

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 30 MAY 1877

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 30 May, 1877.

Questions.—Formal Business.—Railway Reserves Bill.—
Queensland Fisheries Bill.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past three o'clock.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. MORGAN asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

If the Government have any intention, during the present session, to repeal the 85th clause of the Land Act of 1876?

The PREMIER (Mr. Douglas) replied—

It is not the intention of the Government at present to introduce a Bill repealing the clause referred to.

Mr. JOHN THORN asked the Premier—

Why are not all the receiving officers in the Postal Department in the district of Fassifern paid the usual allowances?

The PREMIER replied—

There is no usual allowance to receiving officers, and they are paid, if at all, in accordance with the amount of duties performed. There are thirty-one paid receiving officers in the colony, with salaries ranging from £6 to £12 per annum, and forty-three unpaid receiving officers of which three are in the district of Fassifern.

Mr. KIDGELL asked the Secretary for Public Works—

1. Has the Secretary for Public Works caused an estimate to be made of the probable cost of works necessary to ensure a permanent water supply for the township and gold field of Gympie?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to place on the Estimates a sum of money for the above purpose?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Thorn) replied—

An approximate estimate has been made for Gympie water supply, and an amount has been placed on Loan Estimates for the purpose, to carry a small five per cent. interest.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

1. Do the present new regulations prohibit lessees of Crown lands under conditional purchase clauses disposing of the timber growing on such lands?

2. If so, have lessees been properly informed by the Crown lands rangers?

The PREMIER replied—

1. The present timber regulations prohibit lessees of Crown lands for pastoral purposes from cutting timber for sale without a license; but there is no restriction on conditional purchasers or homestead selectors cutting and disposing of the timber on their land, which, after their applications are confirmed by the Minister, ceases to be Crown land.

2. It was not considered necessary to inform the Crown land rangers specifically on this point, except in the case of the ranger at Bundaberg.

Mr. McILWRAITH asked the Colonial Secretary—

Whether it is true that on the last voyage of the "Somerset" the usual communication with the vessel was permitted, and passengers, mails, and freights freely interchanged at Townsville, Bowen, and Keppel Bay?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Miles) replied—

Communications have been received from the health officers of the various ports as follows:—

KEPPEL BAY.—Landed from mail steamer "Somerset," mail-bags and one passenger, on

captain's own responsibility, who said his ship was not in quarantine, not having been in Hongkong.

BOWEN.—No personal communication with mail steamer "Somerset"; mail only landed.

TOWNSVILLE.—Mails and one passenger landed from "Somerset."

The instruction given to health officers was to permit mails only to be landed.

FORMAL BUSINESS.

The following resolutions were passed:—

By Mr. BELL—

That there be laid on the table of this House, all papers, reports, and correspondence relating to the resignation of Sub-Inspector Brown of the Native police.

By Mr. STEWART—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, returns of the quantity of colonial wine, sugar, and arrowroot manufactured in the colony in the year ending 31st December, 1876; also, a return of the import and export of the said articles for the same period.

By Mr. THOMPSON—

That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be laid upon the table of this House, the depositions in the case of John Hayes, committed on May 14, at the police court, at Brisbane, on the charge of maliciously wounding a cow.

By Mr. PALMER—

That copies of the report and evidence taken in the case of the immigrant ship "Zamora" be laid upon the table of this House.

By Mr. STEWART—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, plans and surveys of the railway from Toowong to river near Lang Farm; and from Railway station to Queen's Wharf.

RAILWAY RESERVES BILL.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of adjourned debate on the Premier's motion, That this Bill be now read a second time,

Mr. GROOM said, in resuming this debate, he must ask the indulgence of honourable members, as he was not altogether in the best of health, but he should endeavour to make himself clearly understood with reference to the question they were now called upon to consider. He regarded the measure last session as one of great importance, and he looked upon it as of still greater importance at the present time, because when the House was last asked to assent to the Bill they were then making, as it were, a leap in the dark. They had passed a similar measure having reference to one particular district of the colony, and before the House or the country had had any experience of the practical results which would follow from

that measure, they were asked to extend the same principle to the colony at large; and this session they were called upon to assent to the same Bill almost in its entirety; but they had now the advantage of the test sales which had taken place under the Western Railway Act. With the practical result of those sales before them, he said the question at the present moment assumed a very grave and serious character, and that the discussion as to whether or not they should adopt this completely new and novel principle of land legislation in this colony ought not to be arrived at without full and mature deliberation on the part of honourable members. That it was a novel system of land legislation there was no doubt. He did not think the Minister for Lands could find in any of the Australian colonies a precedent to justify him in asking the House to assent to this Bill. The only colony in which there was a semblance of such a system was Victoria, where the land revenue was set apart for certain specific purposes, such as the construction of railways, immigration, and whatever else might be determined upon by the Legislature; but the land there remained under the control of the Minister for Lands for the time being, and was not allotted in the way proposed in the Bill now before the House. Hence he was perfectly justified in saying the principles enunciated in the Bill were completely novel in land legislation. It was perfectly true, as they had been told, that in California about 10,424,000 acres of land had been given away for the construction of railways, and he had no doubt if they were to examine the returns of the Lands Department of the United States, they would find that other large areas had been given away for the same purpose. But he contended that they had no right whatever to go to America in search of a precedent to justify the passing of such a measure as this. America stood alone; it possessed an enormous territory and natural advantages which Australia did not, in the shape of large navigable rivers and inland lakes; and even when considerable areas of land were given away for the construction of public works in the United States, large tracts were reserved as the property of the Government, and the condition was attached, that certain population should be settled on the lands as the lines progressed. But that was very different indeed from the system now introduced by the Minister for Lands. When he (Mr. Groom) gave his assent to the second reading of the Western Railway Bill, which the present Speaker introduced, with his usual ability, he did so because that gentleman strongly urged the advantages that he thought were likely to accrue to the colony from the passing of it; and because he (the Speaker) acted upon a

principle, very different indeed from that in the Bill now before the House. In his plan the Speaker proposed, in setting apart the railway reserve, that there should be a base line taken from Dalby to Roma, that the lands to the extent of fifty miles on either side should be reserved for railway purposes, and the large landed proprietors in the district should share alike the result of the scheme. The honourable gentleman also told them on that occasion that—

“What he proposed to do, if the Bill passed, was to give notice immediately in the Southern newspapers that, on some day to be fixed, a grand land sale would be held of 500,000 or 600,000 acres about Dalby and Roma; and he ventured to say that purchasers and a large amount of capital would be forthcoming from Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia for the purpose of investing in that land.”

He (Mr. Groom) gave his assent to that Bill upon the strength of the representations the honourable the Speaker was pleased to make, and he was sure they were believed by the majority of those members who voted for its second reading. But what had been the actual results from the passing of that measure? The honourable the Minister for Lands had told them, in introducing the Bill, that 130,000 acres of land had been sold, and had realized £223,000; but he did not, at the same time, state how much had been taken up under pre-emptive selection at 10s. per acre; and he (Mr. Groom) apprehended, from the figures quoted, that those selections had not been included, because, having been present at the sale, he was aware that the 130,000 acres were sold to Mr. Dangar, another gentleman, Mr. McLean, and the Scottish Australian Investment Company. The result of the sales that had taken place proved conclusively to his mind the absolute failure of the Western Railway Act, and it was proved in this way: The honourable gentleman who had charge of the Bill had been pleased to address to him a letter a few days ago, in answer to a very respectfully worded petition sent from a number of persons on the Darling Downs, protesting against the sale of the public estate at auction in large areas. The honourable gentleman proposed that 10,000 acres of Yandilla and 11,000 acres of Tummalville land, which he represented as being liable to floods about once or twice in twenty years, should not be offered for selection, but should be sold by auction, and thus fall into the hands of the stationholders; and in reply to that petition he said:—

“The sale of the public estate is authorized by the Legislature for a double purpose—first, in order to encourage settlement and extend the benefits which are likely to arise from the assured possession of freehold landed property;

secondly, in order to obtain the means for carrying out the improvement of the country by the construction of roads, railways, and other necessary public works. Being at present entrusted with the duty of providing for both of these purposes, I do not feel justified in abandoning the manifest advantages which arise from the conversion of a portion of the public estate into a money value."

The particular point in the letter to which he wished to direct attention was, the statement that the Legislature had established the principle of the sale of land by auction to encourage settlement. Now, he would ask that honourable gentleman how many people had been settled on the 130,000 acres that had been sold to the Scottish and Australian Investment Company, and Messrs. McLean, Dangar, Bell, and Tyson? He had not added one soul to the population of the colony, or facilitated settlement in the slightest degree, nor had he caused a single bale of wool to be grown more than had been grown before; and the colony was called upon to pay for a railway for the express purpose of carrying the produce of the gentlemen to whom this land had been sold, and no others. He had no doubt he should be told in the course of the debate that 25,000 acres of land about Roma had been recently selected by some twenty selectors, but before he (Mr. Groom) was satisfied as to whether or not that was an argument in favour of the course adopted by the Government, he should like to see the names of the persons selecting this land, because that, he thought, had a good deal to do with the question. But admitting that 25,000 acres had been taken up, the point at which he wished to arrive was this,—that the honourable gentleman in this Bill, called upon the House and country to assent to a scheme, which was purely his own, for the allocation of lands for the construction of railways based upon the test of sales under the Western Railway Act. He maintained that, judging from the result of the sales at Roma and Jimbour, that Act had, to all intents and purposes, been a perfect failure. He took it that the primary object of land legislation, not only here but in all the other colonies, was the settlement of people upon the land. In other colonies the price and the revenue derived from the sale of land was not so much an object as the settlement of a large population, and he asserted that the present highly favourable position of Victoria had not arisen so much from her rich gold-fields and large population, as from her liberal land legislation; and even New South Wales, rich as that colony was in mineral wealth, would not occupy the position it now stood in, as the most progressive of all the Australian colonies, had it not been for their liberal land legislation. What did they find in that colony at the present time?

