

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 21 MAY 1878

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 21 May, 1878.

Question.—Volunteer Bill.—Electoral Districts Bill—
Brisbane Drainage Bill—second reading.—Electoral
Districts Bill—committee.

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

QUESTION.

Mr. GRIMES asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. Whether the contractors for supplies for public service have the privilege of supplying any articles under the general division for which their contract has been accepted which may be required, though such articles may not be separately specified in their contract; or are such articles purchased in open market?

2. If purchased in open market, how are such purchases made?

The PREMIER (Mr. Douglas) replied:—

1. When any articles are applied for which do not happen to be included in any contract, the contractor for the particular division is applied to first, and, if he is able and willing to supply the articles required at the usual cash price, the order is given to him; if not, the Colonial Storekeeper applies to other wholesale establishments.

2. Such purchases, are, where practicable, made at wholesale houses, by the Colonial Storekeeper.

VOLUNTEER BILL.

Mr. PALMER said he rose for the purpose of drawing the attention of the Colonial Secretary to a reply given by him to a question of his (Mr. Palmer's) that day week. It was:—

“Do the Government intend to introduce a Volunteer Bill this Session?—If so, when?”

The answer was:—

“A Volunteer Bill has been prepared and is now in type, but the Government are not sanguine as to the chances of their being able to carry so important a measure through the House until the Electoral Districts Bill and the Local Government Bill are disposed of. I shall be glad to place the draft Bill and any other papers I have in connection with this subject in the hands of the honourable member, if he is prepared to undertake the management of this measure.”

He (Mr. Palmer) had taken some time to consider the answer, and, after consultation with the Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding the Volunteer Force, and some other officers—although he thought it was peculiarly the duty of the Government to introduce a Volunteer Bill, yet believing as he did that it was of the greatest importance that such a Bill should be introduced and passed this session—if the honourable gentleman would, in addition, promise to give him the support of the Government to the measure—not to throw cold water on it, but to say that they would support

a moderate Volunteer Bill—he would, although with great reluctance, take it out of the hands of the Government, and endeavour to the best of his ability to draft a Bill and pass it through the House. But it must be on the assurance that he would get the support of the Government, because otherwise it would be folly for a private member to attempt to do anything of the kind.

The PREMIER said the reason he had given the answer referred to was simply that having the Electoral Bill and the Local Government Bill on hand, he thought he could not attempt to proceed with a Volunteer Bill until these were advanced to a sufficient stage to induce him to suppose they would pass. They were Bills of primary importance, and however important the Volunteer Bill might be, still, in the present position of public business, it, from the Government point of view, ranked second to those two measures. The Volunteer Bill, as he had said, had been in type for some time; but some suggested alterations up to a later date were not, but might be placed in type at any moment. On the whole, he thought he could promise the honourable gentleman fair support; but, of course, he could not undertake to pledge the Government to any Volunteer Bill the honourable gentleman might draft. If he was content to take the Bill which had been prepared on behalf of the Government, and which, he might say, had been prepared after full consideration with the Volunteer officers and those most interested in the movement—if he was prepared to take that as the framework of the measure, he could offer him fair support, and he thought it would be judicious and to the public interest that it should be passed into law. As to the particulars, he was prepared to deal with him in a frank and friendly manner. He stated at the time this matter was previously discussed that Colonel Scratchley had advised against dealing with the Volunteer question by legislative enactment at the present time, because he said various improvements were contemplated in the other colonies, and it would be advantageous to this colony to wait for the experience of those colonies. Of course they were not bound to take that advice. So far as legislation was concerned, they were the best judges of what was required, although they should give due deference to that gentleman's opinion. He should take an early opportunity of conferring with the honourable gentleman, and he hoped they might be able to agree to the principles of a Volunteer Bill, so as to enable him to offer all the support he could from the Government.

Mr. PALMER said it would be impossible for him to say that he would take as the groundwork of his Bill a Bill that he had never seen, but as he had reason to believe

that groundwork was his own Bill, or something very like it, he should be prepared to meet the Colonial Secretary so far. If they could not agree on a basis, of course the matter would drop through. He would not attempt to bring it in unless he got the promise of the Government that they would support it; and as they would have an opportunity of seeing it before it was brought in, he thought the Colonial Secretary might pledge himself that if he approved of the Bill the Government would support it. That was all he asked. He did not ask the Government to support any Bill he might bring in, without seeing it, but that if he drafted a Bill the Government agreed to they would promise to use all the power they possessed in the House to pass it through.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to accept those terms.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the consideration of this Bill in committee,

The PREMIER moved that the Order of the Day be postponed until after the second Order of the Day—the second reading of the Brisbane Drainage Bill.

Mr. WALSH said the Electoral Districts Bill was of much more importance than the Brisbane Drainage Bill, and he thought it a very extraordinary way of managing Government business that the Government should propose, on the first day of the week, to postpone the very measure they had met together to consider, and to proceed with one of much less importance which it might take the whole day to discuss. It seemed as if the Government were anxious to shelve this most important measure behind this subsidiary one. It was either that or a gross sign of favouritism to Brisbane; he did not care which way they took it. He wished to direct attention to the fact that the Government had a right to arrange their own business on the paper as they pleased—that it was an old practice of Parliament that the Government should arrange their business the morning previous to the meeting of the House, and the paper, so arranged, should govern the proceedings of the day. Otherwise honourable members were called together under false pretences. They had now met expecting to consider the Electoral Bill, and they were to be pooh-poohed down, or “choked off”—to use a vulgar expression—by the Government postponing that Bill for a secondary one. He said it was time honourable members protested against this dodgery or trickery, or whatever it was, on the part of the Government. As the business paper was placed in the hands of honourable members, so it should be adhered to by the

Government; but now, when they were prepared to discuss this very important national question affecting the whole colony, they were to be driven to consider something like a parochial matter. He protested against such a proceeding.

Question put and passed.

BRISBANE DRAINAGE BILL—SECOND READING.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. Dickson) said the second reading of the Bill need not occupy such an amount of time as some honourable members appeared to imagine, and it was not likely to interfere to any considerable extent with the consideration of the Electoral Districts Bill, which they were apparently eager to discuss. The Bill now before the House was a small extension of the Drainage Act of 1875. That measure allocated certain lands in the municipality of Brisbane for the purposes of drainage within certain limits, and the object of the present Bill was to bring under the scope of that Act a certain portion of valuable land in Petrie's Bight, which the Government considered they might reasonably sell and apply the proceeds to the further construction of drains in that particular locality. He did not intend to enter into the larger question which might probably be raised, as to the propriety of a large amount of money being appropriated for drainage purposes within the municipal boundary. He thought the consideration of that subject might be better entered upon when the notice of motion of the honourable member for Fortitude Valley came on for discussion, and he should therefore confine himself merely to the Bill before honourable members. He might briefly state that the land which had been sold up to the present time for the purpose of drainage represented something like £24,000, and the whole of that amount had been expended in constructing drains along Roma, George, and Adelaide streets; and when the drain proposed to be carried out by the proceeds of the sale of land under this Bill was completed, the whole would form a very great improvement to the sanitary condition of the city. This drain at Petrie's Bight was estimated by Mr. Nesbit to cost between £3,000 and £4,000, and it would not only relieve a large and populous portion of the city, but also prevent, to a considerable extent, the lower parts of the Valley from being flooded. He did not think it necessary to occupy the time of the House with any further remarks on the question of drainage. Correspondence on the subject had appeared in the papers, and further papers which had been laid on the table would explain the views held by the Government concerning this land, which they now asked

legislative sanction to sell. It might fairly be conceded that those lands within the municipality might, instead of going into Consolidated Revenue, be devoted to sanitary improvements. The spending of money in improving private property had all along been steadfastly resisted. If any drains or improvements were required to be constructed through private property, they would have to be constructed by loans from the Government, and the property assessed by the municipality. The money would, therefore, in no wise be directed to the improvement of private property, upon which no rates could be levied. The matter required no further remark, and he would, therefore, simply move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. McILWRAITH said that the Government, in manipulating the business, should not only consider their own convenience, but also that of the Opposition. The Opposition had shown good faith towards the Government, and had tried to bring the largest number of members they could together for the discussion of Government measures. It was thoroughly understood by honourable members that the Local Government Bill was to have been the first business of the afternoon, and it was for the purpose of discussing that measure that they were met together; he was therefore perfectly astonished at the Colonial Treasurer coming down and proposing the second reading of a Bill of that character. His astonishment was greater when he considered the very great importance of the question of Local Self-Government which had been recently engaging the attention of the House. Honourable members had generally expressed disappointment with the measure, because they thought it failed to provide Local Government; but they all showed a desire to deal with the matter and a willingness to enter upon it at all events. And now what was the comment upon their endeavours? A miserable Bill brought forward to assign to a locality—a locality that ought never to have put itself in a position to ask for money in the way it did—a small grant of money from the Consolidated Revenue for a special purpose. The comments made upon the Bill of 1875 ought to have been a lesson to the Government to be prepared to deal with this question in a comprehensive manner. If that Government had been prepared to deal with the matter in a comprehensive way and take the whole thing into consideration—and not merely to ask for a small amount of money to do a job here and a job there—the House was prepared to deal with it. The Government now came down and tried to perpetuate the old system. There was a subterfuge under it altogether, for the Government could not suppose that by simply asking for £3,000 or £4,000 for a specific object the question

could be dealt with. It was, in fact, a barbarous mode of dealing with the matter. They might just as well ask for the money at once, as it was probable that it would not be convenient for the Government to sell the land at the time when it was convenient to carry on the drainage. The Bill was quite unworthy of the object. The Brisbane drainage was a large question, thoroughly incorporated with Local Government, and as part of the Local Government scheme the House would wish to deal with it. The system was also a bad example to set before honourable members, for how could they be blamed for going in in as strong a way as they could for votes when they found the Treasurer of the colony, backed up by the Ministry, going in for a small job connected with the Brisbane Municipality. It was not as if honourable members did not believe in the general question of drainage. There was not one of the honourable members resident in Brisbane who did not thoroughly appreciate the efforts on the part of the Ministry to provide for it; but, at the same time, they thoroughly disapproved of the way in which this Bill was introduced. In a question of that sort the Government should have brought down a measure intimately connected with the Local Government Bill; this would have been an example to other towns in the colony which were springing up into municipalities, and would show them how to deal with their affairs in the future. The measure had not a vestige of interest in that way, and could only be an example to a future municipality to grab as much money as they could while they had the power. He was so utterly disappointed with the Bill that he had not a word to say in favour of it. Even if the Treasurer had put before them a scheme of drainage for the town and suburbs of Brisbane, he should have liked it better, for that could have been amended by showing that the Treasurer asked too much or too little. At the present time there was nothing before them except the wish of the Government to get two or three acres of land for drainage purposes; which was so utterly at variance with the principles which had been enforced by Parliament, and so contemptible that he could not condemn it in too strong terms.

Mr. Fox had at first been inclined to support the Bill, believing that it was not a matter of so much importance; but from the remarks which had been made by the honourable the leader of the Opposition, he had come to think it was of very great importance. He thought there must be something very considerable to be gained by the Bill, or why did the Government put it in the first position on the paper? It appeared as though there was some design to get that through before the Local Gov-

ernment Bill was passed. A large sum would certainly be required for the object, and he could not see what particular good would be effected by the Bill. He did not think honourable members would give support to the Bill without further consideration. He had come down to the House prepared to deal with the first Bill on the paper—the Electoral Districts Bill—and as no good case had been made out why that Bill should not be gone on with, he would vote against the Bill now under discussion if pushed forward this evening.

Mr. BELL thought that it was a bad precedent which was proposed by the Government, and that he would not be doing his duty if he did not mark his disapproval of the example which was set to the representatives of many districts of the colony. The Treasurer had not shown any strong reason for passing the Bill at that particular time, or even at all. Similar measures would be required for other parts of the colony, where special expenditure was needed for the drainage and other necessities of large towns. So strongly did he feel upon the point, that he would be disposed to test the House by moving that the Bill be read this day six months; and he believed that the supporters of the Government would be only having a due regard to other constituencies by throwing out the measure. It was not of so much importance that it should be passed now, and the time which had been chosen was singularly inopportune. He should, therefore, move that the Bill be read again this day six months.

The PREMIER said he understood the honourable member for Maranoa to say that the Bill was no Government measure. Of course it was a Government measure, and a somewhat urgent one.

Mr. McILWRAITH must correct the honourable member, as he had said it was peculiarly a Government measure.

