

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 7 MAY 1878

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 7 May, 1878.

Questions.—Motion for Adjournment.—Motions.—Electoral Districts Bill—second reading.—Telegraphic Communication with Great Britain.—Electoral Districts Bill—second reading.

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

QUESTIONS.

MR. BAILEY asked the Minister for Works—

What has been done by the Works Department with respect to the road surveyed through Mr. Crowley's selection at Lagoon Pocket, near Gympie, to enable the farmers in that locality to get their produce to market?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Miles) replied—

The road surveyed does not pass through Mr. Crowley's selection, but through portions 403 and 120, Lagoon Pocket, and will be proclaimed in the course of a few days.

MR. BAILEY asked the Minister for Works—

1. Is he aware that the drill-room, which it is proposed to construct of timber at Maryborough, will be situated on one of the first-class blocks in which the Municipal Council of Maryborough some time ago decided not to allow any wooden buildings to be erected?

2. Have the Municipal Council been consulted in the matter, or has their consent been obtained to a breach of their own regulations?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. A communication has been received from the Mayor of Maryborough, respecting erection of drill-room in brick, instead of wood, and the matter is under consideration.

2. No.

MR. MACDONALD asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. Are the Government aware that the provisions of the second section of the Queensland Fisheries Act of 1877 are being repeatedly violated upon the Fitzroy and other Northern rivers by the frequent use of smaller mesh nets than those authorised by the Act referred to?

2. Do the Government intend, and when, to instruct their Police Magistrates or other persons at the various ports to take prompt action for the prevention of indiscriminate destruction of the young fishes, and for other infringements of the said Act?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. Dickson) replied—

1. The Government are not aware that the provisions of the Queensland Fisheries Act are being habitually violated on the Fitzroy and other northern rivers.

2. The Harbour Masters at the various ports have been instructed to give effect to the provisions of the said Act.

MR. MORGAN asked the Colonial Secretary—

Whether Volunteers who entered the Force previous to the abolition of the Land Order

Grant System will be entitled, on completion of five years' service, to a Land Order under the provisions of "The Land Act of 1868"?

The PREMIER (Mr. Douglas) replied—

All legal rights appertaining to Volunteers who entered the force previous to the abolition of the land-order grant system will be recognised.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

Will he take steps to remedy the present crowded state of the Tiaro Primary School by enlarging it, and the deficiency of teaching power by increasing the number of teachers?

The PREMIER (in the absence of the Attorney-General) replied—

The State School at Tiaro is designed to accommodate from eighty to ninety children, without using the verandahs, which are capable of accommodating thirty more. The average attendance at the school rose from sixty in February to seventy-five in April, but the attendance in any one day has not reached 100. No complaints have been received of any crowding in the school. Additional teaching power is necessary, and will be provided as soon as possible.

Mr. MACROSSAN asked the Colonial Secretary—

Whether the Government, in repealing the Gold Fields Act Amendment Act of last session, intend to exclude Chinese from new gold fields for a limited period?

The PREMIER replied—

In the Bill which will be introduced for the Repeal of the Gold Fields Act Amendment Act, special provision will be made for the issue of licenses on new goldfields.

Mr. PETTIGREW asked the Secretary for Public Works—

1. What progress, if any, has been made in erecting the bridges over the Brisbane and Stanley Rivers?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to call for tenders?—if so, when?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. No progress has been made in erecting bridges over the Brisbane and Stanley Rivers.

2. A resolution of the Legislative Assembly was carried last session to place £3,000 on the next Supplementary Estimates for low-level bridges over the Brisbane River; and when voted, the necessary action will be taken for their construction.

Mr. KIDGELL (in the absence of Mr. Tyrel) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

Why a tender for the second section of the Southern and Western Railway Extension was not accepted, and when fresh tenders for that work will be called for?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

The Chief Engineer considered the lowest tender too high, being far in excess of his estimate, and recommended that fresh tenders should be called for in three months, and ad-

vised that this extension of time would not in any way interfere with the line being completed within the original time—namely, two years and six months.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. BELL said he rose to move the adjournment of the House with a view to bringing before honourable members a subject which he considered of some importance. During last session the Government, through the Minister for Works, promised to erect a hospital at Dalby; they did so, because a number of patients were sent into that town from fever and other serious illnesses, and became so great a tax that the people of Dalby considered themselves aggrieved at having to bear it, especially as the patients arrived mainly from the Government railway works between Dalby and Roma. They thought the sick were patients who should be provided for by the Government, and the Government promised to build a hospital, and to supply sufficient accommodation for those to whom he referred. It had been the practice, as long as he had known Parliament, to accept the assurances of Government given in a formal way, and in a manner supposed to be formal, as faithfully intended promises. Since this promise was made, however, no attempt had been made to build a hospital at Dalby. It had occurred to him whether, under the present practice of the House, an assurance of the Government came within the usual practice of the Assembly, and he had been very much disappointed at finding that no attempt had been made to carry out a promise made to him on behalf of his constituents. He should be glad to hear an explanation from the Government as to whether they intended to erect a hospital at Dalby or refused to do so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was rather surprised to hear the honourable member for Dalby endeavouring to make out that the Government had given a promise, and were evading it. Honourable members would doubtless recollect that about a year ago, there was a great deal of sickness on the railway works west of Dalby—so much indeed that the Dalby and other hospitals were filled with patients. The inhabitants of Dalby came forward very generously on that occasion to assist the Government by renting a private building for the accommodation of the sick, and immediately after he had an interview with the honourable member for Dalby, who asked for a grant of £1,000 to put the building into repair, and make it suitable as an hospital. He (Mr. Miles) told the honourable member that he had considered the matter, and had visited the place; it had been originally a private dwelling; it was low, and destitute of ventilation; the rooms were small, and the roof

was covered with iron; and he looked upon it that, if the Government gave money to convert such a building into a hospital, they would be very culpable. He agreed, however, that something must be done, and promised that the Government would erect a hospital rather than spend £1,000 upon an unsuitable building. The Government had no intention whatever to withdraw from that promise. He had consulted with the Colonial Architect, and had asked him to prepare plans of a portable hospital, and he wanted to erect it on the railway line, convenient to where the works were being carried on. He hoped this would meet the object of the honourable member, and that it would relieve the people of Dalby from the expense of attending to the sick who came from the railway line. He had the plans of a portable hospital actually ready. The building would be erected at the head of the railway works, and as they progressed it would be shifted. He believed, also, it would be necessary to secure the services of a medical man. There was a very great deal of sickness even now on the line. The Government had done all they could to relieve it, but found that their generosity was being abused. The right was given the contractor to forward the sick to Dalby by railway, but the result had been, that under the privilege men had been forwarded everywhere. He had reason to believe that not sick men but loafers, who hung about the camps of the contractors, had been supplied with passes under the right. It would be beneficial to the inhabitants of Dalby to have a portable hospital built at the head of the works, and he believed it would cost the country less than an ordinary hospital if the Government paid a medical man to attend the sick workmen. At present they were sent to the various hospitals, and he believed he could fairly state that the Colonial Secretary could furnish the House with a return showing that large sums had been paid by the Government for attendance on these sick labourers. He trusted that he should be able to get the building erected in a short time, and that his explanation would be satisfactory to the honourable member for Dalby and his constituents.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he thought the honourable the Minister for Works, taking advantage of the opportunity he had of replying to the question put to him, had delivered an excellent electioneering speech; but to come to the business that the honourable member for Dalby had brought before the House, in what position did the Minister stand? The honourable member complained that he had the promise of the Minister for Works that a certain piece of work which the House had considered absolutely necessary, should be done; and

that promise had not been redeemed. Nothing had done more harm to this colony than the reports that fever and disease were prevalent in the interior, and the effect of such a report was brought prominently before honourable members when this hospital question was discussed last year. The House expressed a strong opinion that it should provide for the fever patients employed on the railway works, and the Minister for Works told honourable members what he was doing in the matter. He described a trip he had made along the line, with the view of making the necessary provision for these sick people. It was true that no money appeared on the Estimates for this work, but still it was understood that it should be done, and the Minister had assured the honourable member for Dalby that it would be done; but now they were to be told that the Minister for Works was not bound to provide the work because the money was not voted, or because the matter was not in his department. He (Mr. McIlwraith) thought, however, that the work should have been attended to, if only out of consideration for the men employed on the Government railway lines. Nothing could be worse for the reputation of the colony than a repetition of what took place on the line last year; and the Government had the sympathies of honourable members on both sides in the position in which they were then placed. They were clearly told that they were justified in going to reasonable expense to build the hospital, and preserve the health of the men employed in making the railway. Yet nothing had been done. He feared that as they continued to open up fresh scrub country in the interior, these reports of illness would continue to be heard, and Government should take steps to meet it. He was surprised that the honourable the Minister for Works should have shown such delay, and that he had not fulfilled the promise he made to the honourable member for Dalby on the ground that the money was not voted on the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I never said it was because it was not voted.

Mr. MORGAN said that, taking advantage of the honourable member for Dalby's motion, he wished to allude to a promise made with regard to his own district—Warwick.

Mr. BELL thought it would be more to the convenience of the House, if, when questions of this kind were raised, they were settled before a fresh subject was introduced. He should like to take the Speaker's decision upon the subject.

The SPEAKER said it would, no doubt, be more convenient to take that course; still, an honourable member was not out of order in discussing any question on a motion for adjournment.

Mr. WALSH thought honourable members would do well if they confined themselves to the 36th section of their Standing Orders, which was in these words:—

“No member shall make any motion initiating a subject for discussion, but in pursuance of notice openly given at a previous sitting of the Assembly, and duly entered on the notice paper.”

If that was not acted upon, honourable members would be in a position, on a motion for adjournment, to discuss subjects all round the sun.

The SPEAKER said he had already pointed out that it might be most convenient to adopt the course suggested, but the point of order having been raised, he might state that an honourable member was understood to have the right to speak on any question that he might think fit, on a motion for adjournment. In May’s “Parliamentary Practice,” it was laid down:—

“Considerable laxity has prevailed in allowing irrelevant speeches upon questions of adjournment, which are regarded as exceptions to the general rule. In 1849 the Speaker endeavoured to enforce a stricter practice, and called upon members to confine their observations upon such motions to the question properly before the House—viz., whether the House should adjourn or not. But the House has not since acquiesced in any limitation of the supposed privilege of members to speak upon every subject but that of the colourable question of adjournment.”

Mr. MORGAN said the subject before the House was the erection of a certain hospital, and he had stood up to offer a few remarks upon hospitals; and as he was not in the habit of troubling the House often, he thought he might fairly have been listened to when he did venture to trespass upon its time. What he wished to say was, that the Warwick Hospital, at first, was built in a very suitable place, but then there were not more than six or seven patients requiring accommodation. Times had changed since, and the town had gone southward and westward instead of eastward; while, instead of five or six patients, there was an average of thirty to thirty-two, and some of them were from Dalby. The people were not able to stand this demand upon them; but what they complained of mostly was, that the institution was erected on a precipice, within about 100 yards of the Condamine River, the water of which was used for supplying some 3,000 or 4,000 of the inhabitants. He had received a promise from the Minister in regard to this matter, and it appeared to be given with a certain kind of earnestness; but if it was not carried out, or a fair assurance given that it would be, he should table a motion for turning the hospital into an immigration depôt.