The Treasurer a few days ago was able to inform the House that the revenue for the next financial year would exceed £5,000,000 sterling; that the expenditure would be little over £4,000,000, and that they would have a surplus of about £800,000; and that at the end of the financial year they would have accumulated revenue—which could be used for any purpose the House in its wisdom decided upon—of £2,500,000. He had no doubt the Minister for Lands would tell him that this state of affairs had been brought about by sales of land at auction; but that he disputed. He (Mr. Groom) did not make this assertion without having carefully and deliberately gone into the whole question; and he had made himself master of the financial statement of the Treasurer of New South Wales. They should judge of the colony of New South Wales as standing by itself, and then they could apply the same principle to Queensland. New South Wales was a century old; there were thousands of families who had been residing there for many years, and were possessed of the accumulated capital which a century had produced; and when there were sales by auction those persons were able to attend and purchase such land as might be suitable for their purpose. But there was another principle involved. If a wealthy man asked for ten, or fifteen, or twenty thousand acres to be offered at auction, at £1 per acre, the privilege of the selector was in no way infringed upon or invaded. In fact free selection before survey extended over the whole of the territory, and the right of the selector to take up any portion of the land offered at auction continued up to the moment the land was sold. That right was never waived, and therefore they had not only sold large areas, but selection was going on side by side with that system. That was the reason why New South Wales occupied its present position with regard to revenue. Another point was this: In this colony they had, during sixteen years of its existence, passed sixteen Land Acts, and they were now called upon to pass another; while in New South Wales, during the whole of that time, any person settling upon the land knew exactly the conditions and restrictions under which he took it up, and that he would not be interfered with. Recently there had been a short amendment Act passed, rendered necessary by some defects in the present law, shown to exist through the case of *Joachim v. O'Shanassy*; but with that exception New South Wales stood preeminently forward for its fixity of land tenure. There was no disturbing pastoral tenants on the one hand or selectors on the other. Now, under the Western Railway Act, they had thirteen and a-half million of acres of land irrevocably locked up from the public; no ac-

cess whatever could be got to it at the present time, except by sales at auction, but after being offered at auction, if the Minister chose to offer it for selection he could do so at the upset price. It was true that two miles on either side of the line had been reserved for homestead selection; but after the experience of the last three or four months, he did not think the House or the country could expect to see any large homestead selections along the line where malaria had been scattering death and destruction. He, therefore, maintained that his ground was perfectly good when he said that these thirteen and a-half million of acres of land were irrevocably locked up from the use of the public until the House passed a Bill throwing it open for selection in some other way than by sales at auction. Then, what had been the action of the Minister for Lands during the recess? He (the Minister for Lands) stated that, in anticipation of the passing of this Bill, he had given notices of resumption to pastoral lessees; and in many instances such had been the alarm created, that by no kind of computation could he arrive at the amount of capital that had been withdrawn from investment, or the number of labourers who had consequently left the colony. As the honourable member for Maranoa had pointed out, the population of the colony had virtually decreased instead of increased, and this had entirely arisen from continual tinkering on the part of the Legislature with their land laws. On that point there could not be a shadow of doubt. The Minister for Lands had said that the notice of resumption had not driven out any capital, but he was sure no man would invest a single farthing for pastoral purposes, when there was not the slightest security of tenure. It must not be supposed that capitalists were more blind in these colonies than they were at home as to the investment of capital; and when it was known that by this course of procedure the primary security was injured it could not but seriously interfere with investment. He contended that the lands which the honourable the Minister for Lands proposed to create reserves would be just as much locked up as those in the Western Railway Reserve. There was one difference between this Bill and the present Act, and that was, that the privilege of selection was extended to those proposed reserves; but then that was left entirely to the discretion of the Minister for Lands for the time being; and judging from the sort of discretion that gentleman had exercised in some districts, he considered it rather a curse than a blessing. That was the only difference; and it would be unwise on the part of the House at the present time to consent to lock up land from selection as proposed in this Bill.

The PREMIER: It is not locking up.

Mr. GROOM maintained that it was. It might be true that the land would be open to conditional selection whenever the honourable gentleman was pleased to exercise his discretion in that direction; but after their experience of that gentleman's discretion in connection with sales by auction and the manner in which he was flying in the face of public opinion with regard to the lands on the Darling Downs, it was all nonsense to say the lands were open to conditional selection. With reference to one of the proposed reserves in his own district, he (Mr. Groom) protested against it last session, and he protested against it now. The honourable gentleman had shown, in connection with the Southern reserve, a disposition to oppress the Darling Downs particularly. He (Mr. Groom) did not for one moment mean to assert that the extension to Stanthorpe was not a necessary and justifiable work. If they were to have a grand trunk line from Brisbane to Melbourne, no doubt the extension from Warwick in the direction of Stanthorpe would form a link in the chain of connection. But what did the honourable gentleman propose to do? To take land from the Darling Downs to pay for the construction of the line from Warwick to Stanthorpe. And anyone examining the reserve would see that few persons whose land was proposed to be sold would be benefited by the construction of that line. No doubt he should be told that the Darling Downs had a railway already; but most dearly had the Darling Downs to pay to that railway. It was done, no doubt, through blindness and popular ignorance, and he would go so far as to say political expediency, because of all the mischievous Acts ever passed through the House, the Leasing Act of 1866 was the worst. Had the Minister for Lands exercised a wise discretion, he would have kept the Darling Downs until the lands had been settled upon, and then they would not have had one-half the dummying that had taken place, and no doubt the land would have paid for the construction of that line. But the result of the passing of the Leasing Act had been that thousands of acres had passed into the hands of a few persons. The two lines of railway on the Downs had been constructed at a cost of some millions of money, and when it was considered that there were only 847,000 acres of land remaining there unalienated, it was clear that the Government should act as the strictest guardians of that land, and not allow it to escape from their hands except for *bona fide* settlement. He protested against the lands of the Darling Downs being taken to provide for the construction of the Stanthorpe line, because it was an injustice to the people of the Darling Downs, and for this reason: That railway would be of more advantage to the city of Bris-

bane and the commerce and trade of that port than to any other portion of this colony. They were told that it was a national work; that it would attract the trade of New England to the port of Brisbane, and that the Customs would be largely increased; but in that case the proper course was to construct it out of borrowed capital, and not to ask the Darling Downs to pay for the construction of it. Another point which incidentally arose in connection with this was, that before deciding upon the line to Stanthorpe, with a view to its ultimately forming portion of an intercolonial line, they should consult the New South Wales Government as to what point they were likely to approach the border of Queensland. At present there were two routes proposed by different parties,—one by way of Armidale, and the other by way of Inverell; and, if the latter were adopted, probably the branch from this colony should be made from some point on the western line. This still further strengthened his argument with reference to taking the lands of the Darling Downs to make the line from Warwick to Stanthorpe. The honourable member for Kennedy had said, that if the Government would apply the principle proposed in this Bill to all districts of the colony he would not object to it; but it so happened that between Warwick and Stanthorpe there was not sufficient land to pay for the construction of the line, and therefore the Minister had had to fall back upon some other district in order to make it pay. The case would be illustrated in this way:—If the honourable member for East Moreton were to ask for 100,000 acres of land out of the Logan district to pay for the construction of the railway to Sandgate, would the Logan district be pleased? That was in effect what the Minister for Lands proposed to do with the lands of the Darling Downs in connection with the Stanthorpe railway, and on every principle of justice he (Mr. Groom) must oppose it. He believed that the system of locking up the lands of the colony proposed by this Bill was most vicious, and he was satisfied that if the honourable member for Port Curtis had introduced such a measure there would have been no stronger opponent to it than the present Minister for Lands himself. But he (Mr. Groom) would do the honourable member for Port Curtis the justice to say that he would never have come down with such a measure—that he would never have dared to attempt to lock up the lands in the way the Minister for Lands was proposing to do at the present time. It was a species of liberalism with which he did not agree for one moment. He did not wish it to be supposed that in making these remarks he was opposed to the construction of railways; but he said that, with a population of 179,000, to attempt to carry

out gigantic works on the same footing as the other colonies which had large revenues at their disposal, was a matter which deserved serious consideration before they entered upon it. He was quite prepared to go in for railways, to be paid for by borrowed capital, for he maintained that when the lines were constructed that was the proper time to offer the land for sale by auction, or in whatever way the House thought proper. He thought that when such an important Bill as this was brought forward, the constituencies had a right to have a voice in its disposal. There had been dissolutions on questions of minor importance, and when they proposed to lock up such enormous areas and to introduce a new principle for the construction of railways, the voice of the people should certainly be heard upon it. If the majority of the people were in favour of such a scheme, their representatives would have to bow to their decision; but he believed the majority would dissent from it. It was possible that in some districts, where it was put before the people in a plausible way, they would support it, but if stated to them in a plain business-like way he was satisfied that the majority would decide the other way. Looking at the Bill in all its aspects, he could not support the second reading. He believed it contained the embodiment of a policy which would be ruinous to the pastoral, agricultural, and commercial interests of the colony, and he should therefore, give it his determined opposition; and if he could get other honourable members to join him when it got into committee he should endeavour to keep it there. He believed it would be one of the most injurious and ruinous Acts ever assented to.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Mr. Thorn) said he could not allow the remarks of the honourable members for Toowoomba and Maranoa to pass unchallenged. Those honourable members knew perfectly well that the main principle of the Bill was, that the districts benefited by railways should pay for the construction of those railways. He was astonished that the member for Maranoa, who was an advocate for financial separation, should oppose the Bill, because he was convinced that in no other way could the whole colony receive justice except under some such measure. Some opposition had been offered to it because of the alleged failure of the Western Railway Act passed two sessions ago; but he contended that if there was one thing more than another that had been a success, it was that Act. Under the operation of that measure the Government had received a quarter of a million of money for 140,000 or 150,000 acres of land, and they had now at their disposal another quarter of a million, borrowed at five per cent., making in all £500,000, and they would require only a further sum