The PREMIER said he must have inadvertently misunderstood the honourable member. The Bill before the House was a Government measure, and a somewhat urgent one. If the Local Self-Government Bill were passed to-morrow it would make no difference. The municipality of Brisbane had, of course, for a long time worked under the Municipal laws, and the effect of the Local Government Bill would simply be to consolidate those laws and apply certain remedies in detail. It would not alter one essential function of the municipality of Brisbane, so that he thought honourable gentlemen were labouring under a misapprehension if they thought it had anything to do with Local Government. It had been brought in in anticipation of that measure passing, but had nothing to do with it. The present was simply an urgent measure introduced on account of the high rate of mortality in the city of Brisbane arising chiefly from defective drainage, espe-

cially in those parts where it was proposed to apply money provided for under the Bill. It was an urgent measure, as the lives of many people living in the suburbs of Brisbane were at stake, in consequence of the unwholesome state of the drainage. He, therefore, thought it should have fair consideration on the part of honourable members. It had nothing to do with Local Government. Little difficulties of this kind would arise to be dealt with, and they demanded fair consideration on the part of the House. The Municipal Council had a great deal to do. They had streets to lay down, drains to make, and many other things to see to with defective means; and it must not be forgotten that the actual endowment of land which had been accorded within the municipality was not equal to that accorded in other cases. Land, which under other circumstances would have been devoted to those purposes, had not been so devoted, owing to unnatural and unwarrantable jealousy appertaining to the treatment of business matters connected with Brisbane. He put it, therefore, to honorable members to meet the matter in a dispassionate manner. He would emphatically say that the lives of men would be endangered if the Bill were not passed, and the drainage, especially in the suburb of Fortitude Valley and that portion of the city which was drained by the watershed of Wickham Terrace, not attended to shortly; and that the death-rate, under such circumstances, during the ensuing summer in the vicinity of that portion of the city would be unnaturally large. It was exceptional legislation for a matter which could not be dealt with in any other way at all.

The Hon. R. PRING assented to everything that had been said on the Opposition side of the House in reference to the mode of procedure on the part of the Government. He denied the correctness of the assertion of the honourable the Premier, that the Bill was so necessary that it should be taken before the Electoral Districts Bill, as he had heard in a speech on the introduction of the second reading of that Bill, that if it was not sent to the second chamber and passed by the 1st of August, it would be a dead letter. Yet, now he learned that the drainage of Fortitude Valley was so urgent that a Bill to remedy defects (which he had himself known to exist for years), was to take precedence of the Electoral Districts Bill. While he would say with the honourable member for Dalby that the Bill should not have preceded the Electoral Districts Bill, he would also like to say a few words on the merits of the Bill itself, and he wished that the honourable the Treasurer, as the introducer of the Bill, had given a little further information. He (Mr. Pring) represented the city of

Brisbane, but the locality was represented by the honourable member for Fortitude Valley. He was, however, acquainted with the locality, and he would like to say that those lands were waste lands bought up by speculators, who had cut them up into allotments, and now wanted the Government to drain them. He had seen the places flooded, and had seen the people getting out of their homes in boats. One paddock had been bought by a speculator and cut up without a bit of room being left for a drain;—the man did not care twopence whether the people lived or died so long as he got his money. Undoubtedly it was necessary for the public safety and health that the place should be drained; but he did not think the people should buy land, become a nuisance to others, and then ask a paternal Government to step in and provide a remedy. With regard to the merits of the Bill, he was not at all alarmed at what the leader of the Opposition had pointed out with regard to the measure preceding the Local Government Bill. That honourable member had forgotten that in the Local Government Bill all the existing corporations were left intact. From want of information, no doubt, the honourable member for Maranoa had not noticed that, under the Brisbane Drainage Act of 1875, those very allotments of land were vested in the municipal corporation—or, at all events, half. They were, therefore, only giving back to the corporation what the corporation held before, so that there was no “robbing Peter to pay Paul.” If anyone could show that by Fortitude Valley getting that money he would suffer one sixpence, he (Mr. Pring) would vote against it; until anyone did, he would vote for it.

MR. BEATTIE said the honourable member for Brisbane had said he did not represent Fortitude Valley; but he, as the representative of Brisbane, ought to know that this was a very necessary work to relieve Fortitude Valley from a great deal of filth that came out of Brisbane. It was not always advisable for Government to alter the routine of the Orders of the Day; but he thought that this was a thing which should have serious consideration. He was quite sure no honourable member was better acquainted with the Act of 1864 than the honourable member for Brisbane, as he was a member of the Ministry which introduced the measure that took away those lands from the city. From that time till the time of Mr. Palmer's Government, the municipality never received one acre of land as a recompense for the land which had been taken away in 1864. The Palmer Government initiated a system of giving back some allotments which were unsold, for the purpose of relieving Brisbane from some impurities. Some two or three pieces of land were omitted when the Brisbane

Drainage Act was introduced, and this was one portion. The work had been promised from time to time by different Governments, because a very large area—something like eighty acres of land—drained into a certain point, and that point emptied into Fortitude Valley. By selling those few allotments a very large district could be relieved from the overflow and filth of those eighty acres. He did not think any honourable member who knew the locality would object to the sale of two or three pieces of land to relieve a very large and populous district from the misery entailed by the defective drainage. He felt very warmly upon the subject, because he knew the injury that people in that district had suffered from the want of good drains being constructed. The promise had been held out so long before a portion of his constituents, that they had begun to lose heart and all faith in the promises of any Government. He was very glad that the Treasurer had redeemed his pledge; and as the honourable member for Dalby was always anxious to improve the condition of any town in the colony, he felt that if that honourable member knew the locality he would withdraw his motion. He hoped the Government would see their way to press the matter, and knowing that it was of serious consequence to his electorate, that honourable members would give it their strong support.

MR. BAILEY did not think it was right that the measure should be lost on a technical point; but he must take exception to some of the remarks which had been made in its favour. One was, that it had nothing to do with Local Government, whereas it took all power from the hands of the municipal council; and the Government for the time being became the municipal council of Brisbane. He would like to ask whether it was customary for a Government to sell Crown lands in the towns of the colony for the construction of such works within municipalities, or whether it was peculiar to Brisbane alone. They had certainly no right an account of such technical points to refuse that which would conduce to the longevity and health of the people of Brisbane. It was really pitiable to see the way new buildings were going up in Brisbane over large stinking rotten cesspools. No wonder that there was sickness. The wonder was that anyone could live. It certainly seemed hard that the House should be asked to drain such properties; still there was a large population living over these cesspools, and the House had no right, on account of technicalities, to refuse them alleviation.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Griffith) said the Bill was simply to correct an error in the Brisbane Drainage Act of 1875, which was passed by the unanimous consent of the House, and from which two pieces of land were omitted by mistake.

It was only natural to suppose that the House would be in the same temper now as it was then. As to the objection to the words "Provided that any such drains or sewers shall be constructed under the control of the Governor in Council," he would point out that they were in the Act of 1875, having been previously introduced on the motion of the honourable member for Port Curtis. The Bill was not in words but in effect a transcript of the Act of 1875, and rectified an accidental omission made in that measure; and it might fairly have been supposed that it would be disposed of in less time than had already been occupied in discussion regarding it.

Mr. GRIMES said he felt that Brisbane had not been altogether properly treated at the hands of the Government. He held that the unsold lands in a municipality ought to belong to municipalities as endowments. Whatever their increase in value might be, it was simply derived from accessions of population, which brought with it many burdens, such as necessary drainage works. The unsold lands ought to be devoted to defraying these burdens; and, holding these convictions, he maintained that in the past, Brisbane had been largely defrauded of that which should have gone towards providing for the health of its inhabitants. He should vote for the measure.

Mr. PALMER said the honourable member for Bulimba was entirely in error in stating that lands within the municipalities belonged to municipalities; they did not, and never did. At one time the half of the proceeds was given them in endowment, but that was done away with, and instead, the municipalities received a money endowment of pound for pound. The argument of the honourable member, therefore, rested on a wrong basis, as usual. The opposition to the Bill had been brought on by the Government themselves. Had they brought the Bill forward in its proper place, there would probably have been no opposition; but they were so abnormally clever, that they went out of their way to induce opposition instead of going on with the business in the order set down in the regular paper of the day. They were in duty bound to take the business in the order there laid down, unless something unforeseen happened to prevent them; and they had no right to bring members to discuss one matter and then take another. He himself should have made objection to the postponement of the order respecting the Electoral Districts Bill, had he not waited for the honourable leader of the Opposition to do so. The honourable member must have been taken by surprise, he thought, or else he would have objected. If the Government, after

having put down important business, shifted it on one side for little petty business of this sort, they must take the consequences. He was a little amused by the speech of the honourable the Premier, who had spoken of the unnatural and unwarrantable jealousy of the House towards Brisbane. Where had it shown that jealousy? Did the honourable gentleman remember Mr. Stewart's committee on this very subject the session before last? Did he remember the report brought up by the committee, or did he not know—or was he so extremely ignorant of what he ought to know—that since then three or four times as much had been given Brisbane as was recommended? Had they not given it the bridge? Was that unnatural and unwarrantable jealousy? The honourable the Premier had got up with a clap-trap cry, for which there was no foundation. He (Mr. Palmer) believed that Brisbane had been badly treated in 1864, but he had nothing to do with it. The honourable the Premier was a consenting party to what he (Mr. Palmer) considered was robbing the municipality.

Mr. GROOM: It was the Honourable Arthur Macalister.

Mr. PALMER said the Government had no right to shirk such an important matter as the Electoral Districts Bill. He should like to know how many honourable members came to discuss the Brisbane Drainage Bill. The Government had brought them there that afternoon on false pretences. He did think, notwithstanding all that had been said to the contrary, that this Bill interfered with the Local Government Bill. If the Government were in earnest with regard to that Bill, this certainly interfered with it.

The Hon. R. PRING: No, no.

Mr. PALMER said the honourable member for North Brisbane was bound to say "No." He dared not say anything else. So far as he was concerned, if the measure was only carrying out the previous policy of the Ministry of which he was the head, to give the bit of land to the municipality, he had no objection; but he objected to the way in which it was brought in. He might, however, say at once that it would be much simpler for the Colonial Treasurer to ask for a sum of money. It came to all the same, for he was now asking for land. It was not too late even now to do so, the Estimates not yet being down, and it would stop argument. After the way the measure had been introduced to defeat the discussion of more important business, he would vote for the honourable member for Dalby's amendment, and he believed several honourable members on the other side would also do so. It would be much better for the Colonial Treasurer to come down for a vote and say at once what it

would take to make proper drains for the city. The land mentioned in the Bill would not be sufficient.

Mr. WALSH thought there was a great deal of wisdom in the speech just delivered by the honourable member for Port Curtis. It appeared to him, however, that whenever the municipality of Brisbane wanted to make a petty little drain, the Government came down to the House for authority to sacrifice a bit of vacant land to raise the money required. He, therefore, cordially agreed that it would be better the Government should ask for a sum of money than that the House should give them an opportunity of sacrificing the last pieces of vacant land which were the lungs of the city. He repeated all that he had said before, that the time chosen by the Government for the discussion of the measure was most improper. It seemed to him that their object was to tire out honourable members, or to so waste the time of the House, that when the Electoral Districts Bill came on, members would be either too weary or disgusted to discuss it properly, or had left the House. After notifying that the Electoral Districts Bill would be taken first, their action could only bear one construction, either that they wished to lead honourable members astray from the solid business of the day, or wished to gratify a certain local feeling which might prevail. He also objected to the Bill on the ground that the Government were interfering with municipal affairs. The country would not be called to pay municipal expenditure in Brisbane alone, but gradually all municipalities would make similar claims; the expenditure of £10,000, £15,000, or £20,000, or whatever might be required for making drains in Brisbane, would be followed by applications for enormous sums from other municipalities, which could not be refused. If the Government were going to carry out a drainage system in Brisbane, which, if not attended to (to use the Premier's words), would cause an unnatural death-rate, why should the Government not attempt drainage of the same necessity in the towns of Maryborough, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Warwick, Rockhampton, Townsville, or any other town? The Government, apparently under a certain amount of local pressure, were beginning to initiate expenditure which would lead to dangerous results, because, by interfering with the action of the Brisbane municipality, they would be placing themselves more or less in the position of heads of the municipality; and as sure as they did this so sure would the municipality of Brisbane, as well as of other localities, sooner or later, become an institution supported by the Government, and not by the people residing in it. Formerly, the Brisbane municipality was as jealous of the interference of any Government as it

