

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 17 JUNE 1879**

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## FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to :—

By Mr. BEATTIE—

That there be laid on the table of this House, a copy of the specification for the construction of the Dredges, as called for by the Government.

By Mr. AMHURST—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, all Correspondence respecting the changes taking place in entrances to Moreton Bay.

By Mr. GARRICK—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, a return of all deeds of grant of land in the Dalby Land Agent's District, which have been issued since the 1st of January last, specifying any lands in respect of which any legal proceedings have been taken, or are pending, and the nature of such proceedings in each case.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT—ADJOURNED DEBATE.

Mr. ARCHER, in resuming the debate on the Financial Statement, said that in its early stages several of the speakers of the Opposition had confined their remarks to technical criticism. Had the debate continued in that groove he would not have troubled the House, but in view of what had been said since by several hon. members, and particularly by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) in the very able speech which he delivered, the debate had been taken into a far wider channel, touching on a great many topics of interest, not only bearing on the finances but the general good of the colony. To some of those subjects he had given the very best attention of which he was capable, and whether the results he had arrived at were right or wrong, they were in most cases diametrically opposed to the inference drawn by the other side, and he therefore considered it his duty to explain the reasons which led him to think as he did. At the same time, the House had to thank the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) for introducing these subjects, because, although actual criticism of the Financial Statement was a very necessary part of the debate which arose on the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair, yet it was understood that everything which was of interest to the country could be touched on in the debate; he therefore considered the hon. member had conferred a favour on the House by wandering away from the matter opened up by the Statement only. All the speakers of the Opposition appeared to agree that the Colonial Treasurer had very much over-estimated the returns likely to be received during this year, and that in the next year's Financial Statement he would have to make the same admission as was

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 17 June, 1879.

Questions.—Formal Motions—Financial Statement—  
adjourned debate.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

## QUESTIONS.

Mr. AMHURST asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. If he is aware that ships drawing over nineteen feet cannot now enter Moreton Bay?

2. Is he aware that, by buoying and putting beacons on the North-west Channel, ships can enter in any weather, and that that Channel has the greater depth of water?

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) replied—

1. I am aware that, near low water, vessels cannot enter Moreton Bay by the North or Howe Channel if drawing more than nineteen feet.

2. I am aware that the North-west Channel has a greater depth, and that, by being marked, it can be made available for navigation.

Mr. STUBLEY asked the Premier—

If it is his intention to abolish the Post and Telegraph Offices at Millichester?

The PREMIER replied—

The Millichester Telegraph Office was conducted last year at a heavy loss, but the reductions lately made permit of its continuance without the guarantee originally required from the residents. There was no intention of abolishing the Post Office.

made this year, that there was a large deficiency in the estimated receipts. The Colonial Treasurer would have his reply to make to that statement, no doubt; but, so far as regarded the matter which had been discussed, he (Mr. Archer) was to some extent of the same opinion as hon. members opposite. The member for Moreton dwelt at some length upon the hardship which would be suffered by the selectors through the Divisional Boards Bill being put into operation at a time like this. Whether the hon. member meant, merely, that it was hard to pass such a Bill at a time when the selectors had been suffering under heavy difficulties, or whether he meant that the Bill ought not to be passed at all, he (Mr. Archer) could not make out; but he still could agree with some things said about the Bill. The hon. member was quite correct, for instance, in stating that the Bill would put an extra tax on selectors, for, under the Bill, they would be called upon to do for themselves what had previously been done for them out of the general revenue of the colony. Every person who had selected land in the colony would be called upon for a greater contribution to the revenue than at present. The hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Paterson), had remarked that the land laws should not be such as to induce poor men to go on the land; they should have some capital, and the action of the Bill would therefore affect the selector of small means particularly. To a certain extent that could not be controverted, as any supplement of the rates now levied, by contribution to the Consolidated Revenue would be, no doubt, in addition to the burdens they now had to bear. This was not the only way in which the question could be viewed; if it were, he (Mr. Archer) would, in view of the state of the country, have urged the hon. Minister for Works not to push on his schemes at the present: but it was far from the only bearing which the subject had. There were so many and great advantages to be obtained, that the hostile criticisms of the hon. member for Moreton were completely answered. In a time of depression there were only two ways of meeting a deficiency—one by retrenchment, the other by further taxation. He did not understand from the speeches of hon. members opposite that either of these plans would be received; but it was a fact that, if at any time the country was called upon for extra taxation, it usually happened just at the time the country was least able to bear it. They were now called upon, having a deficiency, either to tax themselves to supply it, or retrench. The present Government were trying to supply the deficiency in both ways, but he was sorry to see that under the Divisional Boards Bill the incidence of taxation, un-