of £200,000 to complete the line. The total cost of the line would be about £700,000; and he could inform the House that when it was opened to Charley's Creek, which would be in a few months, not only would the traffic at the present rates pay for maintenance, but it would yield probably about four per cent.; and that when it was completed to Dulacca, which he expected would be in about eight or nine months, it would pay from eight to ten per cent. They only required to sell land to the extent of £200,000, and the whole of the remaining land within the reserve would be left for homestead or conditional selection. He might also state that the line, when finished, would be the best line in the colony with the exception of that from Westwood to Blackwater Creek. It would be far superior to the present southern lines. He was astonished to hear honourable members assert that the Western Railway Act had been a failure. The great argument of the honourable member for Port Curtis on a previous occasion was that the lands within the reserve would be frittered away by the Government; that they would sell them for 5s. an acre, or next to nothing; but the facts had proved that the Government had no such intention, having obtained 30s. an acre for the portion of them that had been sold. He had no hesitation in saying that the 3,000,000 acres of land about Mitchell Downs and Roma was excellent land, nearly as good as that which was sold the other day. This Bill would be the means of opening up that vast interior, and would bring in a very handsome revenue indeed. The honourable member for Toowoomba had said that the Bill of last year had driven away capital from the colony, and crippled its pastoral interests. But capitalists and pastoralists knew very well that, under the Pastoral Leases Act, their tenure was only worth six months' notice. He did not believe the honourable member meant what he said in that respect, nor one-half of what he had said in opposition to the present measure. The honourable member had also said that under this Bill the land would be locked up; but if he would look at the seventh section, he would see that the whole of the land would be open to homesteads and conditional purchases. He (Mr. Groom) also said he did not object to railways being made, provided the money was borrowed for the purpose; but the honourable member knew well that it was impossible to make the railways on any other principle than the present. As to consulting the Government of New South Wales on the subject, if they did that, Queensland would have to wait a long time for its railway. As the honourable member for Toowoomba knew, opinions differed in New South Wales as to the direction which their Northern

railway should take. The Premiers held different views: and when Mr. Parkes proposed one route Mr. Robertson opposed it, and *vice versa*. He was astonished that the honourable member should have put that forward as a ground of opposition to the Bill. Even in this colony the same kind of thing prevailed. The former Premier proposed a line of railway on the south bank of the Condamine, and the present Premier on the northern bank of that river. Most of the proposed lines would, he felt certain, return interest on outlay, in addition to paying their working expenses. Indeed there was only one which he was dubious about. It was necessary for this colony to keep abreast of the others in railway construction. In South Australia, with about the same population as Queensland, there were more miles of railway open and in course of construction and sanctioned by the Legislature. That colony had 327 miles of railway open, and 439 in course of construction. In Queensland there were 298 miles open, 156 in course of construction, and 293 asked for under this Bill. The totals were: South Australia, 766 miles; and Queensland 746 miles. He was not astonished at the opposition of the honourable member for Maranoa to this Bill, for that honourable gentleman one day preached one doctrine, and the next day preached something quite different; one day he was a free-trader, and the next a protectionist; now he advocated throwing all the land of the colony open to free selection; afterwards he urged that it should all be locked up. He (Mr. McIlwraith), on joining the Macalister Ministry, had actually, he believed, made it a *sine qua non* that before land should be resumed both Houses should approve of the resumptions.

MR. MCILWRAITH: There is not a word of truth in what the honourable member has said.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that was what he had always been given to understand; and further, he did not believe the honourable member for Maranoa cared a bit for railway construction. All he wanted was to walk over to that (Ministerial) side of the House. The only objection the honourable member for Rockhampton made to the Bill was, that it took land from Peak Downs, while the proposed railway was some distance off. He believed that if the Government proposed a line from Peak Downs in addition to the line westward, that honourable member would vote against the Bill. But that honourable member went in for a suicidal policy for the port of Rockhampton. Indeed he could not fathom his (Mr. Buzacott's) reasons for opposing this measure, seeing that at the same time he was so strong an advocate for financial separation. He had some figures to bring

forward, but would reserve them for another occasion. He hoped the Bill would be assented to.

Mr. PALMER said the House had been favoured by the Secretary for Works with a speech similar to those which he made last year, when he held a still higher position in the ranks of the Government. It was delivered in his usual style. Last session he accused the honourable member for Maranoa with being a partner in Collier and Co., and immediately withdrew the accusation. He now made other accusations against that honourable member, knowing that they were all utterly untrue. Indeed, he seemed to act on the principle of throwing plenty of mud in the hope that some of it might stick. The assertion that the honourable member for Rockhampton would oppose a branch line to Clermont was also most groundless. He (Mr. Buzacott), like all the Northern and Central members, was an advocate for the trunk line to go due West; but that was not a suicidal policy for the port of Rockhampton. Altogether, the speech of the Minister for Works was more like an election speech than anything else; he was so much in the habit of making such groundless assertions, that it was quite unnecessary to waste the time of the House in contradicting them. With respect to this Bill, he might say that he expressed his opinion on the subject at such length last session that it was hardly necessary on this occasion again to go fully into it. He believed that, although the Bill was a slight improvement on that of last session, still it was radically bad in principle. And he should like to know from the Premier, or some other member of the Government, how they intended to prove that their action under the Western Railway Reserves Bill had been so successful as to induce them to carry out the provisions of an almost similar Bill throughout all the other portions of the colony. What had the recent sale done to promote civilization and settlement? That was a question which not one member on the Government side of the House had gone into. He did not himself believe that the mere sales of land would enable the purchasers to grow an extra pound of wool or fatten an extra bullock; and he should like to know how the sale of that land could promote what the Liberal Government and party advocated—or rather, assumed that they were the only advocates of—that they should sell land for the purpose of settling inhabitants upon it. He denied that they were the only supporters of that idea—in fact, the only support they gave it was by their speeches; for when they were called upon to act they did more to prevent settlement than any other Ministry had ever done. What had the recent sales done to promote traffic on the railway

when it was made? The keys of the position had been sold. It was useless to say that there were still millions of acres in that district to be sold; for, as the Premier very well knew, the pick of the land had been sold already, and from its position would prevent other land there from fetching the same price. The sale of that land, as was very well known, had not brought a shilling of what might be termed foreign capital into the colony. The money had been wrung from the pockets of the lessees, who were obliged to save themselves by purchasing the land offered, at almost any price which the Government of the day chose to put upon it. Had they brought foreign capital into the colony by their measure, that would have been a fair pretext for going on with this Bill; but the result of the sales showed conclusively that they had done nothing of the kind. The honourable member for Toowoomba had stated that the action of the Government on the Bill of last session had driven away capital from this colony. The Premier interjected “No, no;” but he (Mr. Palmer) would assert that that statement was strictly correct. The action of the Government during last session and since, in making these enormous resumptions on Peak Downs and other places, had quite frightened away foreign capitalists. What, he might ask, had been the effect of the Pastoral Leases Act carried last session? Had a single station in the Settled Districts been sold since? He did not know of one; and if there had been one he should have known of it. Several, he was aware, were under offer, but none had been actually sold.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Amby Downs.

Mr. PALMER said Amby was not in the Settled Districts. And when there was so little knowledge displayed by the Colonial Secretary—who had lived almost in that district—what could they expect from the Ministry as a whole? What bank had advanced on these properties since the action of last session? It was well known that no bank in the colony would advance on such security as station property at present offered.

The PREMIER: There are plenty of them longing to buy the land.

Mr. McILWRAITH: Ah! Now you have let the cat out of the bag.

Mr. PALMER would repeat, that the Government, by giving notice of these extensive resumptions, without any necessity, had driven away capital from the colony; and not only that, but they had driven away the thews and sinews—the labouring classes. On Peak Downs, where extensive station improvements were being carried out, every man was discharged. No lessees of Crown land with such a tenure of their property could afford to go on making improvements; and the result was as he

had stated. The most extraordinary argument adduced in favour of this Bill was also given by the Secretary for Works, who said that it went very far towards supporting financial separation. He should very much like to know how it did that. The only support it gave to financial separation was, that it took an enormous reserve out of the Peak Downs, through which the railway was not likely to run. It was admitted, with regard to the Stanthorpe line, that there was no land in that district to pay for the construction; but the land must come from some other portion of the colony, which would not be benefited by it. As to the Northern Railway reserve it was well known that there was not sufficient land available in those districts, which would sell for ten shillings an acre, to pay for the construction of a line. Therefore, land must also be chosen from some other portion of the colony which would only be slightly benefited by the work. Indeed, the result of the Act of last year had proved that the ideas of the Government were wrong, and those of the Opposition were right. The Secretary for Works had charged the honourable member for Maranoa with not wishing to see a single mile of railway carried out; but the fact was that if the honourable member for Maranoa had any special desire, it was for the advancement of railway construction, though not on the Government plan. The House was also asked to swallow the whole Government scheme *in globo*. But he would put it to any honourable member whether it was possible, during the next ten years, or any other moderate time, to commence and complete these seven proposed railways. Where was the labour to come from? At present there were only two lines in course of construction, but the contractors on the Dalby extension had found the greatest difficulty in getting labour; and now the works were nearly at a standstill. On the Northern line, notwithstanding Mr. Ballard's efforts, which were really praiseworthy, the works had not made that progress which might have been expected had labour been at all plentiful. In fact, unless the Government intended to import Chinese, as was done in America, he failed to see how they could get labour to carry on these seven proposed railways. The expense of getting navvies from England would be too frightful for the House to contemplate. His opinion was that if the House sanctioned the measure the only line which would be carried out would be that for which the Secretary for Lands owed his seat, namely, the line from Maryborough to Gympie,—the others might wait for years. As to consulting with the New South Wales Government as to where the trunk line should join, he thought that was absolutely necessary; for they would be bound to connect it with a line

running to the capital of the neighbouring colony, and thence to Melbourne and South Australia. If the line was taken to Stanthorpe, some difficulty would be found in getting it out of Stanthorpe; whereas, by consultation with New South Wales a spot sufficiently near Stanthorpe might be found by which it could be connected with Inverell. He was quite certain that before they sold their land they should build their railways. They should go into the home market for a loan, and only sell the land along the lines in sufficient quantity to pay the interest on the money. That was the policy of the Opposition, and had been so all along. The Government had informed the House that that was also their policy, and that they had not changed. He thought there was a vast deal of difference between their speeches this session and last. The Opposition advocated this policy last session, and the Government advocated the opposite; and now they were told that the Government always advocated the same policy. If so, what did they want with this Bill?—for they already had power to resume whatever land was necessary. No single member of the Opposition had ever objected to the extension of railways; but they objected, and did object, to lumping seven railways together—some of them utterly useless—and saying, "You must take all or none." Each railway should stand on its own merits. No statistics had been adduced to show what were the chances of passengers or traffic on any of the proposed lines. In conclusion, he would simply repeat that if the policy of the Ministry was, as they said, to build railways on loan, this Bill was totally unnecessary, and he should therefore vote against it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said his opinions on this subject had been placed before the House last session, and he simply rose at present to reply to certain objections that had been made by preceding speakers. The honourable member for Maranoa had introduced his name in regard to certain remarks he had made while in Victoria, to a number of gentlemen interested in pastoral pursuits in Queensland, and it might be inferred from what that honourable member had said, that he (the Colonial Treasurer) took advantage of his presence in Melbourne to appear as an advocate of the political opinions of the present Government. The simple fact was, that the gentlemen in Victoria to whom he referred were desirous of having some explanation by a member of the Government concerning a measure of such very great importance to them, and accordingly he pointed out that, as the records of the House would show, last year his colleague, the Minister for Lands, expressed a desire to deal with an area less than the whole of the runs resumed, which intention