now seemed anxious to invite assistance. When the Government offered to build them a bridge over the river, or construct their waterworks, they told them to mind their own business; but now they went almost on their knees to the Government to construct drains. Toowoomba and Maryborough were instances of the bad example that had been set by the Government in carrying out such extraneous duties in Brisbane. He was not surprised at the independent position which the Maryborough municipality assumed, and he had no doubt that the Government, after making their waterworks, would be called upon to do their drainage also. This, however, was only owing to the bad example of the Government. The municipalities would be fools if they did not demand the subsidiary aids which the Government seemed to be willing to grant. Even the model municipality of Rockhampton would be sooner or later tampered with. He was struck by an observation of the Attorney-General, that the Bill was simply to correct an error about a piece of land. If the honourable gentleman had read the Bill, he must see that it contained a great deal more. It contained three important provisions, and it also dealt with two pieces of land, thus showing that the Attorney-General was not a safe guide in expounding the measure. He should certainly vote for the amendment, because he believed that the Municipality of Brisbane was quite able to manage its own affairs, and because he believed that the Government had introduced the discussion of the Bill with a sinister purpose.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Rockhampton) was not aware that the question would be discussed that afternoon, as he expected the Electoral Districts Bill would be taken first. He believed in the statement of the Premier that if the drainage of Brisbane was not soon attended to the mortality would be very great. He had been appalled at what he had seen of the state of Brisbane, but it was not a peddling measure of this kind which would remedy the evil. He wanted to know, however, what the consequences would be if they passed the measure. It seemed to him that they might just as well give Brisbane money as land. Were the Government prepared to extend the principle of the Bill to all other towns? because the drainage of other towns was quite as necessary, and all should be treated alike. Were the Government going to drain every town at the expense of the country, or, were they going to see that each town did its own drainage? He wanted to know the consequences of passing such a measure. It was almost certain, that before long, a measure would be introduced enabling all municipalities to deal with the question of drainage, and

until he heard a better reason than had been given, why Brisbane should get the money required to make the drain referred to, he should vote against the Bill. He had no jealousy of Brisbane, but nothing had been said to show that it should receive exceptional treatment.

Mr. THOMPSON said he knew something about the Brisbane Drainage Act, and he was quite convinced that the omission of the lands mentioned in the Bill before the House was not a mistake, as asserted by the Attorney-General, but was done intentionally. All that was intended to be included in the Act was actually included. He protested against any more public land being sold about Brisbane, for the Government were now compelled to rent offices—the Education Office and the Mineral Surveyor's Office, for example—which were built upon plots of ground sold by the Government.

Mr. GROOM said that, as a representative of a country municipality, he was of opinion that whatever system of drainage was introduced must be general and not special. At the same time, he did not hesitate to say that if the Government were to come down with a comprehensive scheme for the drainage of the city, and to ask for a loan of £200,000 for the purpose, he should have no objection to vote for it. As to this Bill, even if no amendment had been moved, it was his intention to vote against it, because he did not think it was the duty of the Government to part with any of the land that was still left in the hands of municipalities, and the time had come when a stand against such a course of action, which had of late become too common, should be made. He had come here this afternoon expecting that the Electoral Districts Bill would be under discussion, and to assist the Government in passing the measure. He had not the slightest idea that that measure would have had to give way to the Drainage Bill, or he should have been better prepared to discuss it. The question of drainage did not affect the city of Brisbane alone, but the whole of the populous towns of the colony, where the lives of a considerable number of persons were concerned. He should feel constrained, under the circumstances, to vote for the amendment.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he wished to say a few words in reply to objections raised by the honourable member for Toowoomba. That honourable member said, first, that he would have preferred that the Government had come down with a comprehensive scheme of drainage. Had that honourable member been present when he (the Colonial Treasurer) introduced the Bill, he would have seen that it was merely carrying out a system already sanctioned, and that it could be done without waiting for the sanction of the House to anything

like a large sum of money, which would first have to be obtained before it could be employed. The measure was simply a small addition to the system introduced in the Brisbane Drainage Act of 1875, and in that light the House might very fairly have accepted it. The honourable member's second objection was to the selling of any more corporation land in the city of Brisbane. If this land could be utilised for recreation in any other way, there might be some force in the objection; but it could only be used for building purposes. It was too valuable to be allowed to remain idle, on account of its close proximity to the wharves, and the buildings hereafter to be erected on it would increase the revenue of the municipality. Its area was too small for a public recreation ground, and in that light alone would its reservation be justified. If the honourable gentleman bore this in mind, and reflected that this was the only immediate method of giving some small additional funds to the prosecution of the drainage of the city, he would doubtless withdraw his objection and allow the Bill to be read a second time. He might also address the same remarks to the honourable member for Dalby, who moved the amendment.

Mr. PERKINS said, that had he not thought a more comprehensive scheme would have been introduced, he would not have trespassed on the attention of the House this evening. The Premier, in his speech, said the Bill was objected to because of an unnatural and unwarrantable prejudice against the city of Brisbane. He did not think that such a sweeping assertion could be justified, for, during the time he had been in the House, he had seen no animus displayed on either side of the House against Brisbane. It would be more warrantable to say that the opinions of a few members in Brisbane had tinged the administrative ideas of the Premier. In fact, the statement contradicted itself, for the Victoria Bridge Bill was passed last session almost without discussion, and the citizens of Brisbane got a free bridge at a cost to the country of some £140,000. A good deal, indeed, might be said in another direction. It might truthfully be said that a few people in Brisbane wanted to dictate to the whole colony. That was a good deal nearer the mark than the assertion which the Premier had had the temerity to make, and for which there was absolutely no foundation. He for one had no prejudice against Brisbane, and would be glad to help the corporation in any way he could; but this matter was legislated for in 1875, and they must have been very shortsighted people indeed when they found that in 1878 the drainage was not nearly done. He understood from the honourable member for Forti-

tude Valley that this little job would only cost about £3,000. If that were so, and looking to the fact that a water-supply would have to be provided for Brisbane shortly, it would have been much more to the purpose if the Government had come down and asked for the money direct, in which case, he believed, there would not have been much opposition to it. The Brisbane water was simply abominable, and anyone drinking a bottle of soda-water could tell whether it was of local manufacture, or was imported from Sydney, or from the country. It was a matter of much more pressing importance to improve the water-supply of the city than to make this bit of drainage. Not only was the water bad, poisoning people week after week, but those in charge of it were as bad as the water. There was a little clique in charge of the water—"guinea-pigs," he called them, because they went about getting fees in every direction—who were there simply because they were old identities, and it was high time that men trained to the business should be put into their places. More than one department of the Government was grossly mismanaged, but he did not hesitate to say that in that respect the water department carried off the palm. In the face of the Local Government Bill, which had been read a second time, the Government ought not to have gone to work in this patch-work way, but should have brought in a comprehensive measure dealing with the drainage of Brisbane and other parts of the colony. He did not believe that this system of selling patches of corporation land here and there was a good one, and the evils of it were already beginning to be found out. It might be thought that there was enough land at Toowoomba, and yet Government had to buy it whenever they wanted it for any special purpose; and it was the same thing betwixt Toowoomba and Warwick; in fact, they had to pay ten times as much as they sold it for. He should most decidedly vote against the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. KINGSFORD said the honourable member for Aubigny seemed to be very well posted up in the municipal affairs of Brisbane, especially when he talked about certain officials being old identities. Possibly that might be so, and if it were, it was important that their posts should be filled up by men who understood their business; but, however that might be, it did not affect the question before the House. He (Mr. Kingsford) spoke as member for South Brisbane—which, it must be remembered, had no connection with North Brisbane—and he should feel bound to vote for the amendment proposed by the honourable member for Dalby. He should do so, not because there was no necessity for the drainage of Brisbane—it was essentially a

city of stinks, and was likely to remain so for many years to come—but for the reason that until the citizens of Brisbane woke up to the importance of the great questions connected with sanitary reform, such as ventilation, drainage, and water-supply, nothing of really lasting good could be accomplished. He should oppose the measure before the House, because it was a paltering measure, and if the second reading was refused, it would so thoroughly aggravate the citizens of Brisbane that they would bring pressure to bear upon the Government to initiate some comprehensive system which would complete the entire drainage of the city. On that ground, he should vote for the amendment.

Mr. W. SCOTT was glad to have heard the honourable member for South Brisbane express himself in the way he had done. At the same time he was sorry that the Government would not be able to carry the measure. He hoped it would induce them to bring in a more comprehensive scheme for that purpose, especially if, after being defeated, they went to the country upon it. He should certainly vote against it. He deprecated the Government putting aside an important measure like the Electoral Districts Bill for the purpose of discussing a paltry measure of this kind.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said he was sorry that he should have to vote against the second reading of the Bill; but he was compelled to do so from the very partial nature of the measure. The Colonial Treasurer in introducing the Bill said that the price of the land already sold had realised £24,000, and the land to be sold, he thought, would realise between £3,000 and £4,000. He was not aware of any other municipality having had money voted for making drains. Looked at in this light it was a partial measure, and for that reason he should vote against it. He was the more sorry for this because, looking at the vital statistics of Brisbane, something must certainly be done for it; but so much money had already been voted for draining Brisbane, while nothing had been done for other municipalities, that he, as a representative of a country municipality, felt himself bound to vote against the measure. If other parts of the colony were put in the same position as Brisbane, and land given to them to sell for a similar purpose, the matter would be placed on quite a different footing, and would, no doubt, command general support from honourable members on both sides of the House. Besides this, the measure would not remedy the evil to which it was intended to apply. From those statistics of the Registrar-General to which he had referred, it was evident that the city was in a bad sanitary state. This was especially evident from the fact, that 51 per cent. of the children born die under one year of age.

The matter was serious, and there must be some reason for it. Some measure of a more comprehensive nature ought to be introduced which would apply to all the municipalities of the colony; they all needed drainage, and if they could all be put upon the same footing, he should be inclined to give his support to a Bill having that object in view. As far as the present Bill was concerned, he should vote against it.

Mr. FOOTE said that if the Government had gone on with the Orders of the Day as they were down on the notice paper there probably would have been little or no opposition to this measure. One reason for the opposition which had been manifested was, that members were looking out for their own interests, and no doubt they would be able to extract from the Government a promise to bring in a Drainage Bill to apply to all the large towns of the colony. Whether such a measure might be necessary or not he did not intend at present to discuss. It appeared to him, however, that this measure, though simple in itself, might have the desired effect; that was if the money realised from the sale of this land was sufficient to carry out the purpose intended. He looked upon the Bill as the introduction of the thin edge of the wedge; for the money to be spent under it would be only as a drop in the bucket compared with what would ultimately be required. A large amount had already been expended on the drainage of Brisbane, and, as every honourable member knew, Brisbane would be a very difficult and expensive city to drain properly, and the cost of the work would be enormous. It was essential that Brisbane should be thoroughly drained, and, for his own part, he did not see why the House should not pass the second reading of the Bill now before them as a step towards improving the health of the city. Even if the Government intended afterwards to introduce a comprehensive Drainage Bill, he did not see why the land in question should not be appropriated for the purpose described. His vote would be given for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. HOCKINGS said that, with many other members, he should have been much better pleased if a more comprehensive measure had been brought before the House. It also seemed, from the remarks made, that the present Bill had come before the House at a very inopportune time. But it should be remembered that it was merely carrying out a system which the House had previously unanimously agreed to. The work itself was admitted to be necessary by all who were acquainted with the neighbourhood proposed to be drained. It had indeed been urgently required for many years, and the increase of population which had lately taken place in that locality now

made it a necessity. As the House had already decided that certain lands should be set apart for this purpose, it would be a great pity if, in consequence merely of the manner in which the Bill had been introduced, it should be rejected on its second reading. He should like to see the question discussed apart from the strong feeling which had been engendered against it in consequence of the manner of its introduction. The public health was implicated in this matter, and, as he had said before, it was a very populous district which was now proposed to be drained. The land now proposed to be sold was not particularly wanted for any other purpose, and it was so situated that it would fetch a considerable sum if offered for sale, and the work could be done at a comparatively small cost. The remarks that had been made about the introduction of a more comprehensive system of drainage scarcely applied to the question at issue, because even if the Government were prepared to bring down such a comprehensive scheme as had been referred to, embracing the drainage of the whole of Brisbane, this particular work would always have to be provided for as an isolated affair, for the short drain necessary to connect the natural water-course—which it was proposed to tap—with the river, near the Government wharves, would have to be effected irrespective of any other scheme which might be introduced. He was so thoroughly convinced of the urgent necessity for this work that he should cheerfully support its accomplishment as proposed by the Bill. As, however, he gathered from the various expressions of opinion that had fallen from honourable members, they were not so much opposed to the Bill as to the manner in which it had been introduced—because some other measure which they wished to discuss had been set aside for the consideration of what appeared to them a trivial matter—he thought it would be wise to postpone the consideration of the Bill until some more opportune period. With that view, and to test the feeling of the House on the subject, he would propose the adjournment of the debate.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no. Divide, divide. Question, question.