Mr. PALMER said he had no intention of adding much to this debate; but he must enter his protest against having a travelling hospital on a line of railway where fever was already prevalent. Any medical man would tell them that in such cases the best thing would be to get as much fresh air as was possible. He hoped that, on second consideration, the Minister for Works would not carry out the idea of a portable hospital, but that he would have a sum placed on the Estimates for erecting a proper institution.

Mr. BELL wished to point out that the Minister for Works had advanced no excuse for the delay in carrying out this work, which was not in existence when he made the promise that this hospital at Dalby should be provided. The railway from Dalby to Roma was now in progress as it was then, and no ground had been stated by the honourable gentleman to satisfy the House why the promise had not been fulfilled. He would ask the Speaker if it was the rule and practice of this Parliament to accept the assurances of the Government of the day or not?

The SPEAKER declined to give his opinion.

Mr. BELL continued, saying that he supposed it was not the usage of Parliament to accept the promises of Government, and that it was an exceptional circumstance to see promises carried out that were made. He regretted that they had lapsed into such a state of things.

Mr. WALSH said that as far as his experience went, the practice of the present Government had been to set at variance the orders of the House, if those orders were in contradiction to the Government feeling. The cases of the honourable members for Dalby and Stanley were in point. Certain bridges were promised to be constructed, but because the honourable member for Stanley was not an unvarying supporter of the Government, the work had not been done, and not one farthing of money voted had been spent. Yet how many votes carried by the Government supporters last session had been expended, and the Government had found it expedient to expend it. He did not hesitate to say that we had a Government that refused to spend money voted graciously by members of the House, if it did not emanate from their own supporters, while they hastened to spend money if it was in reward for services rendered the Government by honourable members on their own side of the House. That was simply the state in which the Government had landed the colony at the present time. The Minister for Works attempted to make virtuous capital out of it, and said the reason why the money in the particular case before the House had not been spent was, that it had not been voted. But how many thousands

of pounds, indeed hundreds of thousands of pounds in salaries and other ways that were on neither the Estimates-in-Chief nor the Supplementary Estimates had been spent without votes. However, he did not hesitate to say that Government always hesitated to spend money ordered by the House if it was so ordered at the instigation of their opponents; while, as would be seen from the Auditor-General's Report, the opposite course was taken where the vote was obtained on the action of their own supporters.

Motion—That the House do now adjourn—put and negatived.

MOTIONS.

Mr. BAILEY moved—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, all correspondence, &c., with colonial firms, with reference to tenders for ironwork for the bridges on the Gympie railway.

Carried.

Mr. PALMER moved—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, copies of all correspondence between the Government and Bishop Bugnion, with respect to the importation of a cargo of Memnonites.

Carried.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said he had partly arranged with the honourable member for Port Curtis to take the debate on his motion, which appeared lower down on the paper, before proceeding with the second reading of this Bill. The business referred to on the motion of the honourable member was one upon which it was desirable that the House should pronounce an opinion upon in view of the Conference to be held in Melbourne on the 9th. With that view, he moved that the Government business be postponed until after the resolutions of the honourable member for Port Curtis.

Mr. McILWRAITH took this opportunity of explaining that it was not because of the Opposition that there was no House on Thursday last to discuss the motion of Mr. Palmer. It was an understood thing on the Opposition side of the House, and he believed by Ministers also, that there would be no House made; and he was surprised to find the Government present in full force, and that the impression had got abroad that the reason the motion was not proceeded with was that the Opposition were not present to go on with business.

The PREMIER confirmed what had been said by the honourable member who had just spoken as to the management on Thursday.

Mr. PALMER asked why, then, the Government had come down in force to make a House?

The PREMIER said they did not.

Mr. PALMER said it had been so understood by the papers; and why was it done unless to cast odium upon the Opposition?

Question—That the Orders of the Day be postponed—put and passed.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

Mr. PALMER moved—

1. That, in the opinion of this House, it is most undesirable that any agreement should be come to at the approaching Conference, in Melbourne, on telegraphic communication with Great Britain, which will in any way bind the colony to aid a duplicate line of cable, *via* Adelaide, Port Darwin, unless, at the least, such line shall be supplemented by cable or land line from Port Darwin connecting with Queensland lines direct.

2. That this resolution be forwarded to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message, in the usual form.

When he put the resolutions upon the paper of the House, he was completely in the dark as to the intention of the Government with regard to the Conference to be held in Melbourne on the 9th of May. He therefore came to the conclusion, with many other honourable members, that the Government were going to send down a member to that Conference simply to endorse anything that might be proposed in reference to telegraphic communication. Immediately after placing the motion upon the table, he had been informed by the Postmaster-General of the intentions of the Government with respect to the Conference; and he would say that, as far as he had heard those intentions, they entirely coincided with the views which he had held ever since the first proposal for telegraphic communication was mooted, up to the present time. It was not necessary for him to weary the House with details of the opinions he had at first expressed, and which had been endorsed by the Ministry of the then honourable member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Lilley. A large amount of correspondence took place on the subject, and the honourable member for the Bremer and himself (Mr. Palmer) attended a Conference in 1873, as representatives of Queensland. He was now informed by the Postmaster-General, and later by the Premier, that the same line of policy was to be adhered to. With that policy he entirely agreed, and had he been aware of the course intended to be taken, the motion would not have been placed on the table at all. He did not, however, regret having placed it on the table, as the opinion which he trusted the House would express on the subject would have the effect of strengthening the hands of the Postmaster-General at the Conference. With the leave of the

House, he proposed to withdraw the latter part of the first motion, so that it would conclude with the words "Port Darwin;" and he hoped that honourable members would see their way clearly to accepting the resolution in that form. At the time of writing the resolution he was under the impression that the Government did not intend to adhere to the previous decision, but were about to take up a new line, and he therefore put the agenda in order to meet the matter as far as he could. He considered it was absolutely necessary for Queensland to always have direct communication with Europe without being dependent upon the Adelaide overland line, for which he had always entertained a thorough—and justifiable—distrust. He had also a distrust—which he hoped was shared by the House and the community in general—of the British-Australian Telegraph Company. He could hardly find words sufficiently hard to describe their conduct to the colony from the commencement. They had deceived the colony in more instances than one. In the first instance, when, in accordance with their views, the Queensland telegraphic line was extended to Norman Mouth, they sent a representative to Melbourne who entered into an agreement with the South Australian Government to carry the line to Port Darwin. That gentleman saw fit to come up to Queensland afterwards, and presented himself at the office to enter into negotiations, being quite ignorant that he (Mr. Palmer) knew of the action he had taken. The negotiations that ensued, he need scarcely say, were very short and very decided. In June, 1872, Viscount Monck, chairman of the company, telegraphed—

"On application of Agent-General British Australian Company intend to lay cable immediately between Norman River and Port Darwin."

They, however, never made any effort in the direction at all. Without wearying the House with details, he had endeavoured to place before the House as shortly as he could the action which the British-Australian Company had taken, and he thought that, from their previous conduct, it was very easy to guess what their future would be. He believed that the aim of the company was to sell a worthless, useless cable to the Australian colonies or, at all events, to get as much as possible for a cable which would be anything but useful to Queensland. He would not deny that the cable had been of use in its day. He thought that, had an agreement been come to in 1873 between the representatives of New South Wales and New Zealand, direct communication might have been had for some years past, by means of a duplicate cable, which would in no way have inter-

ferred with the other. Should any danger arise to the other cable, Queensland would then be in a much better position with regard to communication. It was needless to impress upon the attention of the House, the very great importance, at the present moment, of being in possession of a duplicate line of cable. The wretched British-Australian line broke down almost invariably at the very moment when intelligence of an important character was expected. He would hardly have pressed the resolution, but that he thought an expression of opinion from the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council would strengthen the hands of the Queensland representative at the Conference. He looked upon it as little less than suicide for Queensland to agree to anything in the way of a duplicate line which would be connected with the South Australian land line, because it had been found that when the cable was all right the land line was broken down, and when the land line was repaired, the cable had failed. Any duplicate cable which might be laid down from the same point would be subjected to the same influence, and would probably break down in the same way. It was very difficult to keep a cable in order, owing to decay and breakage, and it would be very much more desirable—if the Government were determined to support such a line—that it should go direct from Norman Mouth, Cape York, or some other point in Queensland territory. It was the duty of the Government to insist that whatever course was decided upon should be fairly carried out, and not to pledge themselves to carry out any line which would not be advantageous to the colony. He would, therefore, move the resolutions (as amended) standing in his name.

The PREMIER said that the subject brought under the notice of the House was of sufficient importance to justify the course which had been pursued on the present occasion, in order to secure an expression of opinion. As the meeting would take place on the 9th, it was desirable that their representative should be strengthened by an affirmation of that kind on the part of the Legislature; and he was very glad to give his support, and the support of the Government, to the resolutions tabled by the honourable gentleman. He did not know why the honourable member should have stated that he was in the dark as to the policy of the Government upon the question. The policy of the Government, at any rate, was tolerably pronounced on last occasion when the matter was discussed at an Australian conference. On that occasion the colony was represented by the present Postmaster-General and the Attorney-General (Messrs. Mein and Grif-

fith), and by reference to the public proceedings of that Conference it would be found that those representatives took a very decided part. On the first occasion Mr. Griffith tabled a motion in reference to that matter, which bore out and confirmed the principle now pronounced by the honourable member for Port Curtis, which he had always steadily adhered to, and which had been for the most part supported by the Government, though at one time there was some hesitation on the part of Mr. Hemmant, the then Treasurer, as to the manner in which it was desirable it should be supported. The honourable gentleman had always supported direct telegraphic communication with some part of the coast of Asia, independent of that by the present company. He had always been perfectly consistent in advocating those views, and he had also endeavoured to give expression to the opinion that the colony had not been fairly treated at the outset by the British-Australian Telegraphic Company, which company was now merged into the Eastern Extension Cable Company. The colony of South Australia had gone to an enormous expenditure in the construction of the overland line, which had certainly not been directly reproductive, though it had effected a great deal in making known a considerable portion of the interior of South Australia. The work had, therefore, not benefited the finances of the colony, though it had redounded to its credit for undertaking so difficult a work. On the present occasion the Government would adhere to its previous policy, and there was now, more than ever, every reason for doing so. The company had to some extent forced itself upon the colony by occupying ground which might have been more advantageously occupied by some other company through the agency of this Government, or the combined Governments of Australia. It had throughout been an insufficient cable. At times direct communication had been broken for months. Even now it had been interrupted for several weeks, which was a very important matter at such a time as this. It was most certain that at the present time we ought to receive the best and latest intelligence. It appeared that this company had put forward a sort of claim, as though a monopoly should be conferred upon it because it was the first to land a telegraphic cable on the shores of Australia. He did not consider that they had any just grounds for such a claim, but at the same time he thought they should be treated fairly, and that it was most desirable the company should continue to work their cable if they could succeed in putting it in workable order. It was highly undesirable to supplement their efforts, or go further in aiding them, and enable them to get another cable in opposition to any other combination that might be willing to

occupy the ground. He had a correspondence at present in his hands, the details of which he was not permitted to make public, in which the Agent-General in London had communicated information which had been supplied to him, and also to the Agent-General for New South Wales. The communication stated that the Agent-General was in possession of facts in connection with this subject which would render it imperatively desirable not to enter into any agreement with the present company until it were ascertained positively that no effort would be made by any other company to carry out the work with greater efficiency. The communication referred to an offer which had been made direct to New South Wales, and the information had been at the same time conveyed to the Queensland Government. It was to the effect that a company was prepared to lay a cable from Ceylon to Cape York, in Queensland, which would not involve a claim upon the colony for subsidy in excess of that demanded for the cable between Singapore and Normanton. The expense would be somewhat less than that of previous offers, though the distance was much greater. He thought it was his duty to urge upon the Government of New South Wales the provisional acceptance of that offer, believing that it would be thoroughly advantageous to Queensland, and to undertake, on the part of the Queensland Government, to accept as far as they could their share of the responsibilities, should the proposal be accepted. An offer having been made to New South Wales as being the oldest and probably the richest colony in Australia, that colony would, no doubt, be only too willing to negotiate with these gentlemen for the purpose of having another cable laid. In spite of all that and the representations which had been made by him (the Premier) on the part of the Government, with a view to entering into partnership with the Government of New South Wales to share the responsibilities as far as we could, and to undertake the construction of a land line from Cape York, the Government of New South Wales had till now held off. They were perhaps perfectly justified in holding off until the Conference was held, but he was sorry to say that the advances made by this Government had been met with coldness on the part of New South Wales. He expected that an offer so advantageous would at once have been seriously considered, especially when backed up by the offer of the partnership on the part of this colony. A good deal of influence had been obtained by the present company over the various Governments of Australia, and he presumed that they were possessed of influence in