was frustrated chiefly by the action of the Opposition. The honourable member for Maranoa then proceeded to ask, Why, if the Government were sincere in their intentions last year, proceed with the resumption at all? He might have gone further, and asked, Why introduce the Bill in its present shape? The Attorney-General had answered the question about resumptions, and as to the introduction of the Bill in its present shape, he might say that with some alterations of phraseology, it was the same as that modelled by the Legislature last session. As to the feeling outside the colony, there was no doubt that a very large amount of dismay and mistrust prevailed amongst pastoral lessees as to the intentions of the Government under this Bill, chiefly owing to the very large amount of land which was proposed to be brought under its administration. He was free to confess that a more moderate scope would have given the Bill a more equitable appearance. He was no party to any policy of spoliation, or anything that would interfere unnecessarily with the pastoral interests of the colony; but the honourable member for Maranoa had twitted the Government with not having thrown open a larger area of land during the past two years; so that it was unjust to charge the Government with too great a desire to throw open too large an amount of territory. He was also of opinion that free selection—the panacea to quiet the apprehensions of pastoral tenants and others connected with pastoral enterprise, suggested by the honourable member for Maranoa—would be far more prejudicial to the pastoral interests than the resumption contemplated by the Government. As to the Western Railway Bill, he contended that, in a financial point of view, it had been a success. It was not introduced as a means of settling the country with a large number of homestead selections, but simply as a measure by which funds could be raised for the construction of a certain public work. The result was, that an area of land had been sold at a higher price than had ever before been realized in the colony for country lands; and the Treasury had been so amply replenished by these sales as to pay for the construction of the work up to the present time, and leave the loan of a quarter of a million at the disposal of the Treasurer. It had been said by some honourable members that the 130,000 acres sold was the whole of the valuable land in a reserve comprising 15,000,000 of acres. It might be the very best; but he had travelled over a large portion of Australia for nothing if out of so large an area no more than 130,000 acres of really good land could be found. If the representations of those honourable members were correct, how came

it that 26,000 acres in the Roma town reserve should have been so eagerly seized at for £1 per acre? His own belief was that there was still a very large area of good land remaining, which would realize a high price and attract settlement. Similar statements had formerly been made with regard to the salt-bush plains of the Wimmera in Victoria; and yet, now, in the mallee scrub, at one time considered a very uninviting country, there were farms and flour mills, and a large settled population. Doubtless this despised territory in Queensland would, in course of time, be found to possess many good qualities which would render it suitable for settlement. There was a large margin at any rate between the 15,000,000 of acres constituting the Western Railway reserve and the paltry 130,000 acres which had been alienated, and which honourable members opposite had so assiduously stated embraced the whole available area of good land within that reserve that would at all tend to induce settlement. He for one declined to accept such a statement, and thought members should be very chary in asserting to the world that the good available land of the country was so limited. To make such assertions was anything but patriotic. They were assertions that would be most eagerly seized by the immigration lecturers of other colonies, and would tend to divert the stream of immigration which the colony had paid such large sums of money to secure.

Mr. PALMER: Who made the statement?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the honourable member for Maranoa had stated that after the 130,000 acres had been secured there were not another 100 acres in the 15,000,000 of reserve equal in quality to that which had been alienated. He at any rate declined to receive such a statement, and it was not for the good of the colony that it should be repeated.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he wished to explain that he never made the statements attributed to him by the honourable gentleman. What he said was, that the 130,000 acres comprised the very best land in the reserve.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that the honourable member could not deny that the effect of his speech was, that there was very little available land left in the reserve that was worth possessing, and he (Mr. Dickson) was very glad now to find that the honourable member was showing that he was willing to reconsider the matter. The honourable member, who was the most fertile objector to the Bill, said that the manner in which the Government proposed to divert a portion of the revenue from the general consolidated revenue, by dealing with the land proceeds within the reserve districts, was reprehensible; and the honourable member gave an illustration of a man of

fixed income who did not keep his expenditure within his income. The illustration, however, was not an apposite one, because a person of limited income could not, like a State, retrench and expand his income to suit circumstances. A better illustration would have been that of a person paying annual rent, who, after a time, finding himself in no better position than he was in before, put by a sum periodically, with the view of ultimately acquiring the fee-simple of the property he occupied. The colony was paying interest upon the public works which they were constantly initiating, and at the end of the year they were no better off than at the beginning; whereas, by allocating a small portion of their annual revenue from the sale of lands, they would provide for ultimately discharging the accumulated liability upon works. To his mind it was one of the chief merits of the Bill, that by degrees, and interfering meanwhile to no great extent with Treasury arrangements, they made provision for interest and all other incidental charges connected with the construction of railways, and ultimately provided a fund whereby the charges themselves might be extinguished. The honourable gentleman referred to the railways of other colonies, and said that in New South Wales they had not made such a use of their land fund, as would prevent them going into the English market to borrow. The honourable gentleman was generally very correct in his statements, but in this instance he had failed to make full enquiry, because, out of loans which New South Wales had authorized to the extent of sixteen millions, only thirteen millions had been raised, and the balance of nearly three-and-a-half millions represented the accumulated proceeds of land sales, which the Treasurer of that colony admitted had been employed for purposes which were usually provided for out of loans; and on account of having such large balances in hand, they had postponed borrowing for a certain time. That was a very satisfactory position to be in, and he only wished that in Queensland they had such large land sale balances as would enable them to defer the loan which they were periodically putting forward. The honourable member for Rockhampton had devoted a good deal of consideration to this measure, and he looked at it from the view, not exactly of financial separation, but from his own standpoint. The honourable member's plan was, the withdrawal of a territorial fund—the proceeds of real estate—from Consolidated Revenue. This was, in short, the proposition the honourable member submitted to the House the other night; but it would not be difficult to show that, if carried into effect, it would embarrass instead of assist the Treasury.

The honourable member started with the abstraction from Consolidated Revenue of the entire proceeds of the alienation of Crown lands, and in that he was correct. But the honourable member proceeded still further to assume that the pastoral rentals should also form a portion of his territorial fund. To that he (the Colonial Treasurer) objected. The pastoral rentals were the usufruct of our great landed estate, and in such light must be regarded as clear annual income. He would, however, go so far as to say, that the principle embodied in the honourable gentleman's remarks was thoroughly sound,—the principle, namely, that there should be kept, separate and apart, from the very existence of the colony, the proceeds accruing from the alienation of real estates, and these should be devoted to public works, immigration, and the payment of the interest on the public debt. So far he went with the honourable member for Rockhampton; but dissented from his incorporating in his territorial fund the proceeds of the pastoral rentals, which, he would again maintain, should be treated as pure annual income. In the calculation he had made, the honourable member had taken one year by which to illustrate his theory, and he contrived to show a deficiency of £28,000; but it was well known that in all financial experiments something more than the operation of one year was required. Facts and figures used by way of illustration should be collated from and compared with several periods. In order to work out the honourable gentleman's illustration upon this principle, he (the Colonial Treasurer) had tabulated the figures from 1868, which, being the year in which the great Land Act of the colony came into operation, would be a fair date from which to commence dealing with the proceeds of land. Assuming, then, this territorial fund to be formed in the manner suggested by the honourable member for Rockhampton, and started in 1868, the result would be: Total amount of net railway receipts, £261,522; land revenue, £1,793,800; so that from these two sources the territorial fund would receive £2,055,000. On the other side of the account there would be: Paid out of revenue, £825,000 for public works; for immigration, £266,000; interest on public debt, £2,527,900; which three items showed a charge of £3,620,000 as against £2,055,000. This was exclusive of pastoral rents. Assuming, therefore, that the territorial fund had been established at that time, the consolidated fund would have shown a deficiency of £1,600,000; but assuming that the pastoral rentals had been included, the position of the colony would still have been £450,000 to the bad. Therefore, while he agreed that the proceeds of the alienation of real estate should be allocated to public works, immigration, and

the payment of the interest on our public debt, the honourable gentleman's proposition would go much too far, and tend to introduce a most embarrassing element in the Treasurer's financial position. He could hardly understand how the honourable member for Rockhampton, holding the views that he had enunciated, could be opposed to the principle of this Bill, which affirmed a principle the same as his own, though developed in a minor degree. The principle was to allocate a portion of the land revenue to public works, whereby it formed the least disturbing element in the Colonial Treasurer's position. That was one of the most beneficial principles of this Bill. The withdrawal of the pastoral rents was of such a gradual character that it would not disturb the position of the Colonial Treasurer; all financial measures of a tentative character ought to be introduced as gradually as possible—all transitions or revolutions in finance were highly objectionable. He regretted that a territorial fund had not been formed long ago, derived from the proceeds of Crown lands alienated; but the resolutions proposed by the honourable member for Rockhampton were of too sweeping a character to be regarded by any Treasurer with complacency at the present time. There was another point which had been much dwelt upon by honourable members—a point especially deserving the attention of new members of the Legislature,—that this Bill was unnecessary, because it conferred no new powers beyond the previous Act of 1869. There was a very marked difference in the financial aspect of the two Bills. Under the Act of 1869 the rent of pastoral runs where the whole of a run was resumed ceased from the moment of resumption being made; but under the present Bill there was no diminution in the rent till the land was actually sold. How this disturbing element would affect the Treasurer's position appeared from the following facts:—Under the Western Railway Act, out of the area of 15,000,000 acres, the rents were £18,593; the area alienated up to the present time represented 443 square miles, at a rental of 27s. 6d. per mile per annum. Thus the total loss from these alienations amounted to only £609 2s. 6d., while £227,000 had been received into the Treasury by their sale. Again, the railway reserves provided by the Bill before the House showed that the area of 29,000,000 or 30,000,000 of acres under pastoral occupation within such reserves represented a pastoral rent-roll of £20,481. Under the Act of 1869 the whole of that sum would be lost to the Treasury immediately, while under the present Bill only so much would be lost as represented the land actually alienated, and from such alienation a much larger revenue would directly accrue. He thought

this was a very marked feature in the Bill, and, in the Treasurer's point of view, strongly commended itself to his acceptance. To his mind this was one of its most beneficial features—that it proposed this gradual alienation of land and gradual withdrawal from the Treasury of such land revenue. The House had heard a great deal about the loss the colony had sustained from the sale of lands under the Western Railway Bill. Honourable members might have thought, from the expressions made use of, that when the railway was constructed the result would be the same as if 200,000 acres of land had been actually lost to the colony, or, as an honourable member stated, as if the colony had been reduced in area to that extent and a railway were given instead.