fortunately, fell wholly on the selectors. Seeing that the selectors depended on the prices of cattle to enable them to carry on with, he admitted that it was a grievous time, when prices were bad, for them to be taxed further. In spite of this, the Bill was attended with so many advantages that those selectors who had the good of the country at heart would be glad to see the Bill passed into law. One of the greatest advantages that would follow from it would be the abolition of one of the most demoralising forms of Government patronage. Without referring to the present or any former Government in particular, he would say that the less patronage of this kind a Government had on its hands the better. Indeed, so strongly did he feel on this matter, that if that were the only point in the Bill he should support it, despite the bad times from which the colony was now suffering. It was all very well to say that they were gradually getting more and more politically honest; but he did not believe any Government could possibly be formed without one or other member of it being liable to use the patronage in his power for political purposes. Another reason for adopting the measure was this: at present they were spending large sums annually in educating the people, but they were neglecting the most valuable part of public education, and that was the political part. The English people stood as high as any in Europe as an educated people, although, comparing the number who could read and write with those in Germany and elsewhere, they might fall very far short; but from the very fact that they were versed in politics they were more capable of taking care of themselves than much more highly educated nations. While educating the people of this colony, it was necessary they should be taught not to look continually to the State for everything they wanted; and there was no better political education for any man than his having to administer the local works in the parish or district where he lived. Not to give them this opportunity would be to do the rising generation of Queensland a great injustice. A third reason, of at least equal importance, why he should support such a Bill was, that it would destroy the influence which the existing system had on the House. As all were aware, it was the custom of hon. members to ask continually for grants of money for special works. Would anyone pretend to say that those applications were considered by the House according to the nature of the works themselves? On the contrary, were they not rather considered in the light of the political positions in the House of the hon. members who made them? It was a notorious fact that the manner in which those applications were

treated depended to a very great extent to the political standing of the hon. members who introduced them, and the side of the House on which they sat. The sooner, therefore, such a system was abolished the better.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear.

Mr. ARCHER was glad to find that the leader of the Opposition agreed with him on this point, for it would remove temptations from the path of that hon. gentleman as well as of others, and he hoped they might count upon his assistance in the passing of the Bill. A fourth reason why such a Bill should pass was, that it would relieve any member of a Ministry who might be less particular than his colleagues from even the temptation to do wrong. One of the most disagreeable parts of a Minister's duties was in connection with the patronage at his disposal, and to reduce this—to relieve him from the necessity of having to listen to applications by aspiring road supervisors and foremen of works—would be to confer a real benefit upon him. One remark of the hon. member for Moreton he would refer to before proceeding further. That hon. gentleman stated that the purchasing power of the colony did not fall in proportion to the fall in value of our articles of export. That might be quite true in some respects, but the hon. member had forgotten one very disagreeable part of the business. In this, as in every new colony, the greater part of its industries was carried on by means of borrowed capital, and when a depreciation occurred in the value of exports it did not necessarily follow that bank interest decreased in the same ratio;—indeed, the contrary was the case as a rule. The result was that the purchasing power of the colony was very much diminished by the fall in values, because every penny owed by Queensland had to be paid in cash, and the fall in value of commodities had deprived it of a portion of the cash with which its interests would have to be paid. With this reservation, the hon. gentleman's argument was, no doubt, strictly correct. It was hardly worth while entering, now, upon the question of immigration; but he would take the opportunity of saying that he differed to some extent on this subject from the views expressed by the hon. member for Maryborough. On the contrary, he believed the Government had done right in stopping immigration for a time. Indeed, the hon. member for Moreton himself stated, the other evening, that the balance of immigration was against the colony; or, in other words, that more people were leaving the colony than were coming into it. That was a very strong argument against the continuance of a large system of immigration while many of those already here were obliged to leave the colony. No

great fault, he thought, could be found with the Government for its action in this respect, because immigration was not stopped for good, but only until arrangements could be made at home which would bring about a more successful result. At the same time, he trusted the Colonial Treasurer would see his way to increase the amount set down for this purpose before the time had expired during which it was proposed to expend it. He would now proceed to a somewhat more important subject, and one which it was rather difficult for an hon. member in his position to approach. The burning question in Queensland was, no doubt, the land question. There was none other which so intimately affected the prosperity of the colony, and none other which was surrounded by more difficulties. Standing there as a squatter, it might perhaps be thought that he spoke upon this subject with some degree of prejudice; but he would assure the House that he had endeavoured, to the best of his ability, to divest himself of all prejudice, and had given to the question as much thought as he was capable of. The hon. member for Maryborough, in the course of his speech, stated that one great value of the Railway Reserves Act lay in the fact that it had introduced the thin end of the wedge into the squatting system, by making the tenure of leases terminable at six months' notice. With regard to that he completely differed from the hon. gentleman, for he did not think the Act could have any such effect, and if it had it would have been an injury instead of a benefit to the colony. But such was not the case. The Railway Reserves Act opened with a preamble to the effect that whereas it was expedient that provisions should be made for the future construction of railways for the colony, and that funds for the same should be provided by the sale of Crown lands within the districts to be benefited by such railways, and so on. The Act then gave power to the Government to resume the lands mentioned in the schedule on a six months' notice. How was it possible to apply this Act—as the hon. member for Maryborough had asked the Colonial Treasurer to apply it—to districts like the Gregory and the Burke for the purpose of increasing the rental paid by the pastoral tenants of the Crown? Even in hinting at such a thing the hon. member had done himself a great injustice, and on mature consideration would not, perhaps, feel inclined to maintain the position he had advanced. The Act simply provided that certain lands should be sold in certain districts for the construction of railways through those districts, and it was manifestly impossible to apply it to districts which could not have the slightest possible chance of a railway for

years to come. To introduce a similar measure for the purpose of enabling the Government to resume runs in order to increase the rents was a thing which not even the hon. member for Maryborough would admit into his political scheme. To introduce a Bill with one object for the purpose of securing another would be an unheard-of thing in this Parliament. But even supposing such an attempt successfully made, it would simply have the effect of depreciating the value of every part of the Western country by showing that there was no certain tenure for it, and that an increase of rent was the sole object in view. And yet this was the proposal of an hon. member who had once been Premier and leader of the House. That hon. member, speaking on this subject, remarked—

“If the hon. gentleman is going practically to repeal the Railway Reserves Act—if he is going to embark in a large scheme of public works wherever required, then I say, on the principle already recognized under the Railway Reserves Act, he is entitled to reconsider the whole land question so far as relates to squatting tenure.”

Without, he believed, intending it, the hon. member had here proposed one of the most elaborate schemes of repudiation ever attempted in any Assembly, the object being to place in the schedule of the Railway Reserves Act all the runs in the west of the colony, without any intention of carrying into effect that portion of the preamble which stated that the object of such resumption was to pay for the construction of railways through those particular districts. Such a scheme ought never to have been even referred to, for the Government had already power to resume under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, wherein it was provided that, if more than 2,560 acres were required from a run for any public purpose, such run could be resumed on giving six months' notice to the tenant, and with the sanction of both Houses of Parliament. To resume land for settlement might be called resuming it for a public purpose, but that could not be said if the runs were to be resumed as proposed by the hon. member for Maryborough, merely to reconsider their rental. The existing Railway Reserves Act was therefore utterly valueless for the purpose sought to be attained, and, as far as that alone was concerned, might be repealed without loss to anyone. One provision in that Act was really valuable, and that was the power to consolidate runs. Unfortunately, that provision did not go beyond the runs included in the schedule, and it would be an enormous advantage to extend it to other parts of the country, for it would remove a constant cause of detriment both to the selector and the squatter.

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That provision was, he really believed, about the only valuable part of the Act, and he wished the Government had power to apply it to any part of the country required for settlement. He not only did not think, with the hon. member for Maryborough, that any statement in the Railway Reserves Act gave power to re-adjust the rentals of runs in the Western district, but thought it would be a great disadvantage to the country if such power were given. Such a power would simply have the effect of unsettling still further the question of tenure of runs, which was sufficiently unsettled already. It was generally agreed that the State could not administer the public estate better than a private estate was administered by the holder. Now, it was admitted that all the great Western country was part of the public estate, and it was the duty of the State, in order to make the best use of it, to administer it as a private proprietor would do in the same case. Would the private proprietor give an insecure tenure? He might for political purposes, as many had done in parts of England and Ireland; but he (Mr. Archer) was happy to say there was one example of a country in which yearly leases had not been usual—he alluded to Scotland, of which the hon. member for Maryborough knew as much as he did. In the early part of this century that country made an advance in agriculture such as had not previously been seen in any country in the world. Taking into consideration natural disadvantages of situation, poorness of soil, mountains and moors, it was remarkable that Scotland, not for a few years only, but for a great term of years, undoubtedly led the world in agriculture. The reason was well known to be the security of tenure granted to her farmers. At a time when in the southern parts of England—undoubtedly very superior in climate, and in soil—equal or better lands were letting at 15s. to £1 per acre; and in Ireland—ininitely richer than Scotland naturally—farms were supposed to be rack-rented at 30s. to 35s. per acre;—at that time farmers in Scotland paid £2, £3, £4, £5 per acre, simply because the leases granted enabled them to improve the country, and make it produce what it could only produce when well cultivated. Undoubtedly, Scotland had some small advantage in better parochial schools, so that the farmers, and even ploughmen, were men of more intelligence than the corresponding classes in England and Ireland. But the enormous difference between the rental of the poor northern country and that of the richer southern one was mainly due to the security of tenure, enabling the farmer to employ capital without fear of being deprived of the fruits of his labour through the termination of his lease. If we

wished to use the immense estate of Queensland in the same way for the benefit of the country, a better tenure than the present must be granted. Had he been a member sitting on the other side of the House his arguments would probably have had great weight, and been received as from one speaking from conviction; but in his present position he would be credited with speaking according to his personal interests. He had, however, the satisfaction of knowing that there were hon. gentlemen now sitting in the House who had heard him addressing his constituents—principally selectors—and telling them exactly what he had stated now. Even if the hon. member for Maryborough were correct in his statement of what the Railway Reserves Act would lead to, that statement would have done injury instead of good. What benefit could have resulted from stating that the squatters only held their runs subject to six months' notice? It would only destroy confidence; and anyone desirous of bringing capital into the country would naturally say, "What is the use of going to a country where the tenure is no better but worse than where we are?" By hastily speaking on the spur of the moment an injury might be done to the country which it would take a great deal of judicious legislation to overcome. When the question came on for settlement—not this session, perhaps, or for some time to come—it would be complicated by the means which had been constantly taken to try to set up class against class. When the hon. member for Maryborough, the other evening, alluded to something which had fallen from him at Maryborough, and to an extract from the speech of the hon. Speaker on a former occasion, he called attention to something which he (Mr. Archer) was not aware of. Upon looking up the speech which that hon. gentleman had delivered to his constituents, he was greatly pained to see what the hon. gentleman had said. He regretted to have to notice what the hon. the Speaker had said on a former occasion, and he should not have done so had not the hon. member for Maryborough introduced the subject. It was well known that people addressing constituents sometimes said a little more than they intended to—they got excited, and said on the spur of the moment what they would not repeat on reflection. He was, however, astonished that the hon. member for Maryborough should deliberately have read and studied the words, repeated them and endorsed them with his authority. He not only talked about inserting the thin end of the wedge to burst up the squatters—for he presumed the use of a wedge was to burst things up entirely—but he continued, "under the present system, a bullock

worth £8 did not cost 6d. to the owner in the way of pasturage." Such a statement led people who did not know the expenditure on stations to believe that any man who entered upon squatting pursuits must become wealthy, unless he were the greatest ass that ever entered into business. People would be apt to get a most erroneous idea of the profits resulting from squatting. Whereas anyone who knew anything about squatting knew that it was like any other business in the country—people sometimes made fortunes, and sometimes failed. They had only to look round the House to be reminded that such was the case. Who would venture to say that a merchant was certain to make a fortune, whether capable of managing his business or not? Such a statement was calculated to make bad blood between classes, and it was not to the interests of the country that such should be done. Squatting was neither better nor worse than any other business. People who entered into it with little capital, or without knowing their business, failed; others with both capital and knowledge succeeded, and after working twenty, thirty, or forty years, acquired a moderate independence. That result was found in any other business, and the hon. member for Maryborough was therefore not justified in repeating such a statement after he had had time enough to consider its tenour. Such statements would make legislation on the land question more difficult, and it was beneath the dignity of an hon. member holding the position the hon. member for Maryborough did in the House to descend to such arts in addressing his constituents. His firm conviction was, that if the public lands were to become more valuable it must be under a better tenure. An indefeasible lease for the time must be given for such parts of the country as would not be required for settlement. When the Act of 1869 passed it was supposed that such leases had been given for the Western runs. It might be considered necessary to shorten the terms of the lease to fifteen years; but, at all events, for the time for which those runs were held the lease should be indefeasible, and then a very much larger rent might be asked for them. It was not only that people in that case would be better able to invest money in improvements, but when they wanted capital they would be able to get it on easier terms than now. By the present method, no security being given, the squatters were forced to send out of the country as interest an immense amount of money that might be expended in it. No squatter could ask for an advance on the strength of his present lease; he must employ an agent who must be paid, and instead of being able to borrow at the bank rate he paid nearly double that rate before he received the money. This money now sent out of the country

might be retained and go for payment of interest on railway lines; but, if it were to be saved, an alteration must be made in the manner of granting leases. The only way in which the Colonial Treasurer could reopen the question of the land, and supplement the income of the country by increasing rents, was to offer something to the squatter to give up the lease—such as it was—which he now held. At present he would not risk a great deal on the strength of it, but would use the country for the time it was in his hands; but if a secure tenure were given to him for a certain number of years he would be able not only to improve the country, but also to borrow money on lower terms and pay a higher rent for the land. A good deal had been said about the large expenditure for railways to the West;—for his own part, he considered that railways should be made where they would pay best. He was not quite so well acquainted with the resources of the south-western country as some hon. members, but he thought the falling receipts of the Southern line were to a great extent accounted for by the slackness of the times and the inability of people to carry on works they had in hand. He would be sorry to see railways that would not pay, but was convinced that on the Central line there was not the slightest fear of such a state of things. There had been some talk in the House about sheep going westward from Rockhampton, and no doubt the country, there, was largely given up to cattle, although not able to support stock as the hon. member for Maryborough supposed; yet the country would support a quantity of stock in such a way as to be profitable to those who held it. There could be no doubt, however, that the number of sheep would increase enormously. Already the Central line paid  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the interest, and all its expenses, at a time when it was only about 150 miles long; and every additional mile would not only increase the traffic, but decrease, comparatively, the expense of keeping it in working order. He was therefore perfectly convinced that, if carried out as proposed, in two or three years it would not only not cost the country anything, but would pay more than the interest on the cost of construction and repairs. That was only a personal conviction, not capable of proof; but there were hon. members who had examined the country, and knew the facts of the case, who would agree with him that such was likely to be the result. But the hon. member for Maryborough argued that running the railways out West would confer a great benefit on the squatters, and therefore they ought to pay increased rent for the benefit received. So they should, had they received any such benefit; but, in reality, they were offered a benefit with one

hand and deprived of it with the other. They were told that a railway would be run to them, but at the same time their tenure would be made more and more insecure. It was quite right, they admitted, that lands should be thrown open to settlement, but they wished to know in what way they would be thrown open. The land might be thrown open as it was in New South Wales—all over the country at once—to the disadvantage of both squatter and selector. It might be done in such a way as to raise up in Queensland a class of men who, as had been done in New South Wales, would select only in order to compel the squatters to buy them out. As long as there was such an uncertainty as to the way in which land would be thrown open, it was undoubtedly unfair to ask for any readjustment of rents in the West. The senior member for Rockhampton made a proposal which was so far ahead of the time that it would find few supporters in the House. He (Mr. Archer) was delighted to hear a gentleman representing so influential a town holding views so advanced on the matter as to propose that leases should be granted in perpetuity at certain fixed rates. He hardly thought that would be fair for the country. A time would come when lands were of greater value than now, and they could then consider whether such a thing could be done. He was, however, glad to hear that the hon. member had come to the conclusion that the present state of the leases was unsatisfactory, and ought to be amended. In any proposal to settle this question to the advantage of the country and the holders, two great things were to be considered—an increase of the revenue, and the introduction of capital by giving fixity of tenure and a careful provision that sufficient land was always held ready for selection. Legislation to effect those two objects was not beyond the ability of a statesman. It was, at all events, the duty of any person who tried to settle this vexed question to try and fulfil those two conditions. There was not the slightest doubt but that by granting a good tenure they would hold out inducement to men of capital in the other colonies to come here, and they would no longer have to complain of men being idle in the country. There would be an amount of work to be performed which would tend for a long time to prevent that which they deplored—namely, men walking about the country without being able to find employment; and it was for the House to consider, when talking of the extension of railways out West, whether that was not the true basis on which to alter tenures. This was more feasible than appealing to the squatters. The hon. member for Moreton did not use the argument of the hon. member (Mr. Douglas), but simply ap-

pealed to the squatters, and said that if they could not be reached by altering their rentals, they could be by other means, such as assessment, which he said was not repudiation. If it was necessary to reconsider the whole subject, it ought to be done by offering something which would induce the present holders to renounce willingly their present leases for the purpose of securing fixity of tenure, if it were even of a much smaller area than now held. So long as they continued in the present state, and granted leases from day to day and month to month, as it were, the country could never expect to get the full value for the western lands. He thought, therefore, although it was not likely to be a question which would come before the present session, that the land question was one of the greatest importance, and one that would be early considered in any future session. The person who undertook the task of settling this question would, if he carried it out successfully, confer a greater benefit upon the country than any statesman had yet done. He regretted very much that that part of the Act of 1868 which enabled people to consolidate their runs was not generally applicable, as he had already stated. If they were going to settle selectors upon the soil, it was advisable that they should be consolidated as much as possible instead of being scattered over the country—it would be easier to confer upon their children the benefits of education, for example. He believed it would be wisest to separate them as much as possible from the pastoral lessees, as both were liable to become an annoyance to each other, if selectors were scattered over the country. All these things had to be considered, and he hoped that before he ceased to be a member of the House some enlarged scheme would be adopted which would obviate the necessity of using either the Railway Reserves Act or the Leasing Act of 1869 for the purpose of altering the tenure on which the runs were now held.

Mr. BAILEY said they were not now debating the land question or the land policy, but the financial policy of the present Government, and to that subject alone he intended to refer. The financial policy of the Government had been debated from many different points; it had been discussed from the Colonial Treasurer's point of view, past and present, and from almost every possible point of view, except the most important one of all—namely, the taxpayers' point of view—the miners and farmers of the colony. It was a most extraordinary thing that in such a debate the very people who most suffered were the people whose wishes and opinions had been the least of all regarded. Not one word had been said as to how the miner and the agriculturist would feel upon this financial

policy; but they had heard over and over again how the policy would affect sheep, bullocks, runs in the western district, capitalists, and banks. The first question brought before the taxpayer by the present Government was that there was a deficiency of £220,000. The Government practically said to him—"All that you have paid, last year, has not been able to clear you. We find that you are £220,000 short." And, at the same time that this deficiency was announced, he was told that in order to make up the deficiency the present Government would adopt a policy of retrenchment: hardly a taxpayer in the colony would object to such a policy for such an object. This policy was brought before him in the Estimates for the coming year, and he was told that he would there find how it was proposed to convert a deficiency into, perhaps, a surplus at the end of the year. The taxpayer took up these Estimates—this book of account between the people and the Government—and began, for instance, at pages two and three, and what did he find there? That last year £21,815 were required for a certain purpose, whilst this year, under a policy of retrenchment, £22,433 would be wanted. The retrenchment, clearly, did not begin at pages two and three, and for the good reason that the individuals who figured there were all too great birds to be shot at with small shot. Commencing with the first item, he wished at the outset to express the hope that he would say nothing that would be offensive to any person. He would merely express opinions which were current among the taxpayers of the colony. On Schedule A, His Excellency the Governor appeared for £5,000. Hon. members would remember that in 1874 the Governor's salary was increased from £4,000 to £5,000, for several reasons. The mover of the increase (Mr. De Satgé) gave the first—

"He need hardly remind hon. members that there were a great many expenses attached to the position of Governor. As the colony increased, so must his hospitalities and the claims for various charities made upon him. He would not say more except to express a hope that the House would agree to the resolution, and vote a sum to make the salary of the Governor more adequate to the position he occupied."

A little later another member (Mr. Groom) actually stated that Sir George Bowen, on his arrival, received only £2,500; but during the first session of Parliament a resolution was carried by the late Mr. Gore by which the salary was fixed at £4,000. Another speaker (Mr. Pettigrew) said—

"He would have no objection to the increase of salary if the allowance for travelling expenses were discontinued."

At that time a number of contingencies always appeared on the Estimates, and it was never known how much the country



had to pay for odds and ends; and to do away with this state of things the increase was brought forward, and met with great favour, under the belief that the country would, for the future, know exactly what it had to pay. Mr. Pettigrew went on to say, "The Governor would then get a lump sum and might do what he liked with it." This motion was brought forward by a member of the then Opposition and of the party now in office—the party of retrenchment. The Colonial Secretary of the day did not agree to it with good grace, apparently, for he said—

"Last year there was expended in extras and travelling the very sum put down in the motion, and there was now on the Estimates a sum of £800, one portion of which was for travelling expenses and another for Government House; but these two sums were no guarantee that they would be the full amount of expenditure, and he would rather give an addition in salary on condition that these items were banished entirely from the Estimates and should not continue to appear."

Another member of the House, who was not a member of the present party of retrenchment (Mr. Dickson), opposed the increase on the ground that he would far rather see it judiciously distributed in increasing the salaries of meritorious officers in the public service than give it to a gentleman occupying the position of Governor of the colony. He also found the present Premier actually denouncing the increase as an insult to the House; and yet at a time when every citizen, almost, in the colony was living upon two-thirds, and in many instances half, his former income, the salary of the Governor stood at its highest pitch on the Estimates. He found no retrenchment in schedules A and B of the Estimates where the large salaries appeared.

The PREMIER: They are all fixed by law.

Mr. BAILEY said he also remembered the present Minister for Works strongly denouncing the increase of £200 to Ministers' salaries, and warning the House of the effect of it, and that the time would arrive when they would be sorry for having voted it from the public purse; but that hon. gentleman had no objection to pocket it himself, now. Whilst he was dismissing the labouring men and mechanics of his department he stuck quietly to the increase which he objected to so strongly not many years ago. Turning, now, to page eight of the Estimates of the Government of retrenchment, they found that the very reasons which induced hon. members to accede to the increase of salary to the Governor had been set at naught, for, in addition to the £5,000, there was for salaries and contingencies, including travelling expenses of His Excellency, and £300 for rent of a country house, a sum of £1,814 down. He (Mr. Bailey)

was a member of the House at the time, and he understood that there was a distinct bargain between Parliament and the Governor that there should be no more of these side accounts, for the future—that the country should know exactly, beforehand, what it had to pay, and, having paid it, should not be pestered with petty accounts to the amount of £1,800, such as now appeared on the Estimates. This Government of retrenchment had not reduced the amount one sixpence. In the next item, the Clerk of the Executive Council was down for £600. He was willing to pay a fair wage for a fair day's work, but when they were reducing wages throughout the country, and dismissing men because they could not afford to pay them—when from the highest to the lowest they were suffering from the depression, it was time to look round and see that every official who received a high salary should only receive what was due to him, and that they should be guilty of no extravagance. Not one sixpence had been knocked off the Clerk of the Executive Council; and he would ask hon. members whether the gentleman who held the office was worth the same salary, now, that he was getting in times of prosperity. Coming next to the Estimates of the Colonial Secretary, he found that the Under Colonial Secretary and his assistant were still to receive £800 and £400 respectively—not one sixpence was to be deducted. There were also some very high salaries in the Immigration Department; notwithstanding that the present Government had reduced the work of the Agent-General's Office, having almost stopped immigration, yet the £1,300 voted to the Agent-General in times of prosperity still appeared under the Government of retrenchment. Turning next to the Police Department and Judicial Benches, they had a number of gentlemen occupying the positions of police magistrate and clerk of petty sessions at the same salaries. They knew the class to which these officials belonged, and there were no reductions there, although there might be in more ways than one. He remembered the story of a jury who brought in a verdict that, if they had the power, they would make the committing magistrate pay all the expenses of the trial. When they noticed the petty trifling cases sent by police magistrates to be tried by judges, at heavy expense to the country, the same remark might be made to the gentlemen whose salaries appeared the same as in times of greatest prosperity. Going a little further, however, they got to the policy of retrenchment—they found that a great number of police had been done away with, and it was a most extraordinary fact in connection with the item that only white men had been dismissed; not one native policeman had been dispensed with. They

had heard hon. members talking about repudiation, but what had been done with regard to the police? The police were employed on condition that if they worked faithfully and behaved themselves for a certain number of years, they would be entitled to a pension, but many had been deprived of their privileges without cause, and without notice. Men who had been so long in the force that they had become useless for any other avocation, who knew their police duty but little outside of it, had been dismissed at the mere fiat of the Minister, without any reason except that it was necessary for the policy of retrenchment. This was simply a direct breach of faith, and its effect would, doubtless, be to destroy the *morale* of the force. Under such a system a man had no certainty of advancing on good behaviour, and therefore he was sorry to see that the reductions in the force had been done in the way proposed. Had the Colonial Secretary consented to let things take their course it would have been better; for every week men were leaving the force whose places need not have been supplied, and the requisite reduction could have been effected in that way without dismissing men many of whom had been good and faithful servants. Then they came to another part of the Estimates where there certainly was a reduction in one way and an increase in another—he alluded to the Volunteers. This force had never been much in his favour, but they had succeeded in doing a certain amount of destruction with it. He was prepared to admit that, last year, they blew away from their guns one or two poor fellows; and this year, at a cost of £8,000 or £9,000, they had succeeded in killing one estimable young man in Brisbane and another young man in Maryborough; the latter was a trader there, and very much respected, and his parents had now to deplore that he went into this sham-fighting business. It was a miserable farce, and in saying so he believed he was expressing the opinions of the country, and many of the Volunteers themselves. They now proposed to bring the force under military rule, and to have a colonel commandant at £750, and an adjutant and musketry instructor at £300, and instructors for other things at similar salaries. This wretched game was nearly played out. He would engage to take 100 stockmen from the country and whip 300 or 400 of the best Volunteers that could be got. It was not a bit of use taking undersized boys from behind the counter to make soldiers of;—they ought to take stockmen and men who could camp out in the bush under their blankets, and give them a week or fortnight's training every year, and then the country would have a better Volunteer force than it now had.

The PREMIER: That is what we said, last year.

Mr. BAILEY said he wished the Government had said it now. It was extraordinary that they could say such a good thing last year, and yet this year come down with Estimates which began with £750 a year for a colonel commandant—he supposed some friend of Colonel Scratchley's. The next item—the Education Department—was one that was regarded with a good deal of interest by almost every man in the colony—certainly by every married man and father of a family, as well as those who hoped to be fathers of families by-and-by. They had heard one or two propositions from the other side of the House that there should be retrenchment even in this department. They heard an hon. member, the other evening, declaiming against grammar schools, because, he said, they were not for the sons of the poor man but only for the sons of the rich; but he could inform that hon. member that there were a great many poor men in the colony who were glad to be able to send their sons to grammar schools, and who liked to see their sons have the same opportunities of being educated as the richest man in the land. Grammar schools were as great a boon to the poor man as they were to the rich, and he would be very sorry to see any policy of retrenchment which would lessen the education of the people, even in the matter of grammar schools. But there was one part of the education system to which he objected, and that was the amount of red-tape about it. He knew as a fact that in the smaller provincial schools teachers were so harrassed with red-tape business that they hardly knew how to manage their schools; and if they were to do the duties to the department in school hours, one-half of their time they would not be teaching children. The fact was, that if the Minister for Instruction were to dismiss the chief clerks, accountants, and clerks in his office, he would find the work of the department go on much more easily and better. They were only placed there to worry schoolmasters, and they did worry them very seriously. The number of forms and calculations a provincial schoolmaster had to make up every week, or month, or quarter, or half-year, would surprise anyone. He would like to have seen some retrenchment in the head offices, but, of course, the retrenchment that could be done with some propriety they could not expect to see done by the Government now on the Treasury benches. Now, with regard to the Treasury Department, he was brought to book, one day, by the Treasurer with regard to a statement he made concerning that department, but he had not had an opportunity of verifying what he said on that occasion;

neither had he an opportunity of knowing whether the Colonial Treasurer was exactly correct in what he said on the subject. He (Mr. Bailey) complained that there were a number of officers and men in one room—as many officers as men, and perhaps more; that the officers were literally doing nothing, and the men were perhaps working, and that a quantity of work was sent out of that room to be done in town. With regard to the Stamp Office, he would only now notice one officer in that department, who was marked down in the Estimates as “officer in charge of securities.” Was it not a most absurd thing that a man who walked up and down a room and unlocked a drawer occasionally and put some stamps in, locked it again, and then walked about for an hour or so until some one brought in another bundle of these documents to be locked-up;—was it not absurd that the man who performed less duty than a night watchman of a warehouse, and a less responsible duty, should receive £325 a-year? If he received that under an extravagant Government, they would not be surprised at it; but under a retrenchment Government, who were dismissing policemen and ordinary workmen, they would think that such an officer as this would have been placed upon a proper footing, and would have received something near what he was worth. He found in the Customs Department that every high official—every man who got over £300 a-year—still retained his former salary. There was not the least attempt at retrenchment in any way of those high salaries. In the Survey Department he found there was some slight retrenchment. He believed there was a surveyor or two knocked off;—of course, there was good reason for that retrenchment. They all knew that nearly everybody was crying out that they could not get their surveys done, and about the surest way of making them feel this policy of retrenchment was to make the surveys a little longer to be made by dismissing a few surveyors. However, they had been moderate in dismissing only one or two surveyors, but they had taken good care to serve the mice the same as the cats, for they dismissed twelve labourers at the same time. Whenever they found retrenchment going on they always found the labourers—the “lower order” people;—these poor fellows had to go wholesale for the very retail retrenchment in the higher classes. In the Department of Public Works and Mines he found that the salary of the Under Secretary remained, of course, at £700; that of his chief clerk, £500; that of the accountant at £400—no reduction, no retrenchment there! In the Buildings branch there was Colonial Architect, £800. Now, did the Minister for Works know that this gentleman was able to make as much again as his salary by

private work? Did he know that while the Colonial Architect was receiving £800 a-year, he for a considerable time did private work—he did not know whether he was doing so just now—he spoke of six or eight months ago;—how long had he had no private work?

The PREMIER: Since this Government came in.

Mr. BAILEY said he had before, and were they to be told that this man who received £800 a year for performing certain duties, and who dared to use public time, for which he was paid, for private work, so as to compete with his fellow architects, was kept on at the same salary by this economical Government? If he had been a night-watchman, or a porter, or a labourer of some sort, he would have been sacked at once.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said the hon. member had made a mistake in regard to this officer. He did private work by permission of the previous Government, and when the present Government took office they put a stop to it.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said he wished to make an explanation of this matter. Some time ago the Colonial Architect resigned, and he undertook, at the time of his resignation, certain work which he was obliged to do, and it was a distinct matter of stipulation between him and the Government, when re-accepting office, that he should be allowed to carry out the contract he had undertaken—which was of a very limited character—and nothing else. That was a distinct stipulation made by himself (Mr. Douglas).

The PREMIER said, all he could say was that, when the present Government took office, the Colonial Architect claimed, and had always exercised, the right of private practice, until they put a stop to it.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he could assure the hon. gentleman that on referring to the correspondence he would find a memorandum in which the terms were distinctly set out. The Colonial Architect made application to him to explain the terms of his position, and he explained them in an official letter.

Mr. BAILEY said he was sorry he had dragged the name of this officer before the House, because it might possibly do him some slight injury, but he hoped it would not. He had been informed that this gentleman did private work, and it was rather hard upon his fellow architects, because they had to compete with him under great disadvantage, inasmuch as he was receiving a large salary from the Government, whereas they were not. Returning to the retrenchment policy of the Government, he found that in the Department of Roads and Bridges there was £67,800 worth of work to be done, and it actually required £9,650 to be paid to officers, independent of overseers of road parties. There could not be

any great retrenchment there. Going a little further, they came to the real retrenchment policy of the Government. This was not a matter of a few policemen. He forgot to mention, while speaking about the police, that he thought instead of decreasing the police they would require rather more than usual, because it had been found necessary, lately, that Ministers, when they took their rides abroad, should be protected by mounted police; and how could the occupants of the Ministerial benches suggest to reduce the police force when—such being their love for the people, and the people's love for them—they considered it positively dangerous to ride abroad without the protection of a company of police? They would therefore require a very serious addition to the police force, instead of a decrease; especially if Ministers went single-handed along the coast towns, where their presence might be required at sometime. He now came to the real place where the retrenchment policy of the Government would be found—at page 55 of the Estimates. It was quite refreshing, after wading through pages of salaries of inspectors, clerks, clerks-in-charge, overseers, overseers-in-charge, and so on, to come at last to the place where they found the safety of the country—where, in order to save the country from this state of bankruptcy into which it had fallen, it was found absolutely necessary that they should practise the strictest economy. No economy was needed for those heaven-born officials with large salaries—that was not the place to exercise economy;—the proper place was where there was a political clique opposed to the present Government. When they dropped upon this nest of liberal workmen in the Ipswich workshops, there it became necessary to practice the very strictest economy. They found, therefore, that numbers of enginemen, firemen, fitters, turners, smiths, strