous colony to Queensland, we shall find its position to be very much like our own. There, they have £11,884,957 of deposits, and advances of only £10,685,250. So that it is evident that the demand for money is not a demand for money in either New South Wales or Queensland, but that it is a demand for money caused by over-trading in other colonies—in Victoria and in New Zealand. This is perfectly clear from these figures. New Zealand has a total of deposits in the banks amounting to £4,296,553, including £1,253,196 held on Government account—an item which is not shown separately in the statement of any other colony; and against that, the advances are over £8,000,000. I think these figures should satisfy any persons who are inclined to take a desponding view of this colony, and they also show that we are at a disadvantage in consequence of most of our banking institutions being merely branches of extensive corporations, and of their conduct being regulated, not by the requirements of this colony, but by the necessities of the, to them, more important colonies with which they transact their business. I am justified in saying that they have not, up to the present, restricted commercial facilities in this colony, nor have they increased their rate of discount through giving this ridiculous interest on deposits. I say ridiculous, because I think it is so, that a bank can give six per cent. for money, and lend it out at seven per cent., which is the case at the present time. I have put the question, myself, to several bank managers, "What is the reason you act in this manner?" The answer is, "Well, we do not want our business taken away; other banks give 6 per cent.; we will give the same—anything, rather than lose our business." But we are not suffering from this; because the banks have not raised their charges to customers. If we were in this position, that we were being mulcted, it would not be fair to us; it would not be our

fault, but because other colonies have over-traded. Because other colonies have over-traded, and in order that the banks may replenish their coffers, the banks are obliged to offer the high rates of interest that they are giving for deposits. Now, some honorable members are apprehensive of a crisis, and they made reference to it in the House. I must say that, if we are simply to judge from commercial matters, if commerce were the only interest in the country, I should be very much disposed to agree with them; because there is a large amount of over-trading in the colony. Where there is business for nine importers, there are nineteen to compete for it; where there is business for ten storekeepers, there are twenty to do it. But, still, that is a matter that will rectify itself without any dislocation of the credit of the colony. And, as long as the value and credit of our exports are maintained, I do not see what Queensland has to fear. Of course, if a European war or any disturbing circumstance of that kind occurred, that we could not control or foresee, it would have an effect upon this colony as upon every country in the world. But, as far as our own position is concerned, it appears to me that it is a thoroughly sound one; and all the fears and anticipations that are expressed about our being on the verge of a crisis should be taken as implying a commercial crisis only. Such crises take place about every ten years: after a time, people stretch their credit over much, and a reaction ensues. So long as our own exports maintain their value per head of the population and relatively to our imports, in the way they do now, I do not see that we have, or can have, anything to fear that a crisis will ensue at all like that of 1866; and none such is at hand. I think, sir, that before I sit down it will not be out of place for me to refer briefly to a few facts in connection with the history of the colony for the past year. We have had the important district of Palmer and Cooktown opened up. Cooktown already ranks, if not second—third, certainly—next to Rockhampton in point of importance as a port, and its Customs returns now far surpass Townsville. We have had 567 miles of telegraph opened, and the charges on all messages equalised throughout the colony. We have had mail communication all along the coast improved, and, although there is still room for improvement, more has been effected than was ever done before. We have had the advantages of education extended—45 new schools opened—and, although the expense of the past year has been excessive, yet I do not think, if we take into consideration the advantages that have been conferred by the expenditure, this House will regret it. The average daily attendance of scholars has increased by over 5,000. Taxation has been reduced, a reduction which will be to the extent of over £100,000, by the

reduction of the *ad valorem* duties to 5 per cent. and the abolition of the duties on machinery and salt, and a variety of other similar items. Public works have been vigorously prosecuted, involving an expenditure of over £600,000, far more than was ever dreamt of in the history of the colony before. Although public works have been so vigorously carried on, they have not been so rushed as to take labor from its ordinary avocations. Immigration has been kept up in a steady stream; the new comers have been employed as fast as they arrived; and, instead of their leaving for the other colonies, we find that the other colonies have been sending to us a great many more people than we have sent to them. I think that the general prosperity of the colony is evidenced by the soundness of its producing interests, and that the desire that exists in the public mind generally for the moderate progressive carrying on of our various public works has justified the Government, or will justify them, in asking the House to increase our debt by the addition of another million and a-half. Half-a-million, as I have already pointed out, has been authorised; and we feel justified in asking for another million on loan, which will be expended during the course of the next two years. I shall conclude, Mr. Morgan, by moving—

That there be granted to Her Majesty for the service of the year 1875–6 a sum not exceeding £174, to defray the salary of the Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor.

Mr. PALMER said he had no intention of going into a debate on this subject to-night. The House met at an unusually late hour, and they had a late delivery of the financial statement; and he did not think any honorable members were inclined to discuss it now. In fact, there was a mass of figures put before the committee that it was out of the question to deal with at first sight and hearing. With the perfect understanding that the vote now moved for did not commit honorable members to the financial statement, or interfere with their discussing it on a future occasion, there could be no objection, on the part of the committee, to its passing now. As, of course, they intended to debate the financial statement, honorable members would like to know when it was intended to come forward for Supply again; because, the longer time given the better the opportunity for attack. The Treasurer was old enough as a member of the House to know that, he (Mr. Palmer) presumed; and, also, that it was very important that the debate should be over as soon as possible. Taking the present as merely a formal vote, honorable members on his side of the House had no objection to allow it to pass, on the understanding that the debate should be adjourned.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he quite agreed with the honorable member; but

there was no necessity for adjourning the debate. There was no debate to adjourn. At the same time, the Government had no desire to press their question on the committee. All that they desired was to get on with the business of the country. If the motion of the Colonial Treasurer was agreed to, there would be nothing to prevent the discussion of the financial statement when the House resolved into Committee of Supply again. The Government did not intend to ask the House to go into Committee of Supply before this day week, so that there would be quite time enough for honorable members to prepare themselves on that question. He quite agreed with the suggestion of the honorable member for Port Curtis. Of course, honorable members understood that the financial year concluded at the end of next month, and that it was necessary to do something with the Estimates before that. In the mean time, it was competent for honorable members to discuss the financial policy of the Government to any extent.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the committee had come to a resolution; and, on the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, leave was given for the committee to sit again next week.

#### MATRIMONIAL CAUSES BILL.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill to amend the Matrimonial Causes Jurisdiction Act of 1864. Honorable members would remember, he said, that the Act named came into operation in this colony in the year 1865. When it was passing through Parliament there was some scruple in the minds of honorable members that questions of divorce should not be adjudicated upon by one judge, and accordingly they had to be heard and determined by the full court. The Act was copied from the original English Act, without any of the subsequent improvements that had been made in the law up to that time. For some years there was no divorce business at all; but it so happened that, now, matters were changed; and, if the three judges could not sit, the unfortunate suitor must wait until they would, and the result was a great waste of time. The Bill would amend the Act by empowering the judge ordinary, sitting alone or with any of the other judges of the Supreme Court, to deal with all cases. In other respects, particularly in regard to the reform of marriage settlements, the law would be brought up to the stage in which it was in England at the time the Queensland Act was passed. Honorable members would perceive that the first clause proposed to repeal three sections of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1864—the fourth, fifth, and

fiftieth—and part of the third. Some inconvenience was felt under those unsatisfactory provisions which involved the necessity for two arguments when one would do. The second clause, already explained, gave authority to one judge to determine all matters; not, as now, matters of fact alone. It was further provided that he might direct any matter to be heard by the full court. The third clause provided for an appeal from the judge ordinary:—

“Any party dissatisfied with any judgment decision or order of the judge ordinary may appeal therefrom to the full court in the same manner and within the same times as appeals may for the time being be made from any judgment decision or order of a judge of the said court in its Common Law Jurisdiction.”

The sixth section enacted that where any trial should be had by a jury, it should in the same way as at common law, which would put an end to some extraordinary vagaries that took place; because matrimonial causes were not tried like other cases. The seventh clause was a very important one, and was early introduced in England, as far back as 1860, in the Act 23 and 24 Vic. It was found necessary that decrees in divorce should be decrees *nisi*. As the law stood here, when a petition was presented to the court, a copy of the petition was served on the Attorney-General. Whether it was his duty or not to intervene in a case, he never succeeded in getting any information until it was too late to interfere. There was no doubt whatever, that in some cases there was collusion, and that intervention was desirable. The law ought to be, as in England that the decree should be a decree *nisi*; and that after it was granted, not merely before, the Attorney-General should have the power to intervene, as at any time during the progress of the case. Under the clause, the decree would not be made absolute until after the expiration of three months. This provision would be a very great improvement. The next two clauses were taken from the English statute of 1860, and merely corrected errors that had crept into the original Act. He could not understand why they were not adopted at first. In the ninth clause there was one little variation from the English Act, which read “property settled for the benefit of the children of the marriage or their respective parents,” instead of as he had put it; as in England it had been held that without children the provision had no bearing. Under the circumstances the Bill ought to occupy no time in its consideration. It was urgently needed, to amend a difficult and cumbrous process. The amendments he proposed in the law had been in force in England fifteen years, without any necessity for further alteration.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the Bill was like many others with a legal bearing. He had no



doubt, from what fell from the Attorney-General, that the honorable and learned gentleman was confident in the matter; but he could not help regretting that there were no other legal members present who were in any way competent to criticise the Bill. There were some examples of Bills having been brought in by Attorneys-General who had vouched for their being perfectly harmless, which, it afterwards turned out, introduced new principles of law. That, however, he scarcely apprehended on this occasion. Still, he did not feel any confidence in voting for the second reading of the Bill in the absence of legal criticism. It had been said that there was a tendency in gentlemen connected with the legal profession to monopolise the attention of constituencies; but he thought the present state of the House showed that Parliament was suffering from a dearth in that respect.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY assured his honorable friend, the member for Maryborough, that there was not the slightest danger from this Bill, which was simply, with the variation of a few words, a transcript from the English Act; and it was mainly to give to one judge the power that was now exercised by three. There was nothing in it that he could see which ought to excite any desire for legal criticism. He was quite sure that the honorable member who had just addressed the House could give an opinion upon it quite as well as the most eminent lawyer.

Mr. PALMER: The Colonial Secretary was more complimentary to the honorable member for Maryborough than the honorable member for Maryborough was to him, when the honorable member for Maryborough stated that he regretted no legal member was present competent to criticise the Bill. Whether the honorable member for Maryborough would feel re-assured by the speech of the Colonial Secretary he could not say. For himself, he should like a little more information as to the seventh clause than he had received, as to the power of the Attorney-General to intervene at any time. He supposed the intervention of the Attorney-General was usual; but it would be more satisfactory to hear more about the matter. It appeared to him (Mr. Palmer) that the Attorney-General would have the power either to discourage divorce suits or to stop them altogether.

Mr. GROOM was understood to question the policy of the seventh clause of the Bill.

Mr. J. SCOTT questioned the statement of the honorable and learned gentleman in charge of the Bill, that he could not intervene because he could get no information.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: He could get no information now until it was too late to intervene.

Question put and passed.

Bill committed.