MR. McILLWRAITH: Some people would like to represent it to be so.

The TREASURER continued: The 200,000 acres were not lost to the colony; they remained to contribute to the productiveness and settlement of the colony, and in due time they would be expected to bear their due share and pay their just contribution towards the revenue of the State. They were by no means lost so far as productive power or adding to the general prosperity was concerned. This Bill, if carried, would gradually open up the country to settlement in a manner most beneficial to the colony and most beneficial to settlers themselves, as they would have the advantage of markets open for their produce they did not at present possess. It was equitable, also, in this way to relieve the general tax-payer of the cost of construction of public works in certain localities, in the benefits of which he had no participation. In conclusion, the honourable member for Toowoomba had asked, Why not borrow the money required and pay the interest? He said he was not at all frightened at the colony not being able to pay the interest; the revenue of the colony having been expansive in time past it would be so in the future. He (Mr. Dickson) could hardly concur in that view; it was all very well to borrow, and trust to expansion of revenue to provide the accumulating interest, but why was such tightness continuously felt in the exchequer? Simply because the proceeds of the land sales had not grown in the same corresponding degree with the expenditure annually for interest on the public debt, so that at present each succeeding year left the Treasurer with hardly any surplus whatever; but another opportunity would be afforded of alluding to that point. He thought that he had sufficiently answered the objections of the honourable member for Toowoomba. The desire of that honourable gentleman appeared to be, to have the whole Crown lands of the colony

thrown open to homestead settlement in large areas, without any regard to the just demands of the Treasury on such lands. The ideas he had expressed were fallacious, and would be repudiated by any Treasurer of the colony. A great deal of stress had been laid upon the alleged locking-up of the lands by the Government; but there was no meaning in the expression as applied to the present Bill. The provisions of previous Acts had been interfered with in no way—no restrictive principle was introduced. It had also been alleged that the eyes of the country had been picked out; but that had been done long ago—and not merely by the alienation of 130,000 acres in the Western Railway district. Of course it was the policy of the Opposition to magnify the defects of this Bill, but he believed it would give general satisfaction to the country at large; it would conduce largely to the development of the colony, and the advancement of settlement. It provided for the construction of public works such as railways, which would be far beyond their powers to accomplish in any other way. They heard of increased activity in this direction in all the neighbouring colonies. Railways were now regarded as necessities, not as luxuries—they were the chief means of advancing settlement in every shape. The objection of the honourable member for Port Curtis, as to upsetting the labour market by undertaking these lines, was worthless. On the contrary, it would be the direct means of introducing labour to such an extent as had been previously unknown, and would be far more powerful in attracting immigration to our shores than all the expenditure which we had continuously disbursed to encourage this object. He believed it would lay the foundation for the employment of such labour all over the country, and thus conduce to the permanent prosperity and settlement of the several districts of the colony over a large area within such districts, at present almost regarded as *terra incognita*.

Mr. THOMPSON said he did not think the Bill would do much harm unless administered in a peculiar way. In fact this was an enabling Bill. Under it the Government could pursue any policy they liked in regard to alienation of the Crown lands. The Premier introduced the Bill last year on the principle of the Western Railway Bill. The history of the Bill was this: as far back as the time of the Palmer Ministry the idea was approved of granting one-third of the adjacent land in alternate blocks for the construction of railways, leaving the remaining blocks for future alienation. That was the Collier policy, and led to the construction of the Western Railway. It was opposed by the honourable member for Maranoa, who contended the land should not be alienated before the

line was made, and on that point there was distinct issue between the Government and the Opposition. £250,000 was to be provided to start the line. Then the wheel of fortune went round, and the present Premier got into power; and what was his policy? It was difficult to ascertain that from his speeches, as he was so cautious as always to leave room for retreat. It appeared, however, from one speech that he had supported the construction of the Western Railway on the ground that the principle was applicable to other districts. But this session £1,000,000 was asked for the immediate construction of these railways. This session the Premier had estimated the cost at £1,205,000; whereas last session only £600,000 was asked to start the thing.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I did not say that I then asked for that amount, but that the whole cost would not exceed that sum.

Mr. THOMPSON continuing, said it appeared that the Premier had altered his tactics. Last session it was proposed to sell land to meet the interest, but now it was proposed to reserve land as security for the whole cost of construction. The Premier had also expressed his opinion that the principle should be carried out, while he felt bound to defer to the general opinion of the House, and to take his party into his counsels. But the Western Railway Reserves Bill had proved a total failure, as could be proved by the words of the Attorney-General. The honourable member for Maranoa had contended that it would not do to take money out of the capital of the country to buy land. The Attorney-General replied, that the weak point of the honourable member's argument was, that it assumed that the population was stationary; but that was a fallacy; he (Mr. Griffith) could not see why people could not be got from other colonies to buy land here. Yet the Government had spent two years in advertising the land sales, and had not got a single purchaser from other colonies. The Attorney-General had admitted—and the Premier had acquiesced in the opinion—that it would be a serious error to withdraw £250,000 from the current capital of the colony to invest in land. Yet the Premier now wished to borrow at least £1,000,000 for the construction of railways. He was sorry that he had, in colonial phrase, to pitch into the honourable the Speaker's Bill. If the administration of affairs had remained in the hands of the Speaker, who was then Secretary of Works, with the characteristic energy which he threw into the measure different results might have ensued. If the Western Railway Bill was good in principle the present Government had failed to carry it out. They had failed in attracting purchasers from the other colonies, as

the Attorney-General had himself admitted. He had now shown that the proposition distinctly laid down when the Western Railway Bill was brought forward was, that the lands were to be sold to pay for the railways; that the advance to be got was to start the railways; and it was considered that the land should be sold to carry them on. That was the policy of the Government last year when they asked £600,000 to start several railways; and the Premier did not now deny that it was the intention of the Government to ask for a loan of £1,205,000. The Premier's policy was, in fact, exactly the policy which the honourable member for Maranoa had been trying to hammer into the heads of the public for two years, and he was glad that the Government had at last seen that it was a true policy. What they were likely to get in reality would only be gathered from the Premier's own speech, and he had indicated an intention to lean to his party—notably, to the member for Toowoomba—and to the opinion of the House. What had been adopted up to the present time was the opinion of the Opposition, and that was the opinion enunciated by the honourable member for Maranoa. He (Mr. Thompson) had shown that the change of policy in the Government was the result of experience. They had found out that the Western Railway Bill was a fallacy, showing that the argument of the honourable member for Maranoa was not only good as an argument, but as a forecast of what had actually happened. What had been done under the Western Railway Bill? They had created several enormous freehold estates, which, according to all modern writers, were great evils in a community. It was generally received amongst modern political economists, that the accretion of wealth in a few hands, especially in the form of large landed estates, was bad in every respect, illustrating the old quotation—

"Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

If this Western Railway Bill had been so manipulated as to induce the population along the line to pay taxes for what they consumed, and ultimately to pay for interest on that line, it might be called a success; but to create these enormous landed estates on a railway, cut the very throat of the scheme, because no means were left of attracting that foreign capital which it had been said was so necessary. The Western Railway Act might have been very differently administered, and if they examined the Bill now before the House they would find its powers were equally ample in the hands of the Government. They ought, therefore, to guard themselves against repeating the mistake of creating enormous

freehold estates. Mr. Lilley, speaking once on the subject of large estates on the Downs, and in answer to himself (Mr. Thompson)—who pointed out that the honourable gentleman was complaining of large amounts of land being in the hands of what he termed monopolists, said—"It is a public wrong, and I am prepared to introduce a measure to resume those lands, giving compensation to the parties." That was the liberalism of a few years ago; What was the liberalism of the present time? "Sell your lands; get as much as you can for them, and never mind what happens in the future, so long as the money rolls in." His (Mr. Thompson's) policy would be to manage the public estate until it should realize its utmost value; but he did not believe the accretion of these enormous estates was good policy. Whether it was a good thing for the parties who bought he would not undertake to say; but he believed they paid heavily enough, although they were forced to do so. Had they not been so forced by circumstances, the Bill, as a money Bill, would not have been the success the Treasurer assumed it was. Last year it was proposed to honourable members sitting on the Opposition side of the House to give up the stand they had taken; but the men to whom this proposition was made had been underestimated, and it was to their credit that they refused such an offer as that the Colonial Treasurer had just described. That honourable gentleman's argument would lead the House to suppose that there was a resumption clause in this Railway Bill; but there was no such thing. It was entirely in the hands of the Government what they should resume, and they need not have come to the other side of the House to ask what to do. It was, in fact, as if they had said to the Opposition, "If you are good boys we will only resume one-half." The Government had admitted that they only wanted half; and in appealing to the Opposition they appealed to one of the most unworthy motives of politicians. The proposition was unworthy of themselves, while their conduct was unworthy of statesmen. Why did they not take what lands they required? That this was the view of the Opposition was sufficiently enunciated by their leader when he said:

"We are not to be bought over I hope by having given to us that which we endeavoured to get for the leaseholders in the Western Railway Reserve, but failed. We are not now going to take any sop of that sort from the Government. We battled in vain for other people last year, and, I hold, fairly battled for them, but failed; and I reject with contempt any offer of reserving half of those runs; and if honourable members opposite think we are going to help them to save half of their runs, they are bitterly mistaken."