The PREMIER said it was quite manifest, after the expression of opinion on the part of the House, that the Bill was not likely to be favourably received, and he took it that the amendment of the honourable member for Dalby would be carried. So far as Brisbane itself was concerned, the Bill was of great importance, and for that reason he regretted the decision that the House was likely to come to. But there was another matter which he could not regret, and that was the desire which had been expressed to have the principle of the Bill extended to other places. He took it

that the honourable member for Port Curtis was right in his remarks, that, if the Bill was defeated, it was not an irretrievable defeat, as it was a matter which could be remedied in another way, namely, by a direct vote sufficient to effect an efficient system of drainage, not only for Brisbane, but for all towns. He was thankful to the House for the manner in which it had expressed its opinion of what he conceived to be the necessity for drainage in other towns, especially the coast towns of the colony. For that reason he thankfully accepted the defeat, because he foresaw that by-and-bye they must do something better than what was proposed by the Bill. They could not stop as they were, nor could they accept the present as a defeat, as the question must be dealt with in some form or other so as to apply to the various towns of the colony generally. Whatever might have been said about the present being an inopportune time for introducing the Bill, he failed to see that it was so, as it was a measure which might have been disposed of in a very short time, and as when it was called on many honourable members—among others the honourable member for Toowoomba—were not in the House, it was not to be expected that the Government would have cared to go on with such an important measure as the Electoral Districts Bill in a thin House. He did not know what would become of the motion for adjourning the debate, but whatever did happen, it was quite clear that the merits of the Bill had been decided by the expression of opinion which had been given that evening. At the same time he thankfully accepted that expression of opinion, as tending to show that the matter was one which must be dealt with at some future time.

Mr. McILWRAITH took it that the speech of the honourable gentleman was to be accepted as an acknowledgment of defeat, and the honourable gentleman had told them that he thankfully accepted it. Now, when the Government selected their own day for doing their business, and brought honourable members together to discuss a certain measure, and then went on with other business instead, presuming that they did so under the most favourable circumstances for themselves, it might be supposed that they would accept the decision of the House; but how had they done that, but by getting one of their supporters to move the adjournment of the debate? If the honourable member accepted that proposition he would defeat his own object, and would show the House that he did not wish to carry the measure.

Mr. BEATTIE said he did not agree with the remarks of the Premier when expressing his thankfulness to the House for the decision they had arrived at. He certainly took a very different view

of the matter, for this reason, that there was a most urgent necessity for the Bill. He believed that when there was an urgent necessity hanging over a city it was high time to take urgent steps, and, therefore, when the Premier was contented to wait, and even expressed his thanks for an expression of opinion unfavourable to the Bill, all he could say was, God help the people of that city! He was not at all satisfied with the speech of the Premier, but should call for a division. He had listened to the remarks made by honourable members on the Bill, and he must say that he could not agree with those of the honourable member for Ipswich, who had gone in for a most dangerous system of log-rolling; in other words, the honourable member said to them "You support my drain, and I'll support yours." He contended that, looking at the medical reports, it was evident that some very great remedy was needed to prevent the mortality and disease which had been going on in Brisbane. He had not been so much surprised at the statements of the honourable member for Rockhampton, who was a comparative stranger to Brisbane, but he must say he was astonished at the honourable member for South Brisbane, who was an ex-mayor, characterising it as a city of stinks, and then saying he should vote against the Bill. If such was the kind of support given to the Bill by the supporters of the Government, it was not at all wonderful that the Premier should be thankful for the decision come to by the honourable members opposite to him.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Garrick) said that a great deal had been attempted to be made out of the fact that the Bill was not a comprehensive measure; but honourable members must be aware that it would take a very long time to bring forward any comprehensive scheme, as engineers would have to be consulted. The present was merely put forward as part of a general scheme, which, if carried out, would not in any way interfere with such scheme; it was merely intended to furnish the means of carrying out a certain work. He could not but think that honourable members opposite were very desirous of snatching a party victory; but whilst it would be one on a very small matter, the result would be most disastrous to health and the saving of life in Brisbane. They all knew that to carry out a comprehensive system would be a work of time, as the procedure necessary in such a case would be tedious; but the present Bill was an arm of that system, and the House was merely asked to enable the Government to get money for carrying it out. So that it was said, "No, you should have brought down a comprehensive measure;" the reply of the Government was that it was a Bill for the saving of life

and health, and that it would only form a part of a general measure to be brought in at some future date.

The Hon. R. PRING said the honourable gentleman appeared to have got himself up for the occasion, and also to have most strangely forgotten what had been stated by the Attorney-General, when he told them that the present Bill was only an instalment of a larger scheme. Now, he had always laid it down that municipalities should support themselves, and so long as he was a member of that House, he should always oppose one penny of the public money being given to them. The honourable gentleman had contradicted both of his colleagues, namely, the Premier and the Attorney-General, and had simply fallen into the trap which had been laid for him by honourable members of the Opposition, but he (Mr. Pring) understood the Bill in its integrity, and it was simply this, that under the Act of 1875, all the land was not made available, but two portions were excepted, and it was now sought to make them available, which was merely an act of justice to Fortitude Valley, and had no more to do with the general taxation of the colony than his left hand. He should always vote against grants of money to municipalities, as he considered that the very existence of municipalities depended upon their having their own revenues to rely upon; if that was not to be the case then there should be no municipalities, and no honourable members like the honourable member for Ipswich. He would again draw attention to the Bill, to the real object of it, and would say that it was his intention to support the second reading. The Premier had contradicted himself in the most extraordinary manner, as, first of all, he said the Bill was most important, and then he advocated the postponement of it; in fact, the honourable gentleman had contradicted himself in everything he said.

Question—That the debate be now adjourned—put and negatived.

Question put—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

The House divided :—

NOES, 19.

Messrs. McIlwraith, Palmer, Walsh, Groom, Thompson, Macfarlane, Graham, Morehead, Stevenson, Fox, Kingsford, Beor, Perkins, Macrossan, Macfarlane, W. Scott, J. Scott, Bell, and Ivory.

AYES, 16.

Messrs. Garrick, Griffith, Douglas, Dickson, Miles, Morgan, McLean, Bailey, Hockings, Grimes, Murphy, MacDonald, Beattie, Foote, Fraser, and Pring.

Amendment, therefore, put and passed.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill.

On the motion that the preamble be postponed,

Mr. KING said there was one point which had not been touched upon in connection with the Bill before them, and he wished to draw the attention of the committee and of the Ministry to it as being of considerable importance. Honourable members were aware that the present Parliament would expire in a few months. He believed it was an open question whether it commenced from the return of the first writ or that of the last; but there was no doubt that it would expire about next November. Now, the electoral rolls, presuming the present Bill was passed, could not be completed until the first of January next; the clerks were bound to send them in by the 5th December to the returning officer, and after that, he would have to revise them; in point of fact, a considerable time would elapse before the rolls could be completed. In connection with that subject, he might mention that last February some honourable members applied in the library for copies of the rolls, and on its being represented to him that there were none, he sent in a requisition for some, which, however, were only furnished after the meeting of Parliament. This Parliament would come to an end in November, near the end of the year, and it might be possible that a general election could not be held, supposing that the rolls could not be completed until the month of April, and there would be an interregnum of four or five months, during which the country would be without a Parliament. That was not constitutional. The House was only prorogued for a month or six weeks; but it might very possibly be that they would find that they had put themselves out of power to assemble Parliament for four or five months. But, supposing what he had anticipated was not the case, there was another objection of a minor nature, namely, that if it was possible to have elections after the new electoral rolls were framed, the elections would be held in January and February, in the middle of the rainy months. There would thus be very great difficulty in holding the elections, as many of the electors would be quite unable to go to the poll and record their votes. And the question that should be taken into consideration was, that in the event of the returning officers making a mess of the electoral rolls, the only course open to those districts would be to fall back on the roll of the preceding year. But they had had an instance where a roll had to be abandoned through some

informality in signing it; and if that was done during the next revision of the rolls, the constituency would be without an electoral roll, and there would be no possibility of holding an election under this new Electoral Act; in fact, the constituency so placed would not be able to return a member until after January, 1880. It was quite possible, of course, that the honourable the Premier had taken all this matter into his consideration; but they had not been mentioned in the debate, and it was his duty to bring them before the House, because he believed there was rather an important constitutional question involved; and perhaps his constituency was likely to suffer particularly from such a mistake—being in a district where justices of the peace were not very numerous and there were not resident clerks as down here—and possibly disfranchised through such mistake. In 1872, when the honourable member for Port Curtis introduced the present Act, it did not come into operation immediately, but provision was made for the continuing of the old rolls until the new ones were perfected, and any danger in that way was avoided. The general election did not come till 1873, when the electoral rolls were perfected. He mentioned these matters in order that some assurance might be given honourable members that they would not find a new Parliament assembled with possibly less members in it than there were in the existing House—that the returning officers would have a lot of writs for the return of members without electors to return them, and therefore a lot of seats vacant in the House. He thought the matters to which he had directed attention required careful consideration, and hoped that the Premier would be able to give the House some assurances in regard to them.

The PREMIER said the matter which had been referred to was one, of course, that ought to receive the consideration of the committee; but he doubted if they were bound to consider every possible or remote contingency that might arise. There were circumstances under which it was possible even to conceive that a revolution or subversion of the Constitution might take place; but he did not think they were called upon as an ordinary rule to consider such things; and with the ordinary caution applied to all administrative processes, he did not think there was any fear of such a contingency, as had been pointed out, arising in regard to this Bill. There was some force in the objection that if the elections took place in the rainy periods, they would be inconvenient to the Northern districts. But the rolls, he would remind the committee, would not be perfected before the 1st of January; consequently the elections could not take place till after that; and he was very ready to consider any objection that might be raised on that

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ground. But he did not think they were called upon to consider the remote contingencies referred to. The returning officers, it must be assumed, would be duly instructed, and would do their duties with their usual success, and there was no necessity to contemplate possible defects which were inherent in all registration. Such an objection might arise in connection with any Bill, and render registration impossible; but he did not think it was likely to arise in carrying out this Bill. He was much obliged to the honourable member for drawing attention to these possibilities, but did not think it was necessary to provide for them.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he was quite sure, from the reply of the Premier, that he could not have understood the force of the constitutional objection that had been raised by the honourable member for Ravenswood. So far from the honourable gentleman's remarks seeking to provide for what the Premier called a remote contingency, they asked him what he was going to do in a matter that must actually come to pass. If this Parliament expired by effluxion of time in November, and this new Electoral Bill was not passed, the colony would not be without a Parliament a day, except for the interval of time that must elapse between the expiry of the present House and the election of the new members. They might have every member in his seat by October or November but for this Act. Under the ordinary arrangement they would use the rolls that were in existence at the present time, but if this Electoral Act came into law it would throw everything out of gear, and they would not be able to get an election until some time next year. Under this Act, on the 5th day of December, as the Speaker had shown, the different clerks of petty sessions were to send their lists to the returning officers, and it was after that time that the lists were prepared and the electoral roll formed. Up to the present time, it was a fact that the roll for this year could not be placed in the library. At the end of this month of May, for instance, there was no printed electoral rolls for the coming year; and in case of an election, the old rolls would have to be reverted to. It entailed great difficulty to get these rolls, and there would be more difficulty next year than there had been under the old system, for most of the boundaries were new. Seeing that we were to have new electoral districts, it was but reasonable to suppose that it would take greater time to get the rolls prepared; and if they gave two months for that, and another month for perfecting them under this new Electoral Bill, there would be no general election till May, and it would probably be August before the House could meet. So far from

providing for a contingency that might happen, the fact was, they would be without a Parliament as a certainty for five months. The Government had never mentioned this matter in their speeches, showing that they had not considered how grave an objection it was to their Bill. The effect of it would be, that they would not be able to go on with the public works of the colony unless they obtained a loan vote this year, for they would not be able to call Parliament together, and the works would come to a stand-still. With the grave position of affairs in Europe, it was of the highest necessity that there should be a Parliament, but the Government were themselves blocking the chance of calling Parliament together before August; it was perfectly certain they could not have it assembled before May, and it was equally certain that the Government might keep the country without a Parliament until September or October, though he did not say it would be advisable for any Government to do so. There was another point which bore out the argument used already, but the honourable member for Ravenswood in adverting to it did not impress the committee with the danger which possibly might arise. Supposing they were to fail in preparing the electoral rolls this year, the failure could only be rectified in one way, viz., by taking the rolls for the preceding year. Possibly those rolls might not be at all applicable to the electorates as now existing; so that the probability was that several constituencies would be disfranchised. Under these circumstances he could not but appreciate the objection raised by the Speaker as being applicable to a contingency that was very likely to arise; and he was satisfied, from the way in which the honourable the Premier spoke in reply to the Speaker, that he had not provided for the contingency. One would have thought that the first thing the Government did would be to explain this difficulty in detail, and tell the committee how they proposed to provide for this interregnum when the country would be without a Parliament, and without the means of calling for one. He had promised to assist, as far as he could, so as to get the Bill through before July. But when it was shown that the country would be without a Parliament, and without a means of calling them together for a length of time, a means of getting over that difficulty should have been made a prominent feature of the Government Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that the main difficulties raised as objections to this Bill were applicable to any scheme of redistribution. Any scheme altering the boundaries of electorates necessarily created new ones; and until the electoral rolls of the new electorates were formed, there could not be an election for them. It was said that

they ought to provide means by which there should be electoral rolls, notwithstanding the errors of the returning officers. Supposing this Bill had been brought in in any other than the last session of a Parliament, the same difficulty would have been experienced, except that it would have given a little longer to enable the rolls to be prepared. In no case when changes were made in the boundaries could they go back to the old electoral rolls while the new ones were being compiled, and where they might revert to the roll of a past year in other circumstances, when a new Act was passed they must wait for the next roll. New rolls had to be compiled when constitutional Government was established, but the objection now raised was not then raised. The objection was one in the very nature of things which could not be avoided. The honourable member for Maranoa had made a great deal of the assertion that the rolls would not be ready until next May; and he came to that conclusion because one roll was said not to be ready now. That was an assumption without a foundation. Because the rolls were not in print in Brisbane, it did not follow that they were not in existence. They were prepared in November, and there was the whole month of December in which to print them. In 1874, when the then Electoral Act was passed, it was necessary to make special provision for the new roll, because of the nature of the then Elections Act; but under present circumstances, supposing this Bill became law in July, the collection of the lists would be made in August, and by the first of January they would be printed, and the election could take place early next year. The objection was one that must, therefore, happen, if there was to be a change in the electoral districts at all. It was a difficulty inherent in the subject. If it was not the wish of the House to have any alteration in the electoral districts, it was quite clear that this Bill should not pass. The objection amounted to this, that this year was not the proper time to have brought forward a Redistribution Bill. But if they brought in such a Bill during the last session of a Parliament they must wait for the next year for the election. These were all difficulties which must arise when there was a redistribution of the electorates. If it was not desirable to have redistribution until the end of the next Parliament, possibly it was a very intelligent argument to offer. But here they had resolved that there should be a scheme of redistribution this year. If this Bill was not passed, there must be an election either in October or November, under the present rolls, or in January or February under new ones. Supposing the Bill was not passed and the election took place this year, it would be said that the Government were taking an unfair

advantage to get the election under the old rolls, so as to do away with the new votes that had been placed on the rolls this year; they would be charged with endeavouring to disfranchise all those who had come into the districts during these twelve months. The only real objection or difficulty that might arise, that he saw, was that there was a possibility that there would not be a Parliament for three or four months. The real essence of the objections was this: That if a Bill was introduced for the redistribution of electorates or for new electorates with different boundaries, certain difficulties might arise. But those difficulties had never yet arisen, and the past history of the colony did not give them any reason to anticipate those difficulties. There was no reason to suppose that the alterations in the boundaries were so great as to cause difficulties, or that the clerks of petty sessions could not do the work. Another objection pointed out was, that it would be in the power of the Government to have an interregnum of nearly a year. Well, the Government always had that power. There were no constitutional means by which to compel the Governor to summon Parliament together, so long as twelve months did not elapse between prorogation and the next session. But though there was no such power, no Governor would dare do such a thing. There was, therefore, nothing in that objection. Another objection was, that there would be no old rolls to fall back upon; and, in reality, the only objection was, that if a Bill for redistribution was brought in during the last session of Parliament, there was a remote possibility—which the experience of Australia, and of this colony in the past, taught them was a mere possibility—that some difficulties might arise in one or two districts. If honourable members would point out the constituencies where difficulties were likely to arise, there might be something in the objection; but the very constituencies where it had been said difficulties might arise were ones which were unaltered. For instance, in Burke there was no alteration, and the old roll would do. In Cook, also, the old roll would do, if the new one could not be prepared, there being no alteration. Warrego might be suggested, and there again the boundaries would be the same, and the old roll would do.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Mitchell?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said there was a very slight alteration in the Mitchell, and he did not think any difficulty could be suggested there. Nor did he think any one objection had been shown to induce them to say that this measure of reform, which was declared necessary last session, and again last week, should not be passed. He did not know any constituency in which

the rolls could not be prepared long before the 1st of January next, if necessary. There was nothing in the objections, unless it was that the existing scheme of election law was so bad that they could not safely trust it in the future. In fact, the objections raised amounted to this:—That they should not proceed further with a Redistribution Bill this session. He did not know whether the honourable member for Maranoa took that ground, but he (the Attorney-General) had endeavoured to answer the objection simply as a matter of argument.

Mr. GROOM said he must confess that he was extremely surprised at the remarks that had fallen from the honourable the Attorney-General. He was one of those who attached considerable importance to what fell from that honourable gentleman, whose high legal standing entitled his statements to considerable weight. It appeared to him (Mr. Groom), that the honourable the Attorney-General had not considered the point raised by the honourable member for Ravenswood with the gravity it deserved. He (Mr. Groom) had devoted a great deal of attention to it, and if the honourable member for Ravenswood had not brought it forward he should have done so, because he saw the result likely to follow from the Bill before the House. As a practical illustration, he would draw the attention of the Attorney-General to one electorate under the Bill—that of Condamine. Now, what did the Elections Act of 1874 prescribe?—because honourable members should bear in mind that this Bill did not propose to repeal the Act of 1874, which would still stand in full force and effect, and would apply to elections under this Bill. It was this: In the month of August, the police magistrates in their respective districts had to arrange for the compilation of the electoral rolls. In the first instance, a meeting of justices was called for the appointment of suitable persons to compile them. Then taking the electorate of Condamine, what did they find? That the police magistrate at St. George would have to appoint collectors to collect the Condamine roll within his police magistracy. The police magistrate of Condamine township, Goondiwindi, and Surat, would have to do the same. Then the revision courts were not held until November, and, according to the 29th section of the Act, “in every electoral district every clerk of petty sessions shall on or before the 5th day of December in each year deliver the lists revised as aforesaid to the returning officer.” That was a particular point to be considered—that the lists were to be delivered to the returning officers on or before the 5th of December. Now, it very often happened, as had been stated, that the lists were not delivered to the returning officer until the month

of April. In fact, to his own knowledge, the Darling Downs electoral list had only been within the last month; and he had only received the Toowoomba list within the last month. They should bear in mind that this was an extra duty imposed upon clerks of petty sessions. Taking his own district, under the new electorate proposed under this Bill, there would be something like 2,000 electors, and after the revision court had been held and the roll was initiated by the revising magistrates, the clerk of petty sessions had to prepare a manuscript copy of those 2,000 names, and hand it in to the returning officer on or before the 5th of December. It would be impossible to do it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Two days' work.

Mr. GROOM said he thought if the honourable the Attorney-General had visited the Toowoomba office and seen the amount of work done there, he would hardly have made that *sotto voce* remark. He thought there was a disposition in considering this question not to go outside the four corners of Queen street. In dealing with large and scattered portions of the colony, legislation of a better character was required than in the case of circumscribed areas. There was considerable force in the objection raised by the honourable member for Ravenswood as to the compilation of the electoral rolls. There were great difficulties connected with it, as persons were often appointed who were no more fit to do the work than a child of three years of age. On the day when the magistrates held their meeting to appoint persons, there was a general system of button-holing to secure the appointment of certain persons who were not qualified to compile the rolls; and it was therefore no wonder that the names came in in such a jumbled condition, as to occasion the numerous mistakes and challenges that always occurred at general elections, owing to names being spelled irregularly. He had seen the magistrates' copy of the roll for Northern Downs, where there were 1,700 electors, and a different christian name altogether was put down for the honourable member for Dalby than that he bore, while his residence was printed Cattle Creek instead of Jimbour. It was necessary, before going into the question, to take care that particular districts were not disfranchised by any action on their part. As the last general election dated from November, 1873, he presumed the Parliament would date from that date.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not later, certainly.

Mr. GROOM said that according to the 29th section of the Electoral Act, the Parliament would cease to exist on the 5th of November, and the rolls could not be sent to the returning officer to be printed

until the 5th of December. There would therefore be an interregnum during which there would be no Parliament at all, unless the Parliament took means to prolong its existence or repealed certain portions of the Act. The Attorney-General had not met the objections which had been urged by the honourable member for Ravenswood. The matter was of serious importance, and it should be considered carefully before they attempted to set aside what was considered constitutional by a very considerable portion of the House.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the honourable member appealed to him, and had pointed out that collectors would have to be appointed at St. George, Surat, Condamine, and Goondiwindi. They would have to be so whether the Bill was passed or not, the only difference being that if it passed in its present form, the four lists would have to be returned to one officer, and if it did not, to three. The honourable member referred to the case of Toowoomba, where at least 2,000 names were on the roll. That was only two days' work for a competent clerk, though he was well aware that the clerk of petty sessions at Toowoomba, with the work he had to do, would be unable to do it. If the Bill became law, the Government would have to see that clerical assistance was provided to carry out its provisions. If the Government were not competent to attend to such matters, they were not competent to carry on the affairs of the country at all. With regard to the interregnum, he did not quite follow the honourable member. He should say it would probably be safer to dissolve Parliament about October or November. Whatever electorates existed on the 1st of August next, all the electoral rolls for those districts must be compiled.

Mr. McILWRAITH thought the Attorney-General had taken a good deal of trouble to misunderstand the arguments which had been brought forward by himself and other honourable members. He did not question the fact that the Government might have power under the Constitution Act not to call Parliament together for twelve months. His contention was that the Government were precluding themselves from the power of being able to call it together. The objection really brought against the Bill was that it rendered nugatory or destroyed the power altogether. The Attorney-General answered that the Bill had been called for by the unanimous wish of the House declared by the vote of last session. There was, however, no need for apology, because the measure had been accepted as the Bill of the session. He would put the matter in another way to the House to show the reason of his objection. There must elapse a time when, under the operation of the Act, the Government could not call the Parliament together. The

honourable member avoided that, and tried to show that the House would not be dissolved before the end of November, and that consequently a certain time must elapse, throwing the election possibly into next year. There was not the slightest doubt that the House must be dissolved before October to have the elections this year, as it would never do to throw them over to next year. If it would be inconvenient if the Bill was not passed, it would be a great deal more so and worse for the colony if the elections were to take place next year with the operation of the new system. The returning officer could not possibly have the returns before the 5th of December, and after that came all the work. They might on an emergency get them out in two or three days, but it was not a fair thing to have a general election until the electoral lists were printed and circulated over the colony. He believed the Government had used all diligence to get the election lists put before the House, but, as a matter of fact, up to the present time the lists were not completed. The Warwick list had just come into the House wet from the printer's hand. If that was an example of the ordinary way in which the work was done, it was probable that the lists would not be completed before a similar time next year. When the boundaries were altered, a greater amount of time would be taken up, and the publication thrown possibly into June. The election would then have to take place and the House be called together; so that it was quite possible they might have an interregnum of six months—not in the manner contemplated by the Constitution Act, but a forced interregnum. Those were the questions which had been put by the honourable member for Toowoomba and himself, but they had been avoided by the Attorney-General.