New South Wales. Up to a certain period he had hoped to have had the support of New South Wales and New Zealand, and the proposal to lay a cable between New Zealand and New South Wales led to confident expectation that such would be the case when the negotiations got into the hands of the Agents-General in London; however, those hopes were dispelled by their actions. He believed that had they been animated by the same spirit as the Governments of New South Wales, New Zealand, and Queensland, might have secured independent and direct telegraphic communication *via* Singapore. That hope passed away, and New Zealand was led, under the auspices of the Australian Extension Company, to still further fortify their position. It seemed to him to be somewhat unimportant where the second cable were laid to, so long as it was not laid to the shores of South Australia. The main object was to get a duplicate cable. It was not important that it should come to the shores of Queensland, but it was of great importance that it should come to the shores of Australia somewhere. There was not much to be gained by the cable coming to the shores of the colony. No profit was to be made from the messages, as the receipts which might accrue would not be equal to the additional trouble of working the cable. He, therefore, did not think it was a matter of paramount importance that the cable should be laid to the shores of Queensland, so long as it was an entirely independent line. The object was to reach British India, by which means rates would be cheapened and access to different lines secured. Those objects would be attained by reaching India. It might be considered advisable to lay a line to the shores of America. That would be a larger undertaking, involving the crossing of something like 8,000 miles of ocean. It was, however, a matter of money, and one which might be considered under the category of works which were not beyond the powers of the combined Australian colonies; it might be fairly considered as one of the alternative routes. Another line would, however, be equally serviceable in connecting Queensland with the United Kingdom and Europe. He was quite content to accept the resolutions moved, and he hoped it would have the effect of fortifying the hands of the Queensland representative at the ensuing Conference, and that the delegates there would succeed in securing duplicate telegraphic communication entirely independent of the present company.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he believed in the correctness of all the statements made by the honourable mover of these resolutions, and he was also of the same opinion as the honourable the Premier with regard to communication with the old country by

means of telegraph cable. He quite concurred in the honourable gentleman's views, but still he did not think the House should pass a motion of this kind, affirming that whatever they did, they should not take a particular course of action, because it might turn out that that was the only course of action open for them to take, and they would have to make the best of it. It might happen that the other colonies would make an arrangement to make a duplicate cable from Port Darwin to Singapore by the same company, and if Queensland did not join in that, what good would she get by not doing so? The other colonies would simply lay such an embargo on our telegrams as would preclude the use of the line. He might go to the extent of supporting the motion if the latter part were left in, because he considered that through it they might secure a means of communication which would be of great advantage to this colony. He thought if they could get over the difficulty of the want of faith on the part of the present company, the best way to provide communication would be by a duplicate cable to Port Darwin and a land line to Normanton. He did not see why the House should hamper the Government by a decision that would simply be a negative, especially as circumstances might arise which would render that course the best that could be adopted.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Griffith) said he took it that the House, by affirming this resolution, would not say that under no circumstances would it be desirable for this colony to enter into a union with the other colonies in assisting to support a cable from Port Darwin to the East; but that, at the forthcoming Conference, it was extremely undesirable that the colony should pledge itself to anything of that kind. And he did not think the carrying of the resolution would, in any way, be open to the objections the honourable the leader of the Opposition had suggested. He (the Attorney-General) was one of the representatives of this colony at the Conference at the beginning of last year, and he remembered what the temper of the different colonies was then, and although probably there would be none of the same representatives present, with the exception of the one from Queensland, at the ensuing Conference, still he understood the feelings of the different colonies to be very much the same as at that time. At that Conference a resolution was proposed for a duplicate line to Port Darwin, and only three colonies voted for it—South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria. The other colonies—Tasmania, New Zealand, Western Australia, and Queensland—would not support it, but insisted upon a complete duplicate line. Of course the other colonies, being more populous and

wealthy, would not be bound by that; and eventually the following resolutions were agreed to:—

"1. That it is desirable to extend and improve the means of telegraphic communication between Australia and Europe, by the duplication, where necessary, of the cables or lines connecting the same.

"2. That any subsidy on ocean cables to connect Australia with Europe shall be borne by the several Australian colonies assenting thereto, in proportion to population.

"3. That the loss (if any) on completing colonial lines, to connect the cables with the main telegraphic system of each colony, should in like manner be borne by all the colonies concerned."

That was the principle on which he considered the matter should be dealt with. They all knew pretty well why the Eastern Extension Company wanted to get a second cable. It was because the old one was getting worn out, and they wanted a new one at the expense of the Australian colonies; and if the colonies had a second cable constructed by that company alongside the present line, they would be in no better position than they were at present. They would practically have one cable, for the old one would be left alone, and the new one used. He thought it was of little consequence how they got a duplicate cable, so long as they did get it. The principle contained in the resolutions he had just read would, he ventured to say, have to be adopted by all the colonies before they would secure a satisfactory system of telegraphic communication with Europe. The proposal attacked by the motion of the honourable member for Port Curtis would put off the happening of such a result indefinitely, and that was the reason why it would be most dangerous for the colony to agree to it. He thought it possible that if the colony were to withdraw from its old position—that they were willing to assist in bringing a line to Queensland—and say they were willing to enter into an agreement to subsidise another line to Port Darwin, the other colonies might be so influenced by their withdrawal as to come to a most unsatisfactory conclusion. But so long as they did not withdraw from that position, there was little chance of such a conclusion being arrived at. He had no doubt that at the ensuing Conference it would be suggested to construct a duplicate line from Port Darwin to Banjoewangie, the annual cost of which would be perhaps £10,000 less than an entirely independent line. But the result would be that the colony would be no better off, because they would still have only the present land line. Supposing the other colonies should adopt a resolution that an agreement should be come to to subsidise the Eastern Extension company, Queensland would be in no worse position, and they would no doubt

be only too glad to make it part of the resolution that all the colonies who were willing to join in the subsidy should have the benefit of the agreement. He thought the colony would be justified in asking for a concession of that kind in the event of it turning out to be the only thing they could get. It would be better than nothing, and they would be churlish to hold back and not contribute in this last resource. He thought, whether the resolutions were carried or not, the present Government, and the House, unless they had changed their opinion entirely, would be bound by the principle enunciated in that resolution. He did not think that they should agree to subsidise a cable to Port Darwin until they had found that there was no other way of obtaining communication—in fact, until they had discovered that of the two evils this was the least. It had been said that Queensland was simply struggling for its own benefit, but he did not think that was so. He did not suppose it mattered to the colony whether the duplicate line came to this coast or to North-west Cape, so long as they got better communication than at present. But so long as they only got single means of communication, it was hardly worth while going out of the way to subsidise it. The extra cost of an independent line would be nothing compared to the value of having reliable and certain information.

Mr. BELL said there was much that had fallen from the honourable gentleman who had just spoken with which he agreed, but there were some parts of his speech he could not thoroughly agree with, or follow. He thought the honourable member was in the main favourable to these resolutions, but he argued the question so closely that he (Mr. Bell), from his obtuseness, could not follow him. He hoped the honourable mover of the resolution would not alter it one iota, because he thought it was better as it stood. Now, what he understood they wanted was a duplicate cable line, and that that line should be independent of the Eastern Extension Company.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear.

Mr. BELL said if they got that they would be satisfied.

The PREMIER: You won't get that from Port Darwin.

Mr. BELL said he thought there might be very good reasons why the South Australian Government would come to satisfactory terms, and he saw many advantages in the line coming to Port Darwin, and having a territorial line to Normanton. He was quite sure the feeling of the Assembly was favourable to the intention of the resolution, and he hoped there would be no objection made to it.

Mr. PALMER, in reply, said, one objection made by the honourable member for Mara-

noa to the resolution was, that the old British and Australian Company, now merged in the Eastern Extension Company, would lay an embargo upon our telegrams; but that was out of the question. He had never heard of a telegraph company making one rate for one party and another for another; and even if they were insane enough to attempt it, it would fail, because all the colony would have to do would be to establish an agency in Sydney, where telegrams could be simply repeated. That settled that objection. His principal reason for striking out the second portion of the resolution was, that on going through the papers bearing on the question, as he did that morning, he found that the Eastern Extension Company had utterly broken faith with the colony on the two occasions to which he had previously referred, and he for one was not prepared to trust them. They might make the same agreement they did before, when they found the colony negotiating with other companies, and break it when it suited themselves. Any one who took the trouble to go into the correspondence, would find that directly the company found that the negotiations of the colony with other companies had ceased, they abandoned all intention of making a duplicate line from Port Darwin to Norman Mouth that they were pledged to by the telegram of the chairman, Lord Monck. With regard to the objection of the honourable member for Dalby, he would point out that there was no probability of having a duplicate cable to any other part of the South Australian coast, because, according to agreement, the South Australian Government were bound to allow no other cable than those of the Eastern Extension Company, to land at any part of their coast. This resolution would not prevent the colony from joining in any other line; it would not prevent them from joining in a subsidy for a line to North-West Cape. Although, as a Queenslander, he should like the line to touch upon our own coast, still, as long as they got a real duplicate cable and not an apology for one, which he maintained a cable laid by the Eastern Extension Company from Singapore to Banjoewangie would be, he would be satisfied. He hoped the resolution would be carried.