Members had probably learned by this time that all these bargains in politics were bad. With regard to the scheme of the honourable member for Rockhampton, he would not have touched it but for what the Colonial Treasurer had said when it was stated that on resumption the rents would cease. It must be remembered that the rents would only cease when the land was actually required. There was also this other answer—namely, that a scheme like that could not be carried out without legislation; and it would then be easy to provide for the continuance of grazing rights. In conclusion, he wished to ask the Government whether it was true that a meeting of capitalists was held in the Agent-General's office in London, where they carried a resolution to the effect that, in their opinion, if these wholesale resumptions were persevered in, capital would be driven from the colony? Had the Government received advices, stating that such a meeting took place, and that Mr. Macalister recommended them to put their ideas in the shape of a memorial? He wished to know whether the Government had received a communication to this effect from the Agent-General, or a memorial from the gentlemen who met in his office?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he wished for a moment to speak upon a matter which was only indirectly connected with the question. He had been several times taunted with belonging to the Opposition, and as there were a considerable number of new members, he wished to put himself right with the House. It would be in the recollection of most members that he had always advocated the opening of the lands for settlement. He worked with the Liberal party, and assisted them during their struggles when the member for Port Curtis was at the head of the Government; during which term of office there were three dissolutions in succession. After the last dissolution and general election the honourable member was ousted, and the party he (Mr. Miles) had been assisting during nearly the whole of the time came into office. The honourable member for Maranoa joined the Macalister Government, and he (Mr. Miles) naturally anticipated that after their long fight and struggle the Liberal party would open the lands for settlement. But it was not so. When they were on the Treasury Benches they were quiet, and prepared to follow in the footsteps of those they had ousted. He was not satisfied with this, and considered himself justified in sitting at that corner on the cross-benches to which reference was made, and endeavouring to assist the Government in every possible way, by keeping them straight. The Great Macalister Government introduced the Land Bill; and Mr. Stephens (the then Minister for Lands) had a peculiar way of inserting

little clauses into his Bill which it would puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer to find out; and there was one clause in this Bill which entirely met the object he (Mr. Miles) had in view. That clause caused a considerable disturbance in committee; and at a Cabinet meeting, which was held in consequence, it was decided that the Minister for Lands must either withdraw that clause from the Bill or himself from the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that Mr. Stephens himself had said to him, when he met him in the street, "I must withdraw that clause from the Bill or withdraw from the Government. Will you stick to me?" He (Mr. Miles) said, "Yes; I will stick to you to the death."

Mr. McILWRAITH: What is the clause?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had no objection to read the clause; it was as follows:—

"Until the Governor in Council shall otherwise provide and declare by proclamation published in the *Gazette* all Crown lands which immediately before the commencement of this Act were open to selection by conditional purchase under the provisions of The Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868 and all Crown lands which have been proclaimed as homestead areas under the provisions of The Homestead Areas Act of 1872 and also all lands included in the pastoral leases to be issued under clause 9 section 10 of this Act shall except as hereinbefore provided be open to selection as conditional purchases or as homesteads under this Act and all Crown lands which have been proclaimed as homestead areas under the provisions of The Homestead Areas Act of 1872 shall be open for selection under this Act as homesteads only."

But this Minister for Lands was not quite game enough to stick to his resolution; he preferred sticking to office rather than to his clause, and he came down himself the next day with an amendment, and that amendment was:—

"Amendment proposed (Mr. Stephens)—That the clause be further amended by the addition of the following proviso, viz.:—'Provided that the power of selection given under this Act shall not apply to any lands now held under lease issued in pursuance of The Pastoral Leases Act, 1869 unless by proclamation of the Governor in conformity with resolutions to that effect passed by both Houses or by proclamation of township or railway reserves.'"

Perhaps some one would like him to read the division.

Mr. McILWRAITH: Yes, go on. You will find them all there: Macalister, Stephens, McIlwraith, and McDevitt.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, the honourable member for Maranoa the other night was lamenting the action the Government had taken with reference to the Western Railway Bill, and said that it had been the industry of the people whose land

was being sold that had given value to that land. But when he had the opportunity of giving them the land, he did not do so. Where did they find the honourable member for Toowoomba then? Not assisting to give land to the people at Roma. In fact, so long as that honourable member could get land in the neighbourhood of the Darling Downs, he cared nothing about anywhere else. This was one of the reasons he (the Colonial Secretary) could not consistently sit behind a Government who were prepared to be guilty of such conduct. No doubt it was caused by the pressure of the honourable member to whom he had referred. It was well known that that honourable gentleman was his (the Colonial Secretary's) opponent at the last election, and that he was returned as a squatting candidate. When the Western Railway Bill was before the House, he (the Colonial Secretary) had considerable doubts with regard to it, and he did not vote for it; but the honourable member for Maranoa, who had condemned the Bill ever since, actually voted for it. He should like to know where was that honourable member's consistency? No doubt he might say that his constituents wanted a railway, but that was no justification. The proper course for him to have pursued, if he believed it was a bad measure, was to say, "I will be no party to it; I will resign." If he had taken that course, he (the Colonial Secretary) would say he was perfectly justified in all his subsequent opposition to the Bill. He believed that if it had not been for Messrs. Collier and Company's scheme the Bill would never have been introduced. When the honourable member for the Maranoa was a member of the Macalister Government, he was authorized to go to Melbourne and negotiate with that firm to construct a line of railway from Dalby to the Gulf, which they were to be paid for by grants of land. That negotiation fell through; and although he (the Colonial Secretary) did not know how it came about, he believed it subsequently led to that honourable member leaving the Government. It would be in the recollection of honourable members that, when the negotiation was going on, Messrs. Collier and Co. stipulated that if they constructed a line of railway from Dalby to Roma they must be paid in cash, or be allowed to select land on the Darling Downs. Now, the honourable member for the Maranoa had accused the Government of disposing of land about Roma to make this railway, while at the same time the very parties whom that honourable member recommended to carry out the work had point blank refused to do so, except on the terms he had stated, because the land was not sufficiently good. (Hear, hear.) He believed it was a fortunate thing for the

country that that negotiation fell through, because there was no doubt that Messrs. Collier and Co. would have received large grants of land, and would thus have been brought into competition with the Government in the sale of land; and he believed, under judicious management, a mere fragment of the land that firm were to have would construct the railway, and then it would be the property of the country. He thoroughly believed in the system of constructing railways by sales of public lands, and he was convinced it would have been a good thing for the country if that system had been established a great deal sooner. If they had done so, the country would be relieved from the burden of interest on the debt incurred for railway construction, and the proceeds of the land sold, which had been thrown into bog-holes throughout the country, in trying to patch up roads, would have been saved. With reference to the present Bill, he believed it would be a very good thing for the country, because if ever the colony were to progress it could only be by giving facilities for settlement and opening up the lands. If they were to bring their large tracts of mineral country into practical use, it could only be done by opening up the country by means of railways. During the last twelve months he had taken a trip through the United States of America, and, if he had not been convinced before, what he saw there was quite sufficient to convince him that that was the only sound and sure means by which progress would be secured. He had seen large tracts of country there, not to be compared to ours, with railways running through them, conveying minerals from the interior to the port. The honourable member for the Bremer had said, if this measure were to be carried out it should be in proper hands; and with that he perfectly agreed. If the House thought the Government not sufficiently capable of carrying out such an undertaking, they ought at once to withdraw their confidence from them. It was an undertaking that should be approached with great caution. It would be almost madness to make all these railways at one time; it would be impossible to command sufficient labour, and such a course would interfere with private enterprise; and unless the House were satisfied that the Government had sufficient sagacity and judgment to manage the affairs of the country he hoped they would withdraw their support from them. He believed in the principle of disposing of land, or rather of exchanging their lands for reproductive public works, such as railways. In fact, he would be inclined to borrow money for that purpose and dispose of the land from time to time when there was a demand. The proceeds of such sales should be funded so as to pay the interest on the money borrowed, and eventually repay the loan

itself. When the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government said £1,200,000 would be required, he did not propose that it should be obtained at once; but he simply meant that that was the amount that would be required; and he (the Colonial Secretary) would go to the extent of £1,500,000, if provision were made from the sales of land to pay the interest, and so reduce the debt itself that it should not be a drag upon the colony. He was prepared, in the event of the Bill becoming law, to give all the assistance in his power in endeavouring to make it a success. He was prepared to do as little injury as possible to the pastoral interests, and would take no more from them than was indispensably necessary for the purposes of settlement. He trusted honourable members would give the measure serious consideration, and that unless they thoroughly believed it was for the benefit of the country they would reject it.

Mr. GROOM rose to make a personal explanation. He said the honourable gentleman who had just sat down, in the course of his speech had been pleased to mention his name in connection with a revelation of ministerial secrets, such as he (Mr. Groom) had never before heard in that House. In referring to the particular amendment moved by Mr. Stephens, the honourable member was kind enough to ask where the honourable member for Toowoomba was? and made use of some rather offensive remarks in reference to himself. He (Mr. Groom) was prepared to leave his political actions to the impartial judgment of his fellow-colonists; but he thought that the honourable member might have done him the justice to state the facts, and not to imply that he was absent when that extraordinary amendment was brought forward. It only showed how foolish members were in sitting on that side of the House behind a so-called Liberal Ministry.

Mr. GRIMES said there appeared to be some difficulty in dealing with the Bill on account of its doubtful paternity, but he intended to take it as it came before him, and to state what effect it struck him it would have on the future of the colony. He was prepared to admit that it was one of the most important measures that could come before them for consideration, and as, to his mind, it was a Land Bill under which probably a great deal of settlement would take place during the next few years, they should exercise great care in seeing what effect it would have upon the revenue and upon settlement, or throwing open the lands for the people. He professed to be one of the people himself, and he must admit that in the course of their land legislation the Liberal party, or the people's advocates, seemed to be always unfortunate enough to grind the axes of the squatters. Every

step taken had served to throw open land not for settlement, but so that it might be alienated from the people and pass into the hands of the pastoral tenants of the Crown; and he thought the honourable member for Toowoomba had assisted in bringing about one of the evil results of their land legislation. He believed before they commenced tinkering with their land laws the squatters on the Downs would have been content to pay £1 per acre for their pre-emptives, and he supposed they would not object to others obtaining land for about the same amount; but in order to secure settlement a new Land law was passed, and the result had been that they had obtained, 6s. 3d. per acre for land on the Downs which previously would readily have brought £1 per acre. The railway to the Downs had been constructed at a cost of about two millions of money; and, under the circumstances, he maintained it was essentially necessary that they should endeavour to pass such Land laws as would secure settlement, and at the same time obtain as a return for the land something in the shape of public works which would benefit the colony. With regard to the argument that the Western Railway Act had not realized what had been anticipated, and that the holders of the runs had been badly treated because they could not get land on the same easy terms as previously, he sympathized with the latter to some extent; but at the same time he must say that, in the interests of the people, he complimented the Minister for Lands on the estimate he had formed of that land. Experience had proved that his estimate was correct, the land having been purchased by the former holders of it, who were the most competent judges of its value; and he had no doubt that the sales that had been effected would inspire other persons with confidence and lead to their investing in the purchase of those lands. He argued, however, that the interest on the cost of our railways which had to be paid from revenue was a heavy drag upon the industrial classes, who had to contribute to the revenue, and that if they handicapped every industry that might spring up in the colony in that way, they must look forward to the time when they would have to adopt a system of protection to give a standing to those industries. They should not bolster up one industry at the expense of another, and the settlement on the lands was the only thing they could look to, to make this a great and prosperous country. It had been claimed for the Bill, that one of its main principles was that the revenue from the waste lands of the colony should not be used for the purposes of ordinary expenditure, but that principle was not so clearly brought out in the Bill as he should like to have seen it. In the case of certain districts land