The PREMIER said the honourable gentleman had spoken about the electoral rolls not coming in. He could inform the honourable gentleman that those rolls were in a perfect state. In many cases which had occurred in the country, the lists had been printed between the time of a vacancy occurring and the subsequent return of the member. As a further illustration of the critical objection taken by the honourable member for Toowoomba, with respect to the Drayton and Toowoomba list, which contained 2,000 names, he would simply refer to the roll for the Cook district, which had been drawn up and had been in the hands of the returning-officer several months, and could have been printed if there had been any necessity for pressure. In carrying the measure into effect, the whole force of the Government would be concentrated upon it, and if the present officers were not sufficient, others would be provided. The objection with regard to the completion of the electoral rolls applied

equally under the present Act. They were not so complete as they ought to be; as might be seen by referring to the actual number, which would, in some cases, be found very much below, and in some very much above. Those disparities might be got rid of, but there was hardly an election in which some defects in the rolls were not found. That might, to some extent, be remedied under the new Bill, but it was a matter of comparatively no importance. But the House took to itself the power of remedying defects when manifest. The objection just raised, if good at all, might be made to any Redistribution Bill. Reference had been made to a difficulty in calling Parliament together shortly after the commencement of the year. He thought it would be a very proper thing if honourable gentlemen who considered that it would be necessary to call Parliament early next year, to exact a definite promise; but there could be no doubt, that after the completion of the rolls, the elections could take place, without difficulty, in six weeks' time. The honourable member for Ravenswood had referred to the fact, that January or February was an inconvenient period for elections in the North. He was willing to admit that the objection applied to the North, but it did not apply to the South. It was presumed that the people were not sufficiently represented, and, in his opinion, it was certainly of far more importance to remedy the defect of non-representation than fear to encounter the small difficulties which might possibly be met with in the Bill. He maintained that the administrative powers vested in the Executive were sufficient to give effect to the Bill in a proper manner. Of course, if the present House did not consider them fit to be trusted with such powers, they should put men in their places in whom they had confidence. They did not live under the presumption that difficulties not contemplated, or remote contingencies, would occur, and it was, therefore, not reasonable to call upon them to meet difficulties which were not likely to happen.

Mr. PALMER said the speech of the honourable the Premier showed that he did not want a Parliament, and that he imagined he could do very well without one. He said, "If you have not sufficient confidence in us, and do not believe that we are able to manage public affairs, put us out;" but he (Mr. Palmer) did not suppose that any member of the committee would be frightened by such an idea. The whole of the arguments used by the Premier and Attorney-General showed that they did not understand the gravity of the situation, as pointed out by the honourable member for Ravenswood. It was a very extraordinary thing that while the Bill was passing the second reading, the objection of the hon-

ourable member for Ravenswood had struck nobody; but, strange to say, it had struck several honourable members since. This showed that time should be given to consider the various bearings of a Bill before it was rushed through the House. He was perfectly certain in his own mind that the objection had not previously struck the Ministry. He had watched the countenances of the Premier and Attorney-General, and he fancied that they were both taken by surprise. As to the Premier's reference to remote contingencies, he did not think there was any remote contingency in the objection pointed by the honourable member for Ravenswood and Maranoa, that if the Bill passed, a long interregnum was certain to occur before another Parliament could be summoned. It would, no doubt, be satisfactory to him to be in office for as many months as he might choose without any power to put him out or call him to account. The Attorney-General had endeavoured to show that under any Redistribution Bill the same difficulty must occur; but this was nonsense. Under the present Redistribution Act, ample time was allowed for the preparation of the rolls, and Parliament was called together as quickly as there was any necessity. It had been shown that evening that it would not be possible, if this Bill passed, to call another Parliament together without a very long interregnum. He appealed to the committee whether they were going to allow any Ministry to hold office without having any check upon them—whether they were going to let them change face, turn about, and jump into each other's offices, without the country having any Parliament to control them. They must also remember that they were living in a Fool's Paradise. The enemy might appear at their gates any day. He believed that England was certain to be involved in war. Were the members of the House to await such an event and allow a Bill to pass which would render it impossible for the Ministry to call Parliament together? How were they to get Supply? They had been told by the Attorney-General that all Ministries had power not to call Parliament together for twelve months. They knew that if a Ministry was strong enough it could do so and risk being called to account, but that was a very different thing to having no Parliament to control them, which was what the Bill would lead to. Was the House prepared for anything of the sort? The members of the Ministry who had spoken treated the objection very lightly. No doubt it was a nice matter from their point of view, to have a lease of power which could not be done away with if the Bill passed. He was not prepared to give them this lease of power, and it would be an unhappy thing if the

country allowed the present Parliament to be "snuffed out." If the Ministry had fulfilled the pledges given last session, and had called the House together early in the year, there would have been ample time to pass the Bill; but they left it to the last moment, and then expected the House to rush the measure through and obtain a further lease of power. He was glad the objection had been raised by the member for Ravenswood, for, from his position as Speaker of the House, there was no one more competent than he to raise it and to explain its full force.

Mr. THOMPSON wished to point out that the Bill would come into operation at the end of the present session; but for the purpose of collecting rolls, it would come into effect at once; consequently, rolls must be prepared under the Elections Act; but they could not possibly be got ready until January. This was not the first time the point had come before the House in the same shape. He would quote the opinion of a respected member of the House, the late Mr. T. B. Stephens, when the party opposite was a Liberal party with a Liberal policy, which was not the case now. In regard to a similar point, he said—

"If any returning officer neglected his duty by not completing the roll by a certain time, a general election would be postponed indefinitely, and that was not the object of honourable members on his side of the committee."

The boot was seen now on the other leg. To avoid those difficulties they passed a series of clauses making temporary provision for the immediate preparation of the rolls. It was then necessary to call Parliament together with a view to a financial year commencing at a different time from the present, and by section 5, and three or four subsequent ones, it was provided that there should be provisional rolls prepared to meet the very emergency which was now taking place—the old rolls were to be revised and sorted according to the new electorates, and that was what Government ought to have done on this occasion. The marginal note to the 9th clause was "First revised rolls under the Elections Act of 1872 to be produced." Lists were to be made up under certain conditions according to the new boundaries, and minute provisions were made in six subsections showing how this was to be done. Let it be done now. It was proposed, for instance, to make the Bremer return two members; all they had to do was to get the Bremer and Bandanba rolls, and at the revision court make one roll for the temporary purpose. The result would be that, if the House dissolved in a month, it would take only a few weeks, in view of the passing of this Bill, to get one of those provisional rolls out for the purpose of an emergency election. It happened, and might happen again, that it

was necessary to call Parliament together specially; and they ought always to be in a position to call Parliament together at a very short notice. Supposing the Bill were to pass this month, as intended, and Parliament were dissolved as soon as supplies were obtained, the colony would be without a Parliament, even if the utmost expedition were shown in the preparation of the rolls, till the end of January. That was not the sort of thing for them to contemplate, and the Government ought to have provided for provisional rolls until proper rolls could be prepared according to some such scheme as was introduced in the Act of 1872.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the provisions of the Act of 1872 were only applicable to that measure, and had nothing whatever to do with what the honourable member for Bremer had alluded to. He wished honourable members would look in the face the real difficulty, and see what it amounted to. At the end of this Parliament there must be an interregnum of three months, whether this Bill passed or not, for the general election, and it seemed as clear as daylight, that this Bill had nothing to do with that interregnum. The difficulty was as to the termination of Parliament, and not as to the passing of a Redistribution Bill. If the House dissolved in October, there could not be a Parliament during November, December, and January; and if it dissolved to-morrow, there would not be a Parliament for three months, whatever emergency might happen. The clauses to which the honourable member referred in the Act of 1872, were drafted by himself (the Attorney-General). At that time no man could get his name on the electoral roll unless he sent in an application. All existing electorates were then being destroyed, and forty-two new ones created; and if electors had had to send in fresh applications, one-half of them would have been disfranchised. That was the sole purpose for which the clauses were passed. Under the Elections Act of 1872, claims would have had to be sent in on or before the 1st June, and the Electoral Districts Act fixed the date on the 31st March, or two months earlier, thus accelerating the time of the elections. But the rolls were not and could not be ready until October or November, 1873. It was now proposed to leave the existing law as it stood; the rolls would be got ready by the end of December, and the elections could be held in January and February. The remarks of Mr. Stephens referred to an amendment proposed by him to still further accelerate the time, and Mr. Stephens said he thought it was desirable to do so. The present law had been in force for four years, and no difficulty had been found in holding any elections. It was objected that

January and February were inconvenient months for holding elections; but no objection of the kind had ever been made before, and it could hardly be contended that because January and February was the wet season in the North, it was a sufficient reason for not altering the electoral districts. It was certain that if the Bill was not passed now, the next Parliament would not tackle it—at least not till it had been three or four years in existence.

Mr. McILWRAITH said the Attorney-General surely did not consider he had answered the objection as to the interregnum, by saying that under the operation of the existing Act, there must be an interregnum of three months. It had never been contended that as soon as this Parliament was dissolved another Parliament sprang up. The point was—and the Attorney-General had evidently missed it—that, under the existing Acts, an election would take place on the basis of the lists just finished, while, if this Bill became law, the new lists would have to be compiled before there could be a general election. It was quite possible to make some arrangements by which the elections could take place this year, but he thought it would be unsatisfactory to leave the matter in doubt. What he held was, that some provision should have been made to meet a contingency such as that which would have arisen without this Bill having been brought in at all. The Electoral Bill of 1872 exactly provided for a similar case to this, and he was surprised the Premier had not suggested that the clauses should be imported into his Bill, adapted as they might be to meet the present contingency. They had some of the lists of the year in existence, and they thought they might be revised and made applicable to the purposes of the general election. That was the object for which the clauses were put in the Bill of 1872; and they could be made most applicable to this one. If they were to allow this difficulty to go on, as they would do if they allowed this Act to pass, they would have to wait until these new rolls were made next year before they had an election.

Mr. THOMPSON did not think it would be difficult to meet the views of honourable members, and that a less complex set of clauses would effect that than those that had been referred to. This would prevent them having an abolition of their roll; for if such an emergency arose, they might not be able to get a Parliament together. His proposition would be that a certain set of clauses providing for emergency rolls, to be prepared from the old existing rolls, be imported into the Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that, as regarded these emergency rolls, as they had been termed, they were not to be used for any

purposes of election, but simply for reference in compiling the rolls of the new districts: they were something to go upon. The honourable member for Bremer said there should be some means of providing for the emergency in this case; that if this Parliament was dissolved by effluxion of time in November, there would be an interregnum of two months, during which there would be no electoral rolls in force. That was what it would come to; there would be no electoral rolls in force for two months.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Very likely not till May.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that if they had been referring to 1872 they might have said not until November; for there was then no means of getting an election earlier. The Parliament prorogued in May, and did not meet again till January. The only way of getting over the difficulty was to say that the existing Parliament should continue until the new rolls were perfected. That would be the position in which the House would find itself. The honourable member for Maranoa had said the rolls might not be ready till May, but the present rolls were ready in January. They were ready for use although not actually printed. He would ask was the difficulty one worth looking in the face? The remedy, however, was simply that pointed out, a change of the Constitution Act, this Parliament continuing until the compilation of the rolls of the new district.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he should like the Attorney-General to answer this question. The honourable gentleman had referred to 1872, and the time that had elapsed since the passing of that Act and the meeting of the new Parliament. He should like to know had Government the power of having an interregnum of twelve months? Did the honourable gentleman mean to tell him that if a dissolution should happen when there were no electoral rolls in existence, the Governor had the power to call Parliament together?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said what he had said was, that from the time of the dissolution of the old Parliament to the calling of the new Parliament there was no electoral roll in the colony.

The Hon. R. PRING said that neither the learned Attorney-General nor any member of the House who had addressed the committee on the question had touched the real point. Taking the Constitution Act upon which this Parliament was based, he found that "every Legislative Assembly of the said colony hereafter to be summoned and chosen shall continue for five years from the day of the return of the writs for choosing the same and no longer subject nevertheless to be sooner prorogued or dissolved by the Governor." The honourable the

Attorney-General had not drawn any distinction between the effluxion of time and a dissolution or prorogation. He had talked on everything excepting a dissolution. A dissolution did not dissolve a Parliament; if it did, it preserved all the rights of the Constitution Act intact, and all the electoral rights of voters and candidates intact; but once it died, it died like any other body. Parliament then became extinct—it was dead and done for. He would like the Attorney-General to state by what Act he was going to resuscitate a dead Parliament. He had never spoken of it; and it could certainly not be by their passing an Act of Parliament to resuscitate themselves before they were dead. He thought the honourable gentleman was talking a little wide of the mark so far as the rights of voters at elections were concerned. They could not affect to know that they were going to die, and pass an Act of Parliament to get over the difficulty; for the Act would not be good until they were dead. The very moment that, under the Constitution Act, this Parliament expired by effluxion of time, there was then no Parliament at all in the colony; and he (Mr. Pring) did not know who was to call it together. He should have thought that experienced men like the Attorney-General or the Premier, or even the collective wisdom and experience of the House, would have supplied them with a way out of the difficulty, not looking upon the Parliament as an expiring Parliament—but as a dissolving Parliament, the mistake into which all appeared to have fallen. He (Mr. Pring) did not profess to be a statesman, but he would crave the leave of the House to state what he thought would be a statesmanlike view of the question before it. This course, in his view, should be by enactment to enlarge the operation of the 5th clause of the Constitution Act so as to meet the existing emergency. The proposition he was going to advance was one he had never heard advocated here before, but it was one, nevertheless, that would have got rid of all the difficulty. He objected to the Government bringing in this Bill in an expiring session. He had before advanced the same statement, but his remarks were not valued at the time, though in the discussion to-night he heard men, whom he should never have thought of, advance the very same argument. They had re-echoed his opinion, that there was no necessity for Government to allow the Parliament to die out before meeting the difficulty; but the difficulty had come, and it was so great that he (Mr. Pring) could hardly tell what the effect of the present position of things would be. But although he did not himself exactly agree with jumping over the stile before the difficulty occurred, there were certain positions in a man's lifetime, and even in the position of a colony, which would

compel it to do that which under ordinary circumstances, it would not do. Why did not the Premier come down and ask for money and say, "This is a moribund Parliament; we cannot carry on; we'll dissolve and get the members elected again before the end of the five years"? Instead of that, he brought in this Bill, and admitted that if not passed within a certain time it would be worthless. Then they would go back to the old system, and he would like the Premier or the Attorney-General to tell him how they were going to resuscitate this Parliament. It could not be done unless there was an alteration of the Constitution Act—and how could they pass a Constitution Act when there was no Parliament—or by getting a Constitution again from Her Most Gracious Majesty? When this Parliament expired by effluxion of time there would be no Parliament if they did not watch what they were about, and then he wanted to know what they were going to do? The honourable the Attorney-General, in speaking on the subject, had argued the minor point with reference to the collection of the electoral rolls, but he had left the major question in the dark, as he generally did. He should like to get an answer to his question from the honourable the Minister for Lands. He should like to hear that honourable gentleman expound the Constitution Act, explain the Elections Act, and prove that the Attorney-General was wrong, and that he (Mr. Pring) was right. He would listen to him with the greatest patience; he would listen to almost anything, but he wanted to hear one man say he was wrong.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the argument of the honourable member reminded him of something that took place during the session of 1873. When an amendment was made for adjourning the House over the Ipswich races, the Speaker ruled that he could not put an amendment until the original motion had been disposed of. The result was that the motion was carried, and the Speaker had to come to the House and read prayers every day for a fortnight without any members being present. Another way of getting over the difficulty with regard to the interregnum was to say that the Bill should take effect from the 1st of January, instead of from the dissolution of the present Parliament.

Mr. McILWRAITH said, in that case, the present rolls would have to be used, and they were not applicable at all. The Bill made no provision for getting electoral lists prepared.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said what he stated was, that if the Bill took effect from the 1st of January, and it was found necessary to have a fresh election, it would have to be on the old basis, and on the old

electorates, if the new rolls could not be got ready in time.

The Hon. R. PRING said the difficulty that had arisen proved the correctness of his former argument, that this was not the proper time to introduce an Electoral Reform Bill. He should like the honourable the Attorney-General to answer him with reference to the clause of the Constitution Act to which he had referred. If the honourable gentleman could show him that that clause was repealed, and that the House had altered the Constitution, then he (Mr. Pring) would admit that he was wrong. But if he (the Attorney-General) thought that the Bill, either directly or indirectly, repealed that clause, he (Mr. Pring) could tell him, whether he valued his opinion or not, that he was wrong.

Mr. BELL said he had listened attentively to the honourable the Attorney-General and although that honourable gentleman had argued the question very closely, he had not told them anything of the difficulties presented by the Bill now before the House. As the honourable member for Brisbane had said, he had left the major question entirely alone, but he had argued very clearly the subsidiary one, which did not affect the point now at issue. He (Mr. Bell) thought the Government had been very leniently dealt with by honourable members on that side of the House during this debate. The honourable member for Port Curtis had taxed them with having no knowledge of the difficulties surrounding the Bill until they were presented to them by the honourable member for Ravenswood and the leader of the Opposition, but it seemed to him that it was very much like a deep-laid scheme on the part of the Government, and that they knew very much more upon the subject than the Opposition gave them credit for, because it was quite evident from the admissions of honourable members on the Treasury benches that a remedy—and a very important remedy, was necessary—one which, if not incorporated in the Bill, would enable the Government to go through the greater portion of next year without any Parliament being in existence. That was the position laid down by the honourable member for Ravenswood, and it had not been combatted by the Attorney-General. It was clear—however much the Government had been taunted by the Opposition with obstruction on this occasion—that the Government ought to be extremely thankful for the suggestions that had been thrown out in connection with important features that had not been embodied in it. He thought it would be much better for the the Premier to accept the position and withdraw the Bill, reconsider it, and bring it forward in a better shape—a shape that would bear upon

the face of it the suggestions that had been made. Notwithstanding all that had been said by the honourable the Attorney-General it amounted to nothing more than special pleading, and however well it might do for a jury, it would not do for that House. A great injustice would befall this colony if the present Government had in this Bill the power of remaining in office during the greater portion of next year without a Parliament being in existence. The Attorney-General had not yet shown any remedy for the defects which had been pointed out. It was quite possible that a remedy might be found, but no solution of the difficulty had yet been shown. The Government would do well to withdraw the Bill to-night. He might say that, as far as he knew the intention of honourable members on his side of the House, it was their sincere desire to pass as good a Bill as possible. It was quite evident that, whether innocently or knowingly done by the Government, the Bill, if passed, would give them a power which would be regretted by every member of the House.

Mr. WALSH said the Government were in a position to-night similar to what they had been in during the whole of the session. They commenced the day's proceedings by introducing a measure which was a mere subterfuge to divert the House from the real question. They were defeated on that; but they swallowed the leek, and then brought in the great question of the day. They had introduced, in the most milk-and-water way he had ever seen, an important measure. They seemed, in fact, to invite all the opposition to it that could possibly be given. It was one of the crudest measures that had ever been brought before a Parliament of thinking men, and he did not believe that two members of the Government understood it. He was perfectly sure that the Colonial Treasurer and the Minister for Works no more understood what was the substance and essence of the Bill than he did. If any honourable member was less able than himself to comprehend the details and character of the Bill, it was the honourable the Minister for Works, who sat in his seat the very personification of impassive and imperturbable ignorance on the subject. He (Mr. Walsh) understood it was to have been the grand *coup* of the session, and that members would have got up and expressed their opinions of the principles or want of principles in the Bill. He could not understand why the Premier did not give way to the Attorney-General in the same way that the late member for Ipswich gave way to the present Premier. The honourable gentleman should certainly give way to the astute—but he thought mistaken—Attorney-General. The Premier would pardon him for saying that he never listened to more involved high-falutin' remarks than

those made by the Premier that evening. He spoke in an all-round style to evade the questions put to him, and at the same time tried to dazzle his supporters who sat behind him. He would ask the Premier whether he knew the nature of the Bill, what it was intended for, and what effect it would have on the country? The only question, he believed, that the honourable gentleman and his colleagues put to themselves was, "How long can we possibly humbug people so that we may remain in office?" The Minister for Lands was one of the best-natured men in the country, and did not pay the least attention to his official duties, because he knew that if he did he would soon cease to be good-natured. Could the Minister for Works, if he knew anything about the Bill, explain what the Attorney-General meant when he threatened that, if the Bill was not passed in something like its present shape, there would be an interregnum. The term has been used about twenty times by the Attorney-General that evening, and he (Mr. Walsh) found by the dictionary that it signified a time when the throne was vacant. Yet the Attorney-General was constantly harping on the word. He (Mr. Walsh) had very great objection to the Bill, and yet he was going to vote for it if he possibly could. According to the Bill, there were to be two members for Brisbane, and only one for the Warrego. In the city of Brisbane, which was to have these two members, there were 1,768 male adults, that being the basis upon which the representation was grounded; while in the important district of Warrego, there were 1,285 male adults and only one member was proposed. Such disparity between those districts led him to suppose that an extraordinary amount of favouritism had been shown towards the Brisbane interest, which was bolstered up in every direction by members who were more or less connected with Brisbane; whilst outlying districts, which had contributed so much to the revenue were totally ignored. He was more than disgusted with such injustice to a district so distant from the metropolis. For these reasons, he expressed his total distrust of the Bill and his disbelief that it was the intention of the Government to pass it this session. He hoped the Government would be defeated ignominiously on the Bill; but if it became law, he trusted that it would conduce to the prosperity of the country.

Mr. McILWRAITH said the Attorney-General had practically admitted that the important point raised by the honourable member for Ravenswood involved a real difficulty, for he had said that there would be a difficulty in getting the electoral rolls prepared before the end of January. He would suggest to the Government that some amendment of the Bill should be devised by which the present electoral system could

be worked before the end of January, or that they should pass a clause to manufacture provisional rolls out of those which were now in existence. These latter he did not think were far from representing the people of the colony. The elections could then take place in November and December and the interregnum would be of the shortest length. He had suggested two ways to the Government of getting over the difficulty, and he now offered the assistance of the Opposition to enable them to do so. The Attorney-General had rather astonished him by trying to take away the force of his argument, that under the present Bill there would have to be an interregnum of some months, during which no power existed of calling Parliament together, by saying that a longer interregnum occurred between the recess of 1872 and the meeting of the Parliament of 1873. He asked him, whether, supposing a dissolution had taken place by the Act of the Governor in Council, there was no machinery to convene Parliament, and the honourable gentlemen replied, "No." He believed this was not so.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It was so.

Mr. McILWRAITH said Parliament was prorogued in December, and in the legitimate way; elections for the new Parliament were held in October following. If a dissolution had taken place at any time in the interval there was machinery provided by the 29th clause of the Act of 1872, which provided that the rolls revised during the year should continue in force until the rolls of 1873 came into effect.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he had not acknowledged the difficulty, but only the fact, and he had pointed out that the same thing occurred in 1872. The 29th clause, quoted by the honourable member, referred to a different matter. The rolls for 1872 had then been prepared, and it was, therefore, provided that any elections for the existing Parliament should take place under these rolls, and one election did take place. The rolls were to remain in force during 1873 until the dissolution.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the Attorney-General seemed to evade the question at issue. The difference between the dissolution of the last Parliament and the position they would be placed in when the present Parliament dissolved by effluxion of time was, that the Government would not be able to call Parliament into existence, whereas immediately upon the dissolution of the last Parliament, the Governor issued writs for the new Parliament. No matter what machinery the Government might pass now, there would be an interregnum, during which the Governor had no power of convening Parliament. That was a position entirely opposed to the present practice of Representative Government, because, in Great Britain, whenever a dis-

solution took place, the Queen, upon the same day, gave instructions for the issue of writs for the election of the new Parliament. The Attorney-General said the difficulty was merely a fact. It was, however, a fact which would probably exist for nearly four months, and was a most dangerous precedent. No such thing had occurred in the English Parliament during the reign of her present Majesty. It would be a most dangerous precedent to allow a period of four months to elapse during which no Parliament could possibly assemble. If Great Britain went to war during the interval, or if some great commercial crisis arose, what position would the colony be placed in without a Parliament? Had the Parliament been called together earlier in the year so as to have disposed of this Bill two months ago, the question would not have arisen. Parliament last year did not pledge the Government to bring in a Redistribution Bill, but simply to give additional members to those districts that were under-represented. More than that the Government should not have done, but having done more, they had placed themselves in the position pointed out by the honourable members for Ravenswood and Maranoa.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he had not consciously evaded any difficulty, but had on the contrary endeavoured to meet the difficulties put before him. He would repeat, that in 1872, Parliament was dissolved on the 1st September. At that time there were no electoral rolls in existence, and writs were issued for holding the elections two months afterwards. From the moment that Bill became law, it was impossible to hold the elections before October or November. A Bill of this kind was not likely to pass through committee without being recommitted, perhaps more than once. The Bill of 1872 was recommitted four or five times, and entirely recast.

Mr. McILWRAITH was glad to hear the conciliatory tone of the Attorney-General—so different from the style of the Premier, who had declared that he would not allow the number to be reduced by one, or if by one, yet certainly not more than one. If the Attorney-General's version was to be taken, the sooner they got to business the better. The Attorney-General saw the difficulty now, and the Opposition was willing to assist him in meeting it, and give him time. If the proposition had been made before, it would have been accepted.

The PREMIER said that exaggerated importance seemed to be attached to the question of an interregnum. Under any circumstances an interregnum must exist, and the honourable member for Kennedy must admit that it existed even in the Imperial Parliament for a time. He was quite willing to admit that that interregnum should be reduced to a minimum.

He denied the right of the Opposition to treat the Ministry in the high tone they had adopted. The Ministry were the servants and guardians of the interests of the public, and it was the last thing the Opposition had a right to impute to them that they were there by tolerance, and not by the will of the people; and Parliament, approving of their existence, should confide in them. At the same time, Parliament should not surrender its privileges to any men for any lengthened period, but it should place a certain amount of confidence in them as far as concerned the conduct of the Government of the country. It was, perhaps, desirable that this debate should have taken place, as it showed that the same difficulties exhibited themselves in this case as in that of the Bill of 1872, and that certain remedies were applied on that occasion by an independent member. It was quite possible that on this occasion remedies might be pointed out by either an independent or an Opposition member. But he looked upon the Bill itself, administered faithfully and honestly, as a remedy in itself; at the same time he was quite prepared to listen to amendments. The honourable member for Maranoa had no right to say that he (the Premier) would not listen to any amendments at all. What he did say was, that the Bill having passed its second reading, the main outlines of it were to be considered as accepted and binding. He should be sorry to see the representation clauses of the Bill seriously modified. Government were bound to stick to the essentials of the measure, and he looked upon it as most important that none of the numbers should be cancelled. The objection taken was somewhat technical, and one which might be fairly discussed; but it was going too far to say that possible contingencies might arise and throw discredit on the measure. The vital portion of the Bill was that it increased representation commensurate with the requirements of the country. It might be that if this Bill was not passed during this Parliament, it would have to be dealt with as a question of additional members only, for the new Parliament was not likely to take it up until after it had been three or four years in existence. He wished to deal with the matter in as complete a way as possible, and he was not to be deterred from doing so by imaginary evils.

Mr. BELL said the Premier objected to Opposition members dealing with the Government as conspirators against the well-being of the country, but the people would not have placed the Premier in his present position if there had not been an Opposition to keep him from going too fast. If the Premier had no fear of the administration of the Bill, if it passed into

law, the people of the colony would be very much afraid to see an Act passed which would enable the Government to carry on for a lengthened period without the existence of a Parliament. The fact was, he believed, that the Opposition side of the House was far too generous. One honourable gentleman had absolutely drawn up a means of getting out of this difficulty. But it was not part of their functions to do that until the Government said either that they would not do so themselves or confessed that they could not. If they confessed that there was a difficulty, and said they would come back to-morrow with an amendment to meet it, he had no doubt the Opposition would be prepared to assist them in making the Bill law. But it was no use for the Attorney-General to argue on false premises.

Mr. PALMER said a mistake was made in treating the present Bill like that of 1872, as the circumstances were entirely different. This Parliament expired by effluxion of time in November. The last Bill was passed in August 1872, and it did not come into force until the end of that Parliament, and the end of that Parliament did not take place until August 1873. During the whole of that time, twelve months, preparations were being made for the electoral roll, compiling it and bringing it into working order. The Parliament was dissolved in August 1873, and the Government met the House again in January of the following year, and they made as much hurry and haste as they could with the rolls to enable them to do so. Still they were eighteen months from the date of the Bill passing before they were in a position to meet the House. In this case there would be no time at all given. It had been pointed out over and over again, and yet the Attorney-General ran away from the argument, that there would be an interregnum of six months at the very least under this Bill.

The PREMIER: Not necessarily.

Mr. PALMER: Yes, necessarily; six months at the very least.

The PREMIER: Three.

Mr. PALMER said the Premier might say three till he was black in the face; but he did not know that the House was to meet with any difficulty at all until the honourable member for Ravenswood spoke; then it was that a new light seemed to have dawned upon him. If the Bill did not pass, and the Parliament died out by effluxion of time, not three months, but one month, would be sufficient to get the elections over if the preparations had been made, and they had been looking forward for such a result. It would be very different in case of its being absolutely necessary to call Parliament together, as it soon might be in these times, although all the Ministers

seemed to have lost sight of the fact that there might be an obvious necessity for having an early one. In 1873 the chances were not so great. Then there was no enemy at the gate, there was no war threatening the mother country, and the colony had only to protect its own internal affairs; but at the present time a serious state of affairs existed, and the Governor should be able to call Parliament together on the very earliest summons. But, coming back to this Electoral Bill, he had not seen a single article in any of the Press of the colony showing that the people were in favour of it, and there had been no public meetings, or a petition presented in its favour by a single honourable member; and he could not but say that, bearing those facts in mind, and the difficulties that had been pointed out, the Ministry would be rushing Queensland into a very bad state indeed if they persisted in pressing this Bill forward at the present time.

The PREMIER thought that after so much had been said they might reasonably proceed with the business; for, assuming that it might be desirable even to embody the views spoken by honourable gentlemen, they might proceed as far as the fifth clause. They were now going outside the real merits of the Bill. When they had arrived at the fifth clause they would have reached a vital principle of the Bill. The present question, however, was, that the preamble be postponed.

Mr. IVORY did not see the use of the Premier assuming that this and the other might be done. What was wanted on his side of the House before they wasted any further time on this Bill was a promise that the Government would consider the difficulty which had been raised, and acknowledged by the Attorney-General. The tangible difficulty existed in allowing the present Parliament to die out and permitting even the possibility of a new House not being called together for some six or eight months. It was admitted that such a long interregnum was improbable, but still the possibility existed. The moment the writs were issued the matter was out of the hands of the Government altogether. They could not urge the returning officers to be expeditious, or in any other way interfere with them; and circumstances might arise to debar them from making these returns, and the Government would not be able to call another Parliament until the material for bringing it together was in existence. Were honourable members prepared to face the possibilities of a long interregnum? He thought they ought not to place themselves in such a position at all; and after the remarks that the Attorney-General had made, he thought the Government would have given a promise to embody in this Bill an amendment which would overcome the difficulty.

The PREMIER quite understood that that would be the case;—that it would be done. But it could not be done at this stage. It was a technical provision, to meet what he considered a somewhat imaginary difficulty; and would have to be met, if necessary, at a later stage of the Bill.

Mr. MCILWRAITH asked if the Premier would promise to provide for the difficulty, in the way that was spoken of?

The PREMIER said he could not say that it would meet the difficulties as entertained by various honourable members; but the provision would be such, that the interregnum should be reduced as far as possibly could be done by legal means. They were not governed entirely by law, but they were bound to surround themselves with safeguards, as far as they could.

Mr. MCILWRAITH complained of the tone of the speech made by the Premier, and said that his observations were directed to the Ministry and to Ministers themselves.

The PREMIER said he had spoken generally, and thought the honourable member for Maranoa had alluded to them as having no title on any ground whatever, to fill the seats on those (the Treasury) benches.

Mr. MCILWRAITH said he had no doubt that they were not fitted for those benches; but he had not spoken of them personally in any way.

Mr. WALSH was understood to suggest that the debate had gone far enough, and should be adjourned.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had heard no reason why the preamble of the Bill should be postponed. He thought, after what had fallen from that side of the House—which had apparently not fallen on barren soil—they should adjourn until the honourable the Attorney-General or the Premier were able to evolve something to rectify the very serious blot which they admitted had been found in the Bill. He hoped they would not press it further to-night. He read an essay on China last session, and he should read one on Japan to-night.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Miles) said he would call the attention of honourable members opposite to what took place in that House some years ago. An honourable member had moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of expressing his opinion on the political questions of the day, and at the conclusion, the honourable member for Port Curtis moved the adjournment of the House for five months. There was an interregnum; and he thought during that five months Parliament could not have been called together.

Mr. WALSH: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, if the House stood adjourned for five months, he

did not see how it could be called together. He thought they should remember what had taken place before; and he maintained that the defect in this Bill was not to be compared with the action of the honourable member for Port Curtis on that occasion. He did not think that honourable members would get up and say it was a constitutional course to pursue. That House had not power to adjourn for more than fourteen days, and yet the honourable member for Port Curtis carried an adjournment for five months. He believed, in the meantime, he succeeded in getting a dissolution; but, at any rate there was the fact, and he did not think this Government would propose such a course as that. He did not see that there was any great difficulty to be got over. His own opinion was, that this moribund Parliament would not be able to pass any measures at all. He had observed from the commencement of the session, that honourable members opposite did not intend to do any business, and the sooner it was brought to a close the better.

Mr. STEVENSON said he was glad to find that, at anyrate, two members of the Ministry agreed on this Bill. The Premier in the wind-up of his speech on the second reading, and the Minister for Works now agreed, and they found the honourable the Attorney-General dead against them. The Premier, on the second reading of the Bill, said:—

“They would rather discard the Bill altogether. He wished honourable members would have the courage of their opinions. If they believed the Bill was fraught with all the evils they described, let them by all means reject it, but do not let them play with it. In the matter of boundaries, he was quite willing that there should be some modification. In that respect he admitted that the Bill was by no means perfect, and he was quite willing to receive light from any quarter; but he was not willing that the Bill should be made sport of and spoiled by any number of members who might band together for that purpose. He would rather discard it at once. Let them try conclusions on the second reading; but let them not trifle with the Bill in committee. When it passed the second reading it must be dealt with promptly in committee or not at all, and it must be apparent that it must be passed through the Upper House in time for the collection of the rolls, and the proper treatment of it under the electoral laws. He hoped, therefore, if there were any doubts—if there were any honourable members who had been accustomed to support the Government who did not feel that they would be justified in their consciences in voting for the Bill, let them vote against it rather than trifle with it, and think they would tire the Government out in committee.”

Now, in the face of that, what did the Attorney-General say? That he was willing every clause should be recommitted

five times, and be mutilated, and put in any shape honourable members pleased. There was a nice state of affairs! There was one question he should like to ask the Colonial Secretary, and that was:—Whether the returning officers, or clerks of petty sessions, or others who had been engaged in compiling the electoral rolls, had received instructions to send the rolls to the Colonial Secretary's office when they were made up? On Saturday morning he went into the library to look at the electoral roll of his own district, but he found there was not one, and was told by the Librarian that several had not come in. The 1st of August was the date on which the rolls were supposed to be commenced to be compiled, but he found they were not ready yet.

Mr. WALSH said he believed no further business would be done to-night—and he understood that if he did not move the Chairman out of the chair the Premier would do so. On that understanding he would sit down.

The PREMIER said he thought they might make some progress before they adjourned. The question was—that the preamble be postponed—and he did not propose to-night, after the discussion that had taken place, to go on to any of the material or important parts of the Bill. They might pass the first two clauses, and then he should move the Chairman out of the chair. They did not involve any matters of principle, but the third clause did, and would probably have to be postponed.

Mr. STEVENSON thought he was entitled to an answer to his question. It was a point that would bear materially on the argument adduced by honourable members on that side of the House with reference to the interregnum between the expiration of Parliament and the next election.

The PREMIER said he wished to meet the honourable gentleman fairly, and he could only tell him that as a rule the Colonial Secretary was very chary about giving instructions to returning officers. When a returning officer was appointed he had certain duties to perform under the Act, and he was bound to fulfil them with as little instructions as possible. There were certain printed statements which he believed every returning officer was supplied with, and when once that had been done, the practice, which he had certainly no wish to make an innovation upon, was to leave the matter as much as possible in the hands of the returning officer. Parliament was very jealous, and rightly so, of any interference with returning officers.

Mr. PALMER said, whenever a returning officer applied to him, as Colonial Secretary, for instructions, he sent him a copy of the Bill. If he was fit to be a returning officer he ought to be able to read the Bill.

Motion—That the preamble be postponed—put and passed.

Clauses 1 “Short title,” and 2 “Repeal of Act 36 Vic. Clause 10,” then put and passed as printed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Chairman left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The PREMIER moved the adjournment of the House.

Mr. THOMPSON asked when the amendments to the Bill would be considered?

The PREMIER said there would be ample time for discussion. He could promise that the amendments would be taken at a later date, but not to-morrow.

The House adjourned at thirteen minutes to 10 o'clock.