Question, as amended, put and passed.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER moved that this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. McILWRAITH: Mr. Speaker, I have expressed on a previous occasion my approval of the way in which the honourable the Premier introduced this Bill, by making a speech on moving for leave to introduce it; and I did so on good grounds,

inasmuch as I thought that with an intricate Bill like this, which had not been discussed before, it was a good initiation; and I was glad to see that the honourable gentleman had followed the example of the honourable member for Port Curtis, when introducing a similar measure. But I think the honourable gentleman misunderstood the nature of the speech which should have been given on that occasion, as it should have been simply confined to an explanation of the principles of the Bill, in order to assist honourable members in understanding it. Now, there are two or three very prominent features in the Bill, concerning which the honourable gentleman said little or nothing. For instance, one of the principles of it is, that the number of members of this House should be increased from forty-three to fifty-five; he did not say why fifty-five members would represent the country better than forty-three, but simply took the number which was proposed by the honourable member for Port Curtis some years ago—viz., fifty-four—as a justification for his asking fifty-five now. Then, again, the principle of representation of minorities is included in this Bill; but the honourable gentleman did not say anything upon that part of the subject beyond a few remarks which expressed his disapproval of minorities ruling. Another principle is, that of providing additional members as the population increases; that was one which, above all things, required full explanation, for I am certain that not a single honourable member who looks at clause 8 can say that he understands it. It was only after the most laborious trouble that I was able to ascertain what was intended. Yet that principle and that clause were not explained by the honourable gentleman at all: he merely told us that such a clause would be found in the Bill, without attempting to describe how it would operate. If it is to be the practice that a speech usually given on the second reading of a Bill is to be made on the introduction of it after this fashion, all I can say is, that I think it will be a very bad practice. I had better now state, under one or two heads, the objections I am going to make to the Bill, and I shall have a few remarks to make and also a good deal of evidence to offer in support of them. My objections are:—1. That it provides no remedy for the evils of the single electorate system. 2. Because it contains no provision for the representation of minorities. 3. Because it unnecessarily increases the number of members from forty-three to fifty-five; 4. Because the arrangement for additional representation is unfair to the single electorates. 5. Because the Bill does not carry out its own principles. 6. Because the sta-

tistics on which the Bill is based are incorrect and incomplete. I am sure, sir, it will assist the House in understanding the objections I have brought against this Bill, if I touch on the last point first, so that honourable members will know exactly the nature of the statistics with which they are dealing. Honourable members will see that, on a return which was laid upon the table by the Premier in moving the introduction of the Bill, an explanation is given as to how the Registrar-General had arrived at his statistics. He, in fact, explains, and we understand it to be the fact also, that the population as it appears there is the population as taken by the last census enumeration, and that since then each district has got credit for all the births within it and all the arrivals by sea, and has been debited with all the deaths in it, and all the departures by sea from it. Now, that is the principle on which the population of the colony was enumerated up to the taking of the last census and since that time; and I will now call the attention of honourable members to a discrepancy which was proved to have taken place then. Up to the last census the population was taken on that basis, and when it was taken, it was proved that there was an error amounting to $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the total population. I wish to point out, that if there was that great error when the census was last taken, how much more liable to error the returns must now be of outlying populations where no account is taken of arrivals or departures, or interchanges from one colony to the other or one district to the other. Honourable members must see that it is not within the power of any private individual to check the returns of the Registrar-General to any great extent, but he may be in a position to throw light upon them, and also to check them to some small extent. I will first call the attention of honourable members to Table I, which is said to show the population in each electoral district on the 31st December, 1877, and will ask them to look at the item "Bowen," the total population of which is put down at 6,532, and the population, exclusive of Polynesians, Chinese, lunatics, &c., at 5,820, making a difference of 712. That is, in other words, an affirmation that there are 712 Polynesians, Chinese, lunatics, &c., in the electoral district of Bowen. That struck me as not likely to be the truth. Confining myself to Bowen just now, in which, according to this return, Polynesians, Chinese, &c., are put down at 712, I referred to the census of 1876, and there found that they were returned at 1,456; yet we all know that they have not decreased in that time, but that there is proof of their having increased. On making application to the Immigration Office, I found that the number on their books of Polynesians living within 20 miles of Mackay

alone is 1,665. I have estimated, out of that number, as living within the Bowen district, about 300, and I will ask honourable members to look at the result. What is the effect? Why it is simply this, that for the purposes of this Bill, 1,300 Polynesians have been converted into white men. The column I have referred to is made up by deducting the estimated number of Polynesians, Chinese, prisoners, and lunatics from the gross total, and only 712 are taken when they ought to have taken about 1,300 more, thereby making the population in this district 1,300 less. These men appear here, therefore, as adult males for the purpose of voting for the district of Bowen, and give Bowen the full number entitling it to one member. Then I will taken the Mitchell district, which is stated to have a gross population of 2,502, and exclusive of Polynesians, Chinese, lunatics, &c., 1,820, leaving a population comprised of the latter of 682. But on examination of the returns given in the last census, I find that they were given as 519; and again from the Immigration departmental books, I find that they have been reduced since to 474. This means that the Government have converted so many white men into Polynesians in that case. So that whilst it suits them in the one case to convert Polynesians into white men, it suits them in the other to convert white men into Polynesians and to take away their electoral rights. I have mentioned these cases, but I have found others exhibiting the same incorrectness, which I will not now take up the time of the House by referring to, as I have no doubt honourable members will detect them themselves. Honourable members have been also provided with a table headed "Electoral Districts Bill," which was laid on the table of this House by command, and which shows the different groups of electorates, the number of members to which each group is entitled on the total population basis, to which it is entitled on the male adult population basis, and the number it is entitled to, taking the mean of those two bases. Now, there is not a single one of the percentages calculated on that table which is not wrong. The fault has arisen through an arithmetical blunder that would have done discredit to the very lowest grammar school boy in the colony. The Government have assumed that if they have two fractional equations, by adding the numerators and denominators on each side, it would make a new equation; but that is by no means the case, and every one of the calculations in the two last columns, under the head "C," is incorrect, and in four cases they are incorrect to the extent of influencing the return of a member, one way or the other, in that particular district. For instance, Brisbane is put down as only 14.46 for its mean population, whereas it

was entitled to 15.05. Ipswich was put down at 6.23, instead of 6.59. There were, indeed, five cases where the calculations were wrong, and the return of a member more or less was influenced. The framers of the Bill have fallen into the error of thinking that if they add 15.04 to 13.27, and take the mean of that, they have arrived at the number of members due to the district of Brisbane on the mean population basis. But they have made the mistake of fancying that when they add the numerator of two fractional equations with the denominators they get another equation. If they calculate the figures on the table correctly, they will find that 14.46 should be 15.05; that 6.23 should be 6.59; that 8.50 should be 8.67; that 3.52 should be 3.12; that 7.12 should be 7.20; that 3.94 should be 4.00; that 3.90 should be 3.49; that 7.33 should be 6.80. These erroneous calculations, as will be seen, influence the members to the extent of five out of the eight groups. It is difficult to explain the mistake fallen into by the Government, and I cannot undertake to convince the Attorney-General that my figures are correct, but it can easily be worked out by those who are acquainted with arithmetical calculations. There is no doubt but the country looks with considerable interest to the introduction of an Electoral Districts Bill this session, and for this reason amongst others, that most of the faults we have seen in the present Parliament has been attributed to the single electorate system. I feel convinced that many of the evils under which we have suffered, and especially the inroads on the public purse made by individual members, can be traced to that source. At the same time I am satisfied that the system of single electorates has not had a fair trial in this colony, simply because we have never had Local Government. If the power of obtaining public money for expenditure in their districts was taken out of the hands of honourable members, I have no doubt that the constituencies would not only get a higher class of members to look after their districts, but our attention in the House would be directed to much higher subjects, and the business of the session would be got through in far less time, while the expenditure of the public money would be in better hands. The failure of the single electorate system is to be attributed in great part to the want of Local Government, and I should strongly advise the Government to push on the measure on that subject on at least equal terms with the one before us. I was quite prepared to do away with the single electorate system, but we are not likely to accomplish that result, and the only chance of its working satisfactorily is to push on the Local Government Bill as fast as possible. It has been admitted by the Premier that the

single electorate system should be done away with; but how does this Bill propose to do it? There are to be 15 double electorates, and 20 single ones, and those 15 double electorates are in exactly the same position as they were before. A majority which can return one member for a district can just as easily return two, and we shall have exactly the same kind of men returned as before. There is no provision by which the minority can make itself heard, or which will bring better men forward. I see in the measure no departure from the system of single electorates; but I see very plainly that the change will be at the expense of the single electorates, for by clause 8, additional members are given to districts when their population amounts to a certain number. Thus the double electorates can obtain an additional member in half the time that the single electorates can, and so far from that being an improvement on the old system, it is the reverse. If an additional member is to be given to a district when its population is increased by 5,000, it stands to reason that Brisbane with its four members—as it will have if this Bill passes—will very soon get another, while in places like Bandanba, years must elapse before they get the additional population to entitle them to additional representation. Instead of an improvement in the single electorate system, we have the same system with still greater evils added to it. The Bill contains no provision for the representation of minorities. The Premier has declared that he does not believe in the representation of minorities, and would be sorry to see a minority ruling the colony. There need be no fear of a minority ruling the colony. What we want is to represent the minority as well as the majority, to allow the minority an opportunity of expressing their opinions in this chamber. There are many ways in which that might be done, but the Premier seems to imply that it can be done by establishing a few double electorates. But it will not have the slightest effect in that direction. A majority who can elect one member can elect two. The better way would have been to have given treble electorates, allowing voters only to vote for two. My next objection is to the increase of members from 43 to 55. I was rather surprised to hear the reason given by the Premier for this increase—namely, that in the opinion of the honourable member for Port Curtis, eight years ago, a similar number was required to properly represent the colony. But since that time things have altered considerably. A strong feeling has been expressed regarding the payment of members, and that ought to be taken into consideration in settling a question of this kind. But the Premier did not

correctly quote the opinion of the honourable member for Port Curtis. That honourable member said that as we were passing an Electoral Bill that was to last the colony for twenty years, there was not the slightest doubt but that the population would increase during that time to justify it. The Premier also forgets that there are provisions in this Bill for increasing the number of members, and at our present rate of progression, by the time the census has been taken twice—with a six years' interval—the House will consist of sixty-six members, or eleven more than are now proposed. Before deciding that the number of members should be increased to fifty-five, some good grounds must be shown for the change. It is quite competent for the Premier to prove, if he can, that the intelligent opinion of the colony cannot be represented by forty-three members, or that fifty-five members are required to do the work of the House. I do not think that either position can be proved. I appeal to the sense of the House whether, during the last four years, we have not always been fully up to the work of the House, and whether we were not competent to have gone through much more committee work than we did. That we do not require more members on that ground I am quite satisfied. If you select your fifty-five members on exactly the same principle as your forty-three, I do not see how you are going to get a different expression of opinion. Taking the electorates in groups, and increasing each in the proportion of forty-three to fifty-five, and giving each the number of members due to it, I find that altogether only five members would be displaced, and if the fifty-five only varied in opinion from the forty-three by the transfer of a member from Ipswich to Brisbane, I cannot see how it can make any difference. We shall have, in fact, no difference of opinion whatever, and we shall gain, therefore, no advantage from increasing the number of members. We all know the difficulty of getting good men to represent constituencies, especially those which are at a long distance from the seat of Government. This Bill will simply add to that difficulty, and can only result in the return of men of inferior qualities. The increased number of members would be, in my opinion, a mistake, and the Premier has not proved that such increase is wanted. Before I refer to the other points which I have to notice, as I have been informed that several honourable members cannot understand the return showing the three bases of representation, with my corrections I should wish to attempt an explanation which will make it clearer. In order to show the relative amount of representation that each district would have on the different bases, the Gov-