was to be reserved; but there was a large amount of land open for settlement which was not included in any of those reserves, and if they adopted the principle of using the revenue derived from one portion of the colony for public works, and took the revenue from another portion and applied it to purposes of general revenue, they would be adopting a principle that was unfair. It was not fair that land in one district should be taken and sold, and the proceeds used for purposes of general revenue, and that the land in another district should be appropriated to public works in that district. If the principle was good, it should be made to apply to the whole colony; and what he had pointed out was an injustice that he should like to see explained away. Another point was, that if the proceeds of these reserved lands was to be devoted to the construction of railways, that fact alone would attract attention to those reserves, and draw settlement to that portion of the colony, and thus divert the revenue they were now receiving from the sales of land. He should like the Colonial Treasurer to have told the House some of the effects, in this respect, that would result from the adoption of the Bill. £226,000 was derived last year from the sale of land, exclusive of land orders; and supposing the proceeds of the sales of land in those reserves were to be devoted to railways, in what way was the revenue to be recouped which would thus be diverted from the Treasury? He could see no other resource than to fall back upon increased taxation, and that, in the interests of the industrial classes, he strongly objected to. Not a word had hitherto been said about immigration, which, as all would admit, was a most important matter. A large portion of the land revenue was supposed to be devoted to securing a constant influx of population; but the Premier, in his opening speech, seemed to anticipate that the attractions offered by the building of the railways would be sufficient to attract persons from other colonies, and that there would be no reason to obtain more immigrants from England.

The PREMIER: The honourable gentleman has misunderstood me. I said it would be of no use going into immigration, unless a public works policy was authorized.

Mr. GRIMES said there was something in that, but he did not wish it to go abroad that Queensland was obliged to start public works in order to keep the immigrants she had obtained at so large a cost. He did not believe in this colony ordering its policy in accordance with that of the neighbouring colonies. The first consideration should be, Was it proper to adopt such or such a course? He did not think the course of action adopted in

the neighbouring colonies was a suitable one to follow; and he felt sure that, despite what the honourable member for Toowoomba had said, New South Wales would, in time, find out the evils of her wasteful policy. The population of all colonies was comparatively small, and if it was intended to enter into a cutting policy in competition with other colonies for population, they must first be assured that such a course was a wise one. Care must be taken not to hamper the industries of the colony with any undue taxation, in order that the colonists might be enabled to do the best they could for themselves. It had been urged against this measure, that it was a capitalist's measure, and would throw large tracts of country into the hands of a few owners. For his own part he was not afraid of large portions of land passing into the hands of men capable of utilizing it, so long as some restriction was put on the quantity, and some provision compelling the purchaser to settle a certain number of people on the area so alienated. The Bill differed from the Western Railway Act in one or two points. One of these, the omission of conditional settlement, he considered an improvement; but the other, giving the Government unlimited powers to push forward any railways within those reserves, he felt bound to protest against.

The PREMIER: The Bill does not give any such power.

Mr. GRIMES said he was aware that the lines must be sanctioned by the House; but he thought it was fairly to be inferred from the 8th section that some such power was given. In any way the authority of Ministers was too wide, and there ought to be some finality in the railways that were about to be erected. He was anxious that equal justice should be done to all parts of the colony, and was inclined to give a very favourable consideration to the measure now before the House.

Mr. KIDGELL said he was somewhat surprised to hear the measure characterized by the honourable member for Toowoomba as a new and novel one. It was neither new nor novel to him, nor to any member of the House. The question at issue seemed to be, not whether the country was ready for the construction of railways, but how the funds for that purpose should be raised. The Bill proposed to set apart a certain portion of the public land for that purpose, and he held that that principle was a sound one; and his opinions were borne out by the remarks of the honourable member for Port Curtis and the honourable member for Maranoa. When the principles of a Bill were claimed by both sides of the House the Bill must be a good one, and he trusted that it would, like the Act of last year, be carried by a large majority. The construction of railways solely by means of

loans was not altogether a wise policy, for it would either lead to a great increase of taxation, or to the forced sale of a large quantity of the public estate. Some honourable members had insisted that the recent land sales had resulted in failure. For his own part he believed them to have been an almost unqualified success. Up to the present time nearly the whole of the lands sold on that occasion at an average price of 25s. per acre were yielding the magnificent rental of a farthing per acre per annum. If the new policy was an egregious failure, what would be said of the old policy, under which those fair lands were let at such a ridiculously inadequate rental? He did not believe that the Bill would tend in any degree to lock up the public lands; and as to its doing an injustice to the inhabitants of Darling Downs by setting aside a portion of their land for the construction of the Stanthorpe extension, as urged by the honourable member for Toowoomba, he thought the inhabitants had had their money beforehand in the shape of the railway already in existence, and that they ought not to grumble at being asked to assist another line, which would also be a considerable benefit to themselves. Another effect of the measure would be to place the colony in a more satisfactory position for borrowing in the London money market. He believed that ample provision was made for settlement by the present Land Bill; there was very little difficulty in the way of *bona fide* settlers getting land. He was aware that the greater part of the land had been alienated in the Toowoomba district; though that fact might be regretted it could not be helped—persons in need of land must only go farther a-field for it, which they could easily do now by means of the railway. Small capitalists would thus be enabled to take up land in distant parts of the interior, where otherwise the expense of living would have been too great. Objection had been taken to this Bill on the ground that it would tend to greater insecurity of pastoral tenure; but that could scarcely be more precarious than at present. He would be sorry in any way to injure the pastoral interest, but he saw nothing in this Act tending to do so; on the contrary, they might still continue to take up large tracts on advantageous terms. When they had first taken their runs, years ago, it was on the understanding that their tenure was only temporary, and as population advanced they would have to make way for small settlers. With regard to the district he had the honour to represent, it would be a great injustice if railway extension was withheld much longer. In the debates of last session honourable members on both sides of the House had always admitted that the Wide Bay and Burnett districts had not received that share of the public expenditure to which they were

entitled. Cases had come within his own knowledge of large industries lapsing for want of improved means of communication; over £100,000 had been spent in the development of copper and other mines in the Mount Coora and Black Snake districts, and the works were now completely idle. Only the other day a mining manager told him that his company had spent £40,000, and were willing to go on, but were unable for want of communication. Doubtless many similar cases were known to honourable members. The main feature he admired in the present Bill was, that it was based upon principles of moderation, that it was essentially a moderate Bill; and he was assured, if it were carried out in its integrity, it would lead to the inauguration of a new era of prosperity for the colony.

Mr. P. F. MACDONALD said that very little more needed to be said upon this subject, as nine-tenths of the members had made up their minds how they were to vote. A new element, however, had been introduced into the discussion, *apropos* of the Western Railway Bill. He entirely disagreed with the members who argued that that scheme had been a failure. It was true that a large portion of the land had fallen into the hands of a few capitalists; but nearly the whole had been paid for out of foreign capital. The honourable member for Bremer twitted some members with being gulled last year into supporting the Bill, alleging that they were influenced by some objectionable compact, and the honourable member then endeavoured to find excuses for himself and others on his side of the House who voted against the Minister for Lands' amendment, which was intended to give lessees one-half of their runs for a reasonable period, so that they would be justified in making necessary improvements and utilizing the land in the best way. For the purposes of argument the member for Bremer assumed that the Government were only willing to allow the lessees to hold that half on six months' notice. If that had been the case, the amendment would have been a delusion and a snare, indeed; such an offer could scarcely mislead only lessees resident in the colony, but probably would mislead capitalists at a distance. It was well known that under the provisions of the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 a resolution from either side of the House was sufficient to lead to the resumption of runs in the unsettled districts. He could not help thinking that if honourable members opposite had been serious in wishing to assist in judicious legislation on this subject, they would not have been content with merely opposing the amendment referred to; but claiming, as they do, the credit of having shaped the policy of the Government, they should have intro-

duced some measure that would have been acceptable to the House and fair to the lessees of pastoral lands. They had not only neglected to do so but had moved no amendment, but simply opposed the Bill from sheer factious opposition. He maintained that allowing the pastoral lessees to retain one-half of the runs that were resumed would only have been a fair concession on the part of the Government: he thought that no one who desired the welfare of the country could object to such an arrangement. Those honourable members who differed from him on this point could only do so from being practically unacquainted with the state of things in the pastoral districts. If honourable members, more especially the Ministers, paid a visit to the outlying pastoral districts, the course of land legislation would in future be comparatively easy and expeditious, and lead to a settlement much more equitable and satisfactory to the whole colony than it had hitherto been. Honourable members would then find that those magnificent Downs, about which they had heard so much, were rapidly changing into dense scrubs. If some more equitable system were not devised, they would very soon be lost to the country. The cause of this was to be found in the marsupials, who were in millions, poisoning and destroying the natural grasses. The consequence was, that owing to the absence of bush fires, such as used to occur periodically in former times, the scrub was growing up so rapidly that many places were not easily recognized after a short absence. He knew of one instance of a run which was very valuable a few years ago that was now abandoned simply through the kangaroo. If this state of things continued, in another year or two more than half the runs in the Leichhardt District would be abandoned. In that case they would be lost entirely to the country, and generations might pass away before these lands would be reclaimed. A great deal had been said about taking measures for the destruction of marsupials, as if the idea of destroying them was something new; but he could tell honourable members of cases in which hundreds, even thousands of pounds had been spent for that purpose at the Peak Downs,—yet the desired end had not been accomplished. They had simply checked their increase, and prevented the country from being destroyed quite so quickly as it otherwise would have been. There was no hope whatever that any legislative measure would be adopted to lead to the desired effect. The only way to save the country was by fencing, which would cost from £100 to £150 per mile according to locality and material; but no lessee in his senses, even if he had the means, would incur so heavy an expense, unless he had some security of tenure. If some in-

ducement of that kind were not held out, in a short time the country would be past recovery—nothing else could prevent the ruin that was fast going on now. He would like to hear some expression of opinion on this subject on the part of the Government—whether there was any intention to introduce such an amendment as they were willing to embody in their Railway Reserves Bill last year. No doubt they were quite able, if willing, to do so. Otherwise he was quite sure they would have great reason to regret the destruction of one important interest without benefiting any other. There were some clauses in the Bill which required amendment. For instance, the second sub-clause of clause 5, and also the fourth sub-clause, relating to the exercise of preemptive right in each block, which allowed the lessee to pick out the eyes or the best portions of his run, and very much increased the expense of fencing, while it did not benefit the public. If lessees were allowed to take their preemptives in contiguous blocks, very many would be content to take up inferior bad country, so as to lessen the cost of fencing, because, at present, such detached preemptive in the Central district costs £1,000 to fence out the kangaroo. He hoped the Government would agree to, and support the necessary amendments referred to, when the Bill was in committee.

Mr. BAILEY thought he ought not to give a silent vote on this Bill. Though he could not altogether agree with all its details, yet he approved of its principle, that each district should provide a fund out of its territorial revenue for the construction of its own public works, and the revenue derived from land sales, &c., should not be mixed with the consolidated revenue of the whole colony. When the Bill said that such proceeds should be devoted entirely to reproductive works—on that principle he supported it. Honourable members must regard this question in the interest of their constituents. In the districts to the north of Brisbane, the cry had long been that they were robbed in order to enable the Southern and Western districts to advance their public works, and the inhabitants of the Northern districts persisted in looking at the question in that light. The present Bill, however, distinctly asserted the principle of each district profiting to the extent of its own resources. With that principle he agreed, and should, therefore, support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. HALY would like to ask the Government, before coming down to the House with a Railway Reserves Bill, to wait awhile and see the effect of this system in the case of the Western Railway district. In his opinion it had been a practical failure. He allowed that a large area of land had been sold, but it would never have fetched the figure it did unless the squatters had been

forced by the Premier to buy it. They took care to get the best of the land, and in such a way as to command ten times the quantity adjacent. He would also like to ask the Government how they hoped to get people to settle on homestead areas from Dalby to Roma, when they knew that hundreds of labourers had come down lately with fever and ague, so that the hospitals at Brisbane, Toowoomba, and Dalby were crowded? There was no good reason to allege in behalf of this Bill. The Government acknowledged they must borrow money to construct railways; then why not await the result of the experiment at the Western line instead of forcing land for sale on the market? The present Bill would further disturb the wool interest, which had already suffered so much. He would finally like to ask the Government if they had any idea of the harm they had done to the pastoral interest by their course of action? He was positive that they had committed far more harm than they would do good if they were to sit for fifty years in their present positions. He was very much struck with clause 2 in the schedule. Very few people would comprehend the immense area of good land that would be reserved under the Bill,—enough to build ten times as many railways as would be required for the next hundred years. He would support no Government that would throw open, in large areas, magnificent lands that ought to be reserved for generations yet to come, and for the immigrants of the future. The effect of this Bill, in his opinion, was to drive people out of the colony. The Government had no idea of actually making the railways—their Bill was only a sop. Why did not the Government come down with a good system of low cost railways like those of America? But, no! all they wanted was, to get a little popularity, and they would not budge an inch from that position. Had the Government proposed low-priced railways all the proposed lines would be feasible, and the general interests of the colony would be largely enhanced. The cry used to be that money would flow after the railways, but what did really flow was poverty; and the same thing would occur now unless great care were taken. As to the marsupial plague, he was certain those parts of the country would be ruined unless active measures were taken. In 1852 he rode out over country that was the very picture of richness, and that now, because of the marsupials, would not feed a single sheep. He would suggest that land should be given on reasonable leases to any man who would fence in the brigalow scrub, and thus keep down the marsupials. He should vote against the Bill, because it would injure the unfortunate squatter, and unduly favour other classes. It meant utter ruin to those

squatters whose runs were within the railway reserves, without advancing the general interests of the colony; and in his opinion if this Bill only allowed the Government to resume half the runs in those reserves, until the other half was occupied, they would set a far higher value on the half held by the squatter that would well pay the country for waiting, and be the best possible in reference to runs not within the railway reserves.

Mr. PETTIGREW moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER thought the debate might continue for some hours yet (it was quarter past nine o'clock), and that the debate might be brought to a termination to-night. He always wished to consult the wishes of honourable members, but thought it would be really to their own convenience that the debate should continue and finish before the House rose.

The discussion on the motion for adjournment was continued by Mr. MOREHEAD, who argued that, with a *Daily Hansard*, speeches delivered late could not be reported as fully as others; by Mr. STEWART, who protested against the debate closing at that early hour; by Mr. KIDGELL, who opposed the adjournment, remarking that it might be very well for town members to do so, but it was only wasting the time of country members, who did not wish to be in session all the year round; by Mr. MORGAN, who said he would vote against the adjournment, but asked the Premier to withdraw his opposition; by Mr. HALY, who asked the member for Stanley to withdraw his motion; by Mr. PERKINS, who said if some honourable members indulged in less twaddle there would not be so much time wasted; by the MINISTER FOR WORKS, who said that in the other colonies great debates did not extend over two nights, and it was not the habit of more than eight per cent. of the members to talk, and who objected to an adjournment, because most of the members had already spoken on the subject; by Mr. PALMER, who said opposition to such a motion was useless, and only wasted more time; and by Mr. O'SULLIVAN, who said that the debate was very much exhausted, that certain members who wished to speak were absent, and that if the Premier did not consent to the adjournment he would be forced to do so.

The PREMIER said he had objected to the adjournment of the debate because no reasons why the adjournment should take place had been offered either by the mover or the supporter of the motion, and he thought it desirable to ascertain the opinion of the House. After this expression of opinion he did not think it desirable to go on with the debate, especially as he understood that some half-dozen more honour-

able members had expressed their intention of speaking on the subject; but he hoped honourable members would not always adjourn debates at nine o'clock, for if they did the session would be indefinitely prolonged.

Question—That this debate be adjourned—put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the resumption of the debate stand an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

Mr. PETTIGREW said he had not the slightest desire to see the debate adjourned till to-morrow. He was quite prepared to go on till 12 o'clock, but he would like to be short and to the point. He had already served an apprenticeship in the House, and was now a journeyman in politics. He would exercise an independent judgment on the question, and not have it crammed down his throat because it was a Government measure. As to the marsupials that had been referred to, they were here before the white man, and likely to be here when the country returned to black again. The marsupial question must be dealt with, and he would like to ask if the reserves were to be considered in connection with the marsupial pests?

Mr. MOREHEAD suggested that the adjournment of the debate should be to next Tuesday.

Mr. PALMER supported the suggestion. As the Premier had consented to the adjournment, it was exceedingly wrong to have it on again to-morrow.

Before the question was put, Mr. Walsh rose to a point of order, as to whether the Government could regulate the order of the business before the House in any way they thought fit.

The SPEAKER said that he was not aware that there was any standing order or rule of practice against this course.

The Question was put and passed.

QUEENSLAND FISHERIES BILL.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in introducing the Bill, briefly remarked on the necessity and utility of legislation, with a view to protect this growing branch of industry. Though representations had been made from time to time to the Marine Board and the Department of Harbours and Rivers, nothing had been done concerning the size of the mesh in the nets that were used for the capture of fish. This evil had acquired particular prominence lately in connection with the Chinese fishermen at Cooktown, Townsville, Rockhampton, and Brisbane. Information had been collected from various sources on this subject. The present Bill was the result. There had been a great waste of fish in different parts of the colony through the action of the Chinese in this matter, and also by European fishermen. The evil was

not confined to Queensland. It existed also in Victoria and New South Wales, where preventive measures had been passed, on which this Bill was founded. The details of the Bill would be best explained in committee, as they were mostly regulations for the guidance of fishermen, and had been obtained from men who had been long engaged in that pursuit. By the 13th clause the Governor in Council was authorized to make regulations for carrying the Act into effect; and there was another section to which he might draw attention, providing that no explosive, such as dynamite, should be used in Queensland waters for the purpose of destroying fish.

Mr. WALSH cautioned the House to be careful before passing a Bill on a subject about which most honourable members knew so little. He was of opinion that the provision necessitating the taking out of a license might be arbitrarily exercised.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the clause was inserted at the special request of the fishermen themselves.

Mr. WALSH said that but for the mention of Chinese by the Colonial Treasurer his suspicions would not have been aroused, and if this was one of the measures to be proposed by the Government for keeping away Chinese from our shores it would have a most injurious tendency. The minimum weights in the schedule displayed a great want of information on the part of the framers of the Bill.

Mr. IVORY suggested that, as probably nine-tenths of honourable members knew nothing whatever of the subject they were asked to legislate upon, the best way to approach it would be by means of an enquiry before a select committee.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Griffith) said that both the Bill and the schedule had not only been submitted to the fishermen, but to the officers of all the ports of the colony, all of whom had reported favourably upon them. The Bill had been prepared with the greatest care, and it was at least probable that its provisions would be good.

Mr. PALMER believed there was a great necessity for some such measure as this; but the Bill itself was, after all, a simple waste of paper, because the powers given to the Governor in Council by the 13th clause quite destroyed the effect of it. He objected strongly to the 6th clause, which provided that any person using any net in Queensland waters should be bound to give his name and residence.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN thought the Bill should be read a second time, and improved in committee.

Mr. MCLEAN was of opinion, that in any Bill that might be brought forward to regulate the fisheries of the colony, provision should be made for a close season.

Mr. GRAHAM criticised clause 3, which provided that "No person shall drag or draw on to the dry land any net containing fish, but all such nets shall be emptied in the water." He failed to see why a man, after he had been to the trouble of catching a net full of fish should be compelled to lose his labour by having to throw them all into the water again. The Bill was one of those which ought to have been kept back till the end of the session for slaughter.

Mr. JOHN SCOTT said that this Bill seemed to require a considerable study of *fishy-ology* on the part of honourable members. He was quite sure that a great many people here would not want half the kinds of fish mentioned in the Bill; he did not profess to know them himself. He was afraid that even the curator of the museum would not be quite safe if the restrictions were vigorously enforced.

The question was put and passed, and the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at eight minutes past 10 o'clock.