ernment have furnished us with a return. There are three bases of representation shown in it—the total population, the male adult population, and the mean of the two, which is the Government basis. The way in which the population basis is ascertained, according to the Bill, is by adding the gross to the adult male population and the half is taken as the population of the colony for the purposes of representation. The first column gives us the number of members to which each district is entitled under the total population basis; the next, the number under the adult male basis, and the third, the number under the mean basis. For instance, group one, under the total population basis, is entitled to 15'64 members, being the exact proportion of 50,790 to 178,589. Going on to the third column, the meaning of the figures there, with regard to group one, is that on the mean population basis, it is entitled to 14'46 members. I say that this is the wrong number of members, that the proper number is 15'05, and that the figures in the third column are wrong, with respect to all the groups. I say that not one of the proportions is right in that column. The error may have arisen from a blunder or designedly, but its effect is to give a wrong idea of the percentage of representation to which each district is entitled on the Government basis. My next objection is that the Bill does not carry out its own principles. There have been advocates of the total population, and the male adult basis, and a great deal may be said on both sides. The Government propose to strike a mean between the two, to average the two, and thus to give a certain amount of satisfaction to both parties. With respect to the Government plan, I cannot see what can be said for it, except that it is a compromise. I cannot understand on what principle all the women and children are to be reckoned as half in the representation. If they have a certain value for representation, surely Polynesians and Chinese ought also to have some value, be it more than nothing or less than nothing. It cannot be said that their exact value is nothing. I put this forward as a reason to show, that to reckon women and children is founded on a wrong principle, and is inconsistent with other elements which ought to be considered in the representation of the colony. As to its being a compromise, the honourable the Premier, when introducing the measure, ought to have stated the effect of his own figures. If I had charge of a Bill of this kind I should examine what effect it had upon the representation of the different groups. I have prepared a table, which I will lay upon the table of the House, in order to be printed for the information of honourable members; it has given me a great deal of trouble in preparing, there being so many figures involved,

This table shows the electorates as they are grouped in the table furnished by the Government, and I have put them in the same way. The first shows the groups; next, the number of members given by the Bill to each, and so forth, as the table itself will show:—

GROUPS.	Number of Members in Bill.		Number due on total population basis.		Number due on adult male basis.		Number due on mean basis.		Number due on corrected mean basis.		Number increased in proportion to number at present returned.	
	Bill											
Comprising North Brisbane, Fortitude Valley, South Brisbane, Enoggera, Moreton, Bulimba, Oxley, and Logan... ..	12	15	13	14	15	12						
Comprising Ipswich, Bremer, Rosewood, Fassifern, and Stanley... ..	7	7	5	6	7	8						
Comprising Drayton and Toowoomba, Aubigny, Darling Downs, Warwick, Dalby, and Carnarvon ...	8	9	8	8	9	8						
Comprising Condamine, Maranoa, and Warrego...	4	3	4	4	3	5						
Comprising Maryborough, Gympie, Wide Bay, Mulgrave, and Burnett and Taroom	7	7	7	7	7	6						
Comprising Rockhampton, Blackall, and Port Curtis.	4	4	4	4	4	4						
Comprising Normanby, Clermont, Leichhardt, and Mitchell	5	3	5	4	3	6						
Comprising Mackay, Bowen, Townsville, Kennedy, Burke, and Cook... ..	8	6	8	7	7	6						

So that, with one exception, the district of Cook, which gets an additional member under the mean population basis, the numbers were exactly the same as on the whole population basis. And if the Premier offers this measure as a compromise between the gross population and the electoral population, all I can say is, that it will only affect the one district of Cook, and it is easy to see that really there is no compromise at all. There has been no compromise; and it would only have been right if the honourable the Premier had followed up his calculations, and shown the result of them. Speaking still to the point of my objection to the Bill, that it does not follow out its own principles—which is that the members of each district should be in direct proportion to the amount of mean population—there is a schedule given of the members actually proposed at the present time. Supposing the Government had not told us on what basis their apportionment of members was founded, but had left us simply with the tables, to which I have been referring, what would be our position? Left to our own analysis of them,

we should have found that on the population basis three groups were on that basis, and five not; on the adult male population basis six groups were on it, and two not; and on the mean population basis three groups were on it, and five not. Comparing the Bill with the total mean basis, six of the groups are on the adult male basis, and two are not; and yet the Government had brought in a Bill on what they said was the mean population basis. If one member is taken from the Ipswich group and given to Brisbane, you would have the adult male population basis pure and simple. The Bill is thoroughly inconsistent with itself, and is a sop to certain constituencies that are considered well worth conciliating in the present crisis. If the honourable member for Port Curtis had brought in a Bill on principles he had advocated in this House, the apportionment of members in this Bill would have thoroughly represented it. Now, sir, I come to a point which must have been a hard matter for honourable members to understand—clause 8 in the Bill—and which the Premier should have said more upon, than that it involved principles which no one had cared to deal with until he had the courage to do so. The Government might have supplied this House with statistics, but as they had not done so, he had himself been at that trouble, so as to show what would be the effect of the Bill when the next census was taken, and to where we may be drifting. I was not in a position to get all the information accessible to Ministers, and I had to assume that the population would increase in the same ratio in the next six years that it had done in the last. I took six years instead of five—the period between one census and another—and I did so simply because I had for my guidance only the increase in population between 1872 and 1878, showing the actual increase in each group of the electorates between those years. I calculated that the population would increase in the same ratio in the next six years as in the last, and I find that at the end of the six years two constituencies would be entitled to an additional member, Brisbane and Fortitude Valley. All the difference in the next six years will, therefore, be an increase of two members, making the total number fifty-seven. According to the Bill, I next divide the population again by this fifty-seven to get a fresh quota. The quota is necessarily diminished on account of the increased two members, and I find that no additional members are required. The first trial quota will prove to be the final one, and the House will stand with fifty-seven members instead of fifty-five. I could see quite well that this would not give enough information, so I extended my calculations to another six years, supposing that the population would increase

during the next six years in the same ratio. I found what the population of all the different electorates would be on that basis in 1890—twelve years ahead. I find from the first quota that the following constituencies would be entitled to additional members:—Brisbane four, instead of three; Cook three, instead of two; and all the others remain as before. That would increase the number to fifty-nine. Having got the increase of members, I come to the second trial quota. Having divided the population by the increased number of members, I find the following result: Brisbane and Fortitude Valley remain as before; Enoggera gets three, instead of two; Mackay two, instead of one; Townsville two, instead of one; Kennedy three instead of two; and Cook, four instead of three. That gives an increase of five to the number of members; and the number by the operation of this second trial quota is increased to sixty-four. I divide it again into the different electorates, and I find this result:—Fortitude Valley gets four instead of three; South Brisbane, three instead of two; and the others remain as they are. The number of members, twelve years hence, would, therefore, be sixty-six. Honourable members will now see the value of a clause which has been supposed to have been inserted to save favourite constituencies. It runs thus:—

“That the number of members to be returned for any district shall not by virtue of the foregoing provisions be reduced below the number specified in the fourth section of this Act.”

Honourable members will see the operation of this clause directly it comes to be applied. The result after the census of 1890, may be summarised thus:—Three quadruple electorates—North Brisbane, Fortitude Valley, and Cook; three triple—South Brisbane, Enoggera, and Kennedy; three double electorates—Condamine, Mackay, Townsville, have a population over number required; eight double electorates—Bremer, Stanley, Toowoomba, Darling Downs, Maryborough, Wide Bay, Rockhampton, Leichhardt, have a population under the number required, and would be reduced to one member, but for clause 11; eleven single electorates—Moreton, Bulimba, Oxley, Logan, Aubigny, Warwick, Maranoa, Warrego, Gympie, Mulgrave, Bowen, have a population over the number required; twelve single electorates—Ipswich, Rosewood, Fassifern, Dalby, Carnarvon, Burnett and Taroom, Blackall, Port Curtis, Normanby, Clermont, Mitchell, Burke, have a population under that required. In other words, were the principle of the Bill to have full play without proviso to clause 11, twenty constituencies would be disfranchised of one member, and twelve of these totally disfranchised, being single electorates. This is understood by hon-

ourable members to be a Bill to equalize the representation of this House; but if honourable gentlemen will examine the table which I hold—and which, if printed, would afford useful information to honourable members—they will find that there will be many anomalies. Stanley, for instance, will return two members with a population of 5,900, and Oxley one member with 7,815, and Oxley with 7,815 have one member, while Normanby had one with 2,224. This is one anomaly picked out to exemplify the anomalies which may arise under this Bill, which is nominally to equalize representation. I have omitted to give the result of the changes in the first Census, supposed to be taken in 1884. The result would be—North Brisbane escapes, having four members instead of three by 140; Cook escapes having three members instead of two by 68. Of the triple electorates, two have a population over the exact number required. Of the double electorates, five—viz., South Brisbane, Enoggera, Toowoomba, Kennedy, and Cook—have a population over the number required; and eight, viz., Bremer, Stanley, Darling Downs, Condamine, Maryborough, Wide Bay, Rockhampton, and Leichhardt have a population under the number required, and would be reduced to one member but for clause 11. Of the single electorates, fourteen—viz., Moreton, Bulimba, Oxley, Logan, Ipswich, Aubigny, Warwick, Maranoa, Gympie, Mulgrave, Blackall, Mackay, Bowen, Townsville—have a population over the number required; and eleven—viz., Rosewood, Fassifern, Dalby, Carnarvon, Warrego, Burnett and Taroom, Port Curtis, Normanby, Clermont, Mitchell, Burke—have a population under the number required. That is, if the principle of the Bill was allowed to have full play without the proviso to clause 11, nineteen constituencies would be disfranchised of one member and eleven of these totally disfranchised. The only effect of the increase of population in six years would, therefore, be to increase the number of members to fifty-nine, and in the next Census to sixty-six. I have clearly explained to the House the basis of my figures. It would have been competent for me to exercise my judgment, and to fix upon the probable percentage of increase, but the figures might have been cavilled at by opponents, and doubted by friends. I propose now to analyse and eliminate from the facts some of the calculations which I think are not likely to be realised. In the six years between 1872 and 1878 the increase in the population of the Northern district is put down at 125 per cent.—that is to say, for the districts of Mackay, Bowen, Kennedy, Burke, and Cook. We all know that that increase is due to the influx of population from without, and it is possible that a rush of the same kind

might take place again; but it is very improbable that it would be in geometrical proportion, and it is evident that such calculation applied to the Northern district must give wrong results. It will be at once seen that these figures give a false return, and I shall, therefore, eliminate that increase from the result. Honourable members will agree with me that it is proper to do so, because the increase is abnormal. All increases which are due to the increase of population, by natural sources or by natural means, may be called normal, and should be accepted. Whether they will double in the next I do not know, but I am inclined to think they will not. Eliminating therefore, from the increase that has been put down to this northern district—Bowen, Townsville, Kennedy, Burke, and Cook—the result of the operation of this Bill in 1890 will be the following:—Brisbane, instead of having two members, would have four members; Fortitude Valley, instead of two, four; South Brisbane, instead of two, would have three; Enoggera, instead of two, would have three; and every other electorate exactly the same. Is not that a miserable conclusion that this Bill is going to bring us to? All this talk about a fair representation of the colony is to end in giving six members to the metropolis. I consider that a miserable result. Every man of common sense in this colony will acknowledge that the country districts ought to be represented more in proportion than the town districts. I say this Bill is inapplicable to the circumstances of the colony, and the Premier admitted the other night that such a basis as population alone should not be taken. Look round the House and see how many members really represent Brisbane. I myself have been as much a member for Brisbane as any member in the House. Of course, when the Government has been badgered about small local matters, I have not supported that course, but knowing that what is going to conduce to the welfare of Brisbane must conduce to the welfare of the colony, I have supported it. I say the bulk of the members in this House represent Brisbane thoroughly; and if it had not a single member it is well represented, and yet the only result of this Bill, after an operation of twelve years, is to give six members to the metropolis. I say that is the conclusion we should all strive as far as possible to avoid. If Brisbane wants additional members, why not ask for them; but do not let us commit ourselves to a system of which we do not perfectly see the result. There is another point that cannot be overlooked. I have shown that, but for the proviso in clause 11, twenty out of the electorates at the end of the time would be actually disfranchised

—either be reduced to one member or be disfranchised. Now, sir, on the principle of this Bill, why should they not be disfranchised if they have not sufficient population to entitle them to a member, whatever that population may be? The Government have applied a system of increasing members that proves the thing actually to be an absurdity, because, in spite of themselves, if they work it long enough, they will work it into a system of small pocket boroughs. I had hoped that an effort would have been made to have applied some remedy to the single electorate system, but my hopes have been dashed by the Bill I have before me. I have shown that instead of providing any means by which the evil effects of the single electorate system would be ameliorated, this Bill serves to intensify them. I have shown, also, that the operation of the Bill tends to give an undue proportion of members to the populous districts, and instead of having the evils of the single electorate system remedied, they will be increased. If, for instance, the quota required by a constituency is 5,000 it must make up that number, but in the case of Brisbane, or any other electorate returning four, three, or two members, it has not to make up 20,000, 15,000, or 10,000, but simply 5,000, so that the whole of the single electorates are handicapped against the double electorates; and you will have the double, treble, and quadruple electorates represented much more in proportion than the single electorates. I leave it for the Government to explain how it comes that they have introduced a Bill so inconsistent with their principles—that they should advocate one principle and make the Bill upon another. I have no doubt that other honourable members far more competent than I am will be able to point out the reasons which have induced the Government to alter the electorates in the way they have. I can see no reason for a great many of those alterations, and the Premier certainly gave us no information that suggests other than party purposes. Honourable members, like myself, have seen party purposes in a great many of them. I think, wherever the boundaries are changed the Government should show good reason for the change—whether it is impossible for the department to make out different boundaries, or so as to secure to the colony better representation. I leave the Bill now. It is not at all the Bill the country expected. It does not mitigate or do away with any of the evils under which we have been suffering; and it is leading us in a direction which I am sure honourable members have not followed up to the end. I have tried as far as I could to follow it, and have shown what I believe the result will be, and I am sure it will not be satisfactory to the country.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said: The honourable gentleman who has just sat down has made a great many objections to the Bill, and, in conclusion, he made some suggestions as to the motives which induced the Government to make certain changes in some of the electorates, and I am glad he did so, because it has given me an opportunity of referring to what I might otherwise have forgotten. I say that any man or party of men who would attempt to redistribute the electorates of this colony with any personal motives to suit the particular moment, would be fools, because it is impossible to predicate even for one year, or even less than that, what the position of the electorates may be. I think there is only one motive that could actuate any sane man in dealing with a subject of this kind—a subject much more difficult to deal with than it may look to critics—and that is, to make the fairest distribution of the colony that they can, having regard to its geographical features, to the present distribution of population, and to the signs of the times as to the prospective distribution of it. A great number of the honourable member's arguments would have been very good if addressed to a body of men framing a constitution for a colony not yet settled—who were dealing with it, as to where population might settle, and so on, *à priori*. But in dealing with the electorates of this colony, we have no such problem before us. We have a colony nearly every part of which is more or less supplied with a history—short, it is true—of eighteen years—and from the history of the past two or three years, we have seen where population has settled and where it has not—what parts of the colony are stationary and what are increasing. We have seen the changes since the last Electoral Act, and with these and all other matters before us, it was our duty to endeavour to make the fairest distribution we could, geographically, politically, and in point of population. The honourable member made several charges against the Bill, and one not so much against the Bill as against the statistics of the Registrar-General. I do not know whether the Government is responsible for that. We, at least, can only work upon the materials we have.

Mr. THOMPSON: There is no signature.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The return is dated from the Registrar-General's office. I never saw a return such as this signed by anybody. Does the honourable member suggest that we prepared the return?

Mr. THOMPSON: We want to know who did.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I presume it came from the Registrar-General.

Mr. THOMPSON: It came from his office.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not know whether he prepared it himself or not.

That is a matter in which the Government are not concerned. The only thing they have to do is to get the best material they can, and I have no doubt this return is as accurate as it could be prepared at the present time. It is, after all, simply an extension of the Census of 1876, which is the nearest basis we have. The calculation is stated to be made up as follows:—

“This return is calculated upon the figures shown by the last Census enumeration and the subsequent increase from excess of births over deaths, and excess of arrivals over departures by sea. It is impossible to arrive at the exact population in the interval between two Census enumerations, because it cannot be ascertained how many may arrive in the colony, or leave, overland; and in the same way there is no possibility of estimating the interchange between the several districts by land. Persons arriving by sea are soon to be distributed through the country. In the district of Cook, almost all the increase from excess of arrivals over departures is no doubt retained within that district. In compiling this return, the increase from excess of births over deaths, and from excess of arrivals over departures by sea, has been ascertained first for the district of Cook, secondly for the remainder of the Northern Territorial Division, thirdly for the Central, and fourthly for the Southern Division of the colony, including Wide Bay and Burnett, and is then distributed within these four divisions in the proportion of the population of the several Electoral and Census Districts as found at the Census.”

I do not know how you are to get anything more fair. The result is that, instead of taking the figures of the Census of 1876, we take these, and have the same relative proportion, but different figures; that is all. But apart from the figures, our own knowledge will enable us in a great many instances to correct them, and I wish to point out that that also has been taken into consideration as an element in the calculation. Now, one word as to the fairness of the mode of arriving at the estimated population. With regard to the district of Cook, people must get there either by Cooktown, or Cairns, or Port Douglas, and we know that the majority go there and return by sea, so that no doubt there is a fair estimate of the arrivals and departures at that part of the colony. The taking the Northern district, including Townsville, Bowen, and Mackay, people go there either by sea or overland; but I venture to say, from information I have received from persons living in that part of the country, that quite as many come back as go there overland. With regard to the Central districts, the arrivals and departures overland are about the same. So that it will be found on the whole that we have got as nearly as possible the correct population of the colony. The honourable member has pointed out two cases where he says the figures are erroneous. He said that in the

Mitchell district the white population was under-estimated, whilst in the case of Mackay it was over-estimated. He may be right in both cases; but as this professes to be only an approximate estimate, what then? Supposing the Mitchell is under-estimated, it does not affect the population of that group in any way, if the figures are prepared on the principle on which the Registrar-General says they are. The honourable member appears to imagine that each constituency has been calculated by itself, but the Registrar-General points out that the grouping of the various electorates has been made proportionally; and so with regard to the Mitchell possibly these Kanakas of which the honourable member speaks may be in the Leichhardt. So that after all, if that is all the error the honourable member can find, it is not very great. If we cannot trust these returns, then we have no data to go upon, and must wait until the next Census, as during each year until then the estimates will be getting more inaccurate. The honourable member next attacked the table showing the groups. There are three sets of tables, showing first, the total population; next the male adult population, and next the mean of those two tables. Each set is divided into three columns showing the population, the percentage, and the proportional part of fifty-five. So that the third set, whilst showing the mean of the total, and male adult population, gives also the mean percentage and the proportional part of fifty-five. That is what it shows, but the honourable member says it would be more correct if, instead of doing that it had proceeded on this basis, that we should take the 119,300, the total mean population, and find what relation the population of each group bore to the 119,300, and by that means we should arrive at a correct estimate. That would be more strictly accurate, perhaps, but after all, the difference in any one case would be only about decimal 5. I will tell honourable members the difference. In the East Moreton group the figures given are accurate, if not scientifically accurate according to the honourable member, and the difference is this, that whilst in the table the percentage is put down at 14.46, it is, according to the honourable member, 15.05. But does that affect the principle of the Bill, bearing in mind the number of members we propose to give to that group is twelve? I think not. Next comes group 2, comprising West Moreton; our figures are 6.23, those of the honourable member, are 6.59, thus bringing them a little nearer to the seven members, we propose to give them by this Bill. Then, in regard to group 3, instead of our percentage of 8.50, he makes it 8.7. Next group 4, comprising the South-western district, instead of 3.52, the honourable mem-

ber makes it 3.12, and we propose to give them four members. The percentage in group 5, is 7.12, and the honourable member makes it 7.20. In group 6, it is 3.94 according to the return, and the honourable member makes it 4 exactly. Group 7 is put down at 3.90, and he says it is 3.49; and group 8 is altered by him from 7.33 to 6.88. The only practical lesson we can learn from that is this, that we ought to take one member from the Northern group and give it to East Moreton, but I do not think we ought to do anything of the kind. So much for the tables, which I shall refer to again to show how very fair the Bill is. The honourable member next said that there was no necessity for increasing the number of members. Now, we must look at this from a practical point of view. Is there anything magical in this number of forty-three that we should adhere to it? I rather think that if the people were consulted they would say that there ought to be additional members. I will, however, give a practical reason for increasing the number. In the first place, the present distribution of electorates is not fair; some districts are fairly represented, whilst some are not fairly represented in relation to others, and thus, if you continue to have the number of members limited to forty-three, you must either take a member from one district and give it to another, or throw one district into another. Will the honourable member take that view and apply it, and see what two districts can be thrown together, or what district can have one member taken from it? I think I shall be able to show that there is not a single electorate from which a member could be taken away, or which could be thrown into another. I will give an instance: take the Central District; we propose to give an additional member to it, not that it in itself demands it, but because the population of Rockhampton has so largely increased that it is entitled to two members. But can anybody throw Normanby into the Leichhardt, or the Leichhardt into the Mitchell? Can the honourable member point out how that can be done fairly with that or any other groups? The Northern district, again, is entitled to another member, and where will you take that additional member from? You could not take it from the Central group. Questions of this magnitude can only be dealt with on a practical basis, as the honourable member for Port Curtis attempted to do in 1872. You cannot tell when you begin what increase you want. You cannot begin by saying, "We will have fifty members, no more nor no less," and then proceed to divide the colony into fifty squares. It does not follow that we started with a foregone conclusion, to have a House of exactly fifty-five members; but we found on going into the matter, that fifty-five was the

number which could give the fairest representation; and we could not do otherwise without taking away members from districts already represented. The honourable member says that no remedy is provided against the evils of the single electorate system. One would suppose, from what has been said, that single electorates were an unmitigated curse. I know of no part of the world where there are not single electorates, but if a district is entitled to two members give it two. Honourable members on this side of the House would probably not object to Mitchell and Warrego being joined together, and returning two members, for they are purely pastoral districts, and their members have uniformly acted against the party now in power. But should a tract of country as large as Victoria be made into only one constituency? The local element is a most important feature in a system of parliamentary government. What, in England, is the proportion of double to single electorates—or in Scotland, Ireland, America, France, or any other country governed by representative institutions? The number of single electorates in all far exceeds that of double ones. We do not want theoretical systems, and so long as one keeps to the rough-and-ready system that has worked so well for hundreds of years, we must have some single electorates. We cannot determine *à priori* which shall be single and which shall be double electorates. We must see where the population is, and where the interests are. For instance, you might return five members for North Brisbane, Enoggera and Moreton taken together; but if you did, it would only result that Brisbane would return the whole five. And same thing would happen at Toowoomba and Rockhampton under similar circumstances. But such a result would be most unfair, and where you have entirely distinct interests you must have separation. The practical test is, which of the electorates can fairly be joined together; and as we have not got a perfectly level country with an equally distributed population, we must take things as we find them, and make the best of the materials at our disposal. The honourable member says we have made no provision for the representation of minorities. There are only two methods of doing that which have ever been really tried. One is Hare's system, but I do not think any member who thoroughly understands it would ever propose it in this colony. The other is the one mentioned by the honourable member, to give three members to an electorate, and allow voters to vote for only two. The latter system has been tried in a few places in England, and if we had followed the example of the mother country, it would have been said, "Here is a miserable attempt

to represent minorities; the opportunity to do so is only given in two or three places." I say that minorities are represented; but to carry out this principle to its extreme, the minority in the House ought to have two or three seats in the Cabinet. Our system of Government does not work on that principle. Our principle is government by majorities, and the minority always gets well represented in the electorates. The honourable member assumes that progress in all parts of the colony is the same, and that opinions are alike. If the opinion of the House is two to one in favour of any particular view, I venture to say that the opinion of the whole colony is pretty much the same. Minorities gain in some constituencies what they lose in others, and all are represented alike in this House. It has been said that the self-adjustment system proposed in this Bill would be unfair, because the double electorates would increase in population more rapidly than the single ones. But that is an objection, not to this Bill in particular, but to the nature of things; and we cannot help the nature of things. The honourable member also said that the increase in the number of members would not result in any difference of opinion. You might get the same opinions and possibly the same men, but I hardly think so; indeed, I fancy that in many cases both the opinions and the men would be different. And what about the districts? Are they not to be consulted? We are told that there is a difficulty in getting members, and we were told the same thing in 1872. I do not believe it, and I think we are no worse off in that respect now than we were before 1872, when we were told we should never get ten more members. The House has declared that there shall be a change, and the only practicable change is the one we propose. The honourable member also complains that our basis of calculation is unfair. The basis which the Liberal party contended for in 1872, was the total population and not the adult male population. An adult male basis does not necessarily represent the settlement of the country. Where there is a large population exclusive of male adults, there is generally a guarantee that the country is settled. I know of no country where the electoral power is distributed on the basis of the adult male population. There are, no doubt, reasons why certain parties in the colony and in the House contend for it, because it would give them a preponderance which their numbers do not entitle them to. In the district of Cook, and in some of the pastoral districts, the population consists almost entirely of adult males; but it is an unsettled population, coming and going, and does not represent the permanent interests of the colony nearly as much as the

population in the settled districts does. We might take the case of a gold field. A rush takes place and an enormous population is attracted. Supposing an Electoral Bill were passed immediately case, after a Census was taken; in such a case, if we were to adopt the adult male basis, the electorate might receive two or three members, and yet in two or three years the locality might be deserted. There are districts where that process has happened. We say that both bases should be taken into consideration and that having arrived at a basis, its principles should be applied as nearly as possible. The first step is to divide the colony into groups of electorates. It may be said by some honourable members that this is localism extended, but there must be localism to a certain extent under every system but theirs. Now take the groups and see how fairly the Government scheme has been worked out. The first group, comprising North Brisbane, Fortitude Valley, South Brisbane, Enoggera, Moreton, Bulimba, Oxley, and Logan, has 28.44 per cent. of the total population. 24.13 per cent. of the male adult; and 26.29 per cent. of the mean, or 27.35, according to the honourable member for Maranoa, corresponding to 14.46 or 15.95 as its proportional part of the total number of proposed members. We propose to give it 12. Of course Brisbane is an exceptional group, and I have to admit that, according to the population basis, it has been unfairly treated; but we must take the matter from a practical point of view. A metropolis seldom gets as much representation as it is entitled on the population basis, being compensated in some other way. We must also, however, remember that Brisbane is not a capital in the same way as Melbourne, where an enormous proportion of the population of the colony is concentrated. Taking the second group, comprising Ipswich, Bremer, Rosewood, Fassifern, and Stanley, we find that it is entitled on the total population basis, to 6.97 members, on the male adult to 5.48, and on the mean to 6.23, or, according to the member for Maranoa to 6.59. How many members ought it to have on the mean basis? If the honourable member is correct—and I admit that his figures are scientifically correct—the group is entitled to more than six. We propose to give it seven.

Mr. McILWRAITH: I did not say the number allotted was wrong.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The honourable member said everything in the column was wrong without particularising, and I am going to show what his generalisations amount to when tested by particulars. It must be recollected that the population of the second group is understated, as settlement in it has progressed considerably particu-

larly in Fassifern, Rosewood Scrub, and the upper part of the Brisbane River. Then we came to group three, embracing Drayton and Toowoomba, Aubigny, Darling Downs, Warwick, Dalby, and Carnarvon; they are entitled to 8.83 members on the total population basis, 8.18 on the male adult, and 8.50 on the mean. We propose to give them eight members. Group 4, comprising Condamine, Maranoa, and Warrego, is entitled to 2.72 members on the total population basis, 4.32 on the male adult, and between three and four on the mean. We propose to give them four. It must be remembered that there is a surplus over in Brisbane, and it must be distributed somewhere. It must also be recollected that we do not take any member from any group of electorates. We next come to group 5, comprising Maryborough, Gympie, Wide Bay, Mulgrave, and Burnett and Taroom. They are entitled to 7.30 members on the total population basis, 6.94 on the male adult, and a little more than seven on the mean. We propose that they shall have seven. Group 6 embraces Rockhampton, Blackall, and Port Curtis. On the total population basis, they are entitled to 4.05 members, on the male adult to 3.83, and on the mean to 3.94, and we propose to give them exactly four. Next we come to group 7, comprising Normanby, Clermont, Leichhardt, and Mitchell. Here we deal unfairly—not to the district, but to other parts of the colony; that is the greatest objection to the Bill. They are entitled to only three members on the total population basis, to nearly five on the adult male, and to between three and four on the mean; but at present they have five, and on the principle that no group shall be reduced in its number of members, we have left the number at five. I will show presently that we could not, without the grossest unfairness, have joined any two electorates in the group together. Next we come to group 8, comprising Mackay, Bowen, Townsville, Kennedy, Burke and Cook. They are entitled to 7.33 members on the mean basis of population—or 6.88, according to the honourable member for Maranoa—in any case to about seven members; we propose to give them eight. Now let us apply the principle to the different districts. If honourable members will refer to Table II. of the return prepared by the Registrar-General, they will find that the average of the total population is 3,248, of the male adult 1,091, and of the mean 2,169. Our next step was to divide the districts as nearly as possible, so as to get these figures represented. We could not divide equally because people do not settle equally in the colony. North Brisbane and Fortitude Valley are exceptional cases, and do not get so many members as they are entitled to numerically. South Brisbane has not so many members as its

total basis entitles it to, and has just a shade more than its adult basis, but population in South Brisbane has largely increased; this is an instance in which the population is not correctly represented by the tables; it is probably ten per cent. more than stated. In Enoggera, population has also increased, at Toowong especially, since the last Census. The same can be said of Fortitude Valley. Coming to Moreton, I think it probable that the numbers have been understated, but it will be seen that it still has nearly the average number, its total population being 3,322, as against 3,248, and its adult male 1,041, as against 1,091. Then we have Bulimba, where the population is larger than the proportion required; but Bulimba is a stationary district, and its population is overstated in the return. Oxley has largely increased in population, and the numbers in the return are understated. Oxley and Bulimba are about equal, although they may appear in the return as unequal. Logan is about right, the figures being probably a little understated. Ipswich has probably not increased its population, but Rosewood, Fassifern, and Stanley doubtless have. The population of Bremer is 6,409, which is rather less than the number required for two members, but it is also an increasing district. Will any one dispute that Rosewood is an increasing district? The next Census will show, I am sure, that the figures are understated. I say that, although the figures for the West Moreton electorates may appear a little less than the average, it will probably turn out that the actual population is a little in excess. Then we come to the Darling Downs. The present electorate of Drayton and Toowoomba contains a total population of 6,170 people, and 1,673 adult males; that is not enough for two members. If we had endeavoured to separate them, we would have found a population of 5,300 for Toowoomba; that is too many for one member. We therefore take the suburbs around the towns and give them an additional member. Then we come to the electorate of Aubigny, which is not large enough for two members, and therefore a portion is taken from it and added to the Darling Downs, to which two members are given, while Warwick has one, the result being that each electorate has its right number of members. They could not, in fact, have been dealt with in any other way without exposing the Government to the charge of unfairness towards either one or the other. Coming to Northern Downs, the population was insufficient for one member. It was, therefore, proposed to add them with the Western part of Carnarvon to the Balonne, and to give the district so formed two members. Going further west, we come to Maranoa and Warrego. Each of these had one member, and we propose to leave them so.

And if we go north, to Maryborough and Gympie, we find that, although they are not entitled to two members, they are each entitled to more than one. The population adjoining Maryborough in the North is considerable, and by taking it in, the town is fairly entitled to two members. Gympie might be thrown into Wide Bay, and made a double electorate, but that would not give a fair voice to the country parts of the district. It is therefore reduced in size, while Wide Bay receives what it is entitled to—two members, being, as it is, an increasing district. Then we have Bundaberg to deal with, which you cannot join to anything except Mount Perry, and we, therefore, leave it with Mount Perry, taking away the Southern part of the district approaching Maryborough. Burnett and Taroom are to form an electorate, Burnett having, so far as I know of it, a stationary population for some time past. Taroom could only be joined to Burnett or Maranoa, and Maranoa is large enough already. Taroom is part of the Southern Financial District, and we have thought it desirable to add it to an electorate of the Southern Division. We next come to Rockhampton, with slightly enlarged boundaries, enough to entitle it to two members, which we propose to give it. There is no way of dealing with the matter fairly, except by throwing in the suburban populations around the towns with the towns. If the suburban population was added to a country district the country population would be swamped. Blackall interlaces Port Curtis, but the populations are not so evenly arranged as that we could divide them exactly equally. We come now to Normanby, Clermont, Leichhardt, and Mitchell. Clermont has been a separate electorate for a long time, and has nearly sufficient population to entitle it to a separate member. If we were to add it to Normanby, the latter would be swamped. In the interest of the colony at large, trying to be fair to all, we consider that no district should be swamped in this way; and, therefore, we propose that Clermont shall stand as it is. I am not arguing now from the same point of view as the honourable gentleman; but I am dealing with the practical difficulties which must arise in deciding upon matters of this kind. To Normanby it was proposed to give one member, and to the Leichhardt two. It might be said that in the arrangement of this electorate, Government had not acted fairly; but if honourable members would only show us what could be fairer, their opinions would be of considerably more value. As to the Mitchell, although the figures are much smaller than the average, still the district is increasing, and when the next Census is taken it will, I believe, have a population about equal to the average

number; and will, in fact, be in point of numbers a model electorate, and I hope that it will be represented by a model member. Mackay and Bowen come next, and Bowen is entitled to nearly two members; but as there is no reason why they should be joined together—and the population entitles them to two members—we have given them one each; and in doing so, I believe, the population of these electorates is not over-estimated but, rather underestimated. Townsville had one member allotted to it; Kennedy two members, and Burke one member. And then we come to the district of Cook, in which the total male adult population is such as to entitle it to three members, if the representation is based on that basis. But we do not know how long they may be there. Should new gold discoveries be made in the North, they would probably be in other parts of the electorate, and the population would remain in the electorate. The mean population is 4,580, and the district is entitled to two members on that basis. As to the principle of the Bill, I would here say, although the figures are not in some instances thoroughly accurate, they have been worked out as well as they can be worked out at present, and that as to the boundaries of electorates, we cannot alter the geography of the country, but that having found out the population, our duty is to so arrange the districts as to give them the best representation that we can. It has been a very difficult matter to give natural boundaries to some of the electorates; but I believe that those difficulties could not have been got over in a fairer way than the Government have got over them, if indeed in so fair a way. As to the double electorates, there are perhaps some few more which could be joined together, without any disadvantage, such, for instance, as North Brisbane and Fortitude Valley, and Mackay and Bowen. Bulimba and Oxley might be joined territorially, but their interests are different. The next that might be joined would be Bremer and Rosewood, taking the whole of the West Moreton District east of the Little Liverpool Range. Aubigny and Darling Downs could be joined and return three members, but Aubigny would always be the more densely populated, and could command the electorate. Looking through the list of electorates, there will hardly be found any others that could be advantageously joined. The geographical features of the country have been recognised throughout as the proper basis, and I hold that it is upon that basis that representation should always go. Except in the five cases I have mentioned, there are no instances in which more double electorates can be made without positive unfairness. I do not think the Government are open to the charge of

having perpetuated the evils of single electorates; and that those evils exist I think is not so much the fault of the Government as the circumstances of the colony. For my own part, I agree with the honourable member for Maranoa in attributing the evils laid to the charge of the single electorate system to the absence of Local Government. The only practical difference between single and double electorates is, that there are not in the former case quite so many things for the member to look after. If critics on that point will refer to the so-called log-rolling in the past, they will find that the log-rolling has been principally done by districts which were sufficiently represented by one member. The honourable member, made one objection, which I should like to answer. He asked why Chinamen and Polynesians should be left out? I think it is the first time that it has been suggested in this Parliament that Chinese and Kanakas shall be represented, or even be reckoned as a basis of the representation. I find that in the tables which were prepared by the honourable member for Port Curtis, in arranging the basis of representation in 1872, they were excluded. I do not see why Chinamen or Polynesians should be represented now any more than then.

Mr. PALMER: The honourable member did not say they should.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The honourable member asked why they were not to be counted as well? I think the basis that is proposed to be adopted is the only true one. The House is indebted to the honourable member for Maranoa for the calculations which he has made as to the probable result of the scheme for readjustment. As to readjustment, it is one of those subjects which are always talked about by members of the House; but I am not aware of any instance in which the principle has been tried. In the Canadian Dominion a provision is made for the readjustment of representation. Quebec is taken as the fixed basis, and always returns the same number of members—I think seventy-two; and the other provinces send representatives in the same proportion, according to their population. The only way to arrange the representation according to population—which is assumed by a great many members of the House and by the Government to be the correct basis—is to take an average; and the only way to get that average is to divide the gross population—whether total or adult male, or the mean—by the number of members, and so to find out which electorates are over, and which under, represented. It is only a rough-and-ready way of dealing with the question, but we cannot get a perfect system unless one district exactly doubles its population and another remains exactly similar. The honourable member for

Maranoa shows that, assuming the population would increase in the same ratio, the result would come out extremely fairly, of course, leaving out of consideration the capital, which has been treated on exceptional grounds; and by which he showed the result arrived at would be a near approach to the principle which has been called for by the general voice of honourable members, reduced to a practical shape. It will lead to anomalies, perhaps, but so will any other system; and it will be found more convenient to have the anomaly than to have to pass a Redistribution Bill after each Census. It has been said that, by this basis, some electorates will be disfranchised. This, however, is an error. Some double electorates would, if it were not otherwise provided, only return one member, but none would be disfranchised. I do not know how the mistake has arisen, as there is nothing in the Bill to suggest such an idea, or to cause the misapprehension. I have endeavoured to answer the objections which have been urged against the Bill, and I ask honourable members to regard this question as a practical one. We have not endeavoured to work any particular gain of our own; we should have been the blindest of fools had we attempted to do so, and the consequences would recoil upon the heads of any party who attempted such a thing. We have endeavoured to take the best geographical features, and apportion the members as fairly as possible. We have been unfair only in the case of the district around the metropolis, and, to the extent of half a member, in the Darling Downs District. I challenge the most careful criticism of the Bill and the tables laid before the House in connection with it. The tables which the honourable member for Maranoa has prepared to lay upon the table of the House, and which I have no doubt are correct, bring out precisely the same result. What he has complained of is, that taking our basis and our way of working it out, although on the principle of a compromise, the result after all comes out much more fairly on the adult male basis than it ought to be. Without disfranchising districts altogether, we could not make the number of members less, and that is the reason why it comes out more favourably. The principles of the second part of the Bill will have the effect of correcting any apparent unfairness as time goes on and the colony increases. The honourable member for Maranoa considered that we are not justified in calculating upon the same ratio of increase to the population of the Northern districts as has taken place previously. I differ entirely from the honourable gentleman in that respect, and think that it is probable that the population of those districts may be

doubled in the interval between the last Census and the next. Whether they will double again in the next interval I do not know, but I am inclined to think they will. I have greater faith in the Northern Districts than the honourable member. But, after all, that is merely criticism conjecturally made, and has nothing to do with the merits of the honourable gentleman's argument. I do not think it necessary to say anything in detail as to the way the second part of the Bill is worked out. I have endeavoured to answer some of the objections of the honourable member, and to show that it is impossible to deal with such a subject upon any rigid principle or theory. In doing so, you must take the circumstances of the colony, and the population into consideration, and do the best you can; and if you do that, you will get the best system of representation that is possible. And I venture to say that this Bill will compare satisfactorily with any previous system in force in this or any of the neighbouring colonies. I trust honourable members will endeavour to criticise it fairly, and the more criticism the better, and the more chance of improvement there will be. I hope they will point out where its practical defects are, and where it does not conform to what is required. If they do so, I am sure that before the debate is over the criticism will have had the effect of bringing out its bad points as well as its good ones, and that the good points will predominate.

Mr. WALSH suggested, that after the able speeches of the honourable the leader of the Opposition and the Attorney-General, the debate should be adjourned for a week or so, to enable honourable members to further consider the question with the light thrown upon it by those speeches.

The PREMIER said, if the adjournment of the debate were moved, he would be prepared to proceed with it to-morrow.

Mr. WALSH said: On the understanding that the Premier would consent to a prolonged adjournment, he begged to move the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER was willing to meet the views of honourable members, but thought it was not necessary to adjourn the debate longer than until to-morrow.

Mr. WALSH said that unless the Government consented to a longer adjournment than one day, he would withdraw his motion.

Mr. MOREHEAD objected to the withdrawal of the motion. He also warned the Attorney-General, who had referred to him as a "model member," that he should describe the model Ministry in detail to-morrow, when he hoped there would be a full House.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he was sorry if anything he said should have

offended the honourable member. What he said was, that he believed the Mitchell would be a model constituency in point of numbers, and hoped it would be represented by a model member, and he would have added—if the honourable member had not entered the Chamber—"as it is at present."

Mr. McILWRAITH said the honourable the Attorney-General said the Mitchell was a model constituency, and that the honourable member was a model member, as he (Mr. McIlwraith) thought he was. He (Mr. McIlwraith) was of opinion that the debate could be proceeded with to-morrow.

Mr. PALMER said if the tables laid on the table by the honourable member for Maranoa were worth anything, it would be impossible for honourable members to get through them by to-morrow. They ought to be in the hands of honourable members before they came to the House, but many honourable members would not see them until they came to the House.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he should like to see the tables he had quoted printed before the discussion was resumed; and he expected they would be placed in the hands of honourable members to-morrow.

The PREMIER said he could state confidently that the figures quoted would be published in *Hansard* to-morrow.

Mr. WALSH protested against the honourable the Premier presuming to say what would appear in *Hansard* to-morrow or at any other time.

The Hon. R. PRING was anxious that public business should be proceeded with, but thought an adjournment for a short time was necessary, after the able speeches that had been delivered.

Question—That the 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. WALSH moved—

That the resumption of debate stand an Order of the Day for this day week.

He protested against such an important measure being hurried through the House, and contended that members should be allowed reasonable time to consider it fully.

Mr. PETTIGREW said he should not have seconded the amendment had he not wished to express a hope that the honourable member for the Warrego was not going to delay the business of the House in the same way he had done during previous sessions by his dribblings and obstruction. The honourable member now wished to postpone the debate for a week, whilst the whole thing could be settled next evening,

provided the Government would give a promise that they would not then go to a division on it.

Mr. BELL said he understood that the honourable the Premier and the honourable the leader of the Opposition had agreed, each speaking to the House, that the debate was to be adjourned until the following evening. He hoped, however, that those honourable members who had not mastered the figures which had been quoted by the next evening, would have an opportunity of speaking on another day.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he had given his personal consent to the debate being adjourned until the next day, but he had afterwards heard an expression of opinion from several honourable members that they should like to have it adjourned for a week, and if they asked for such a postponement, he was quite willing to agree to it. He wished to show that the Opposition were anxious to push on the business of the country as much as possible, and what was also of importance was, that the Bill in question must be pushed on quickly, in order to come into force at a certain time. All that was wanted was a full discussion of the matter, and if the Premier thought his supporters could go on with the Bill next day, the Opposition were prepared to do so.

The PREMIER said he was much obliged to the honourable member for Maranoa for the support he had given to the adjournment of the debate until the next day. He desired to have a full and free discussion of the Bill, and even if it was not finished on the following evening it could be again adjourned. He had no wish to come to a division to-morrow, but he hoped the debate would be resumed then, with the understanding that, if necessary, there could be a further adjournment, so as to allow every honourable member an opportunity of expressing his opinions on the Bill. He would remind honourable members that if the Bill was passed at all it must go from that House before the end of next month.

Mr. PALMER thought the present was one of those questions which should be left to the head of the Government, and the leader of the Opposition alone. Whatever his opinions on the subject might be, he readily gave way to the leader of the Opposition, and he hoped that on questions of the kind where there was no principle involved—those members, the Premier and the leader of the Opposition—would be allowed to make their own arrangements.

The amendment was put and negatived, and the original motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at twenty minutes to ten o'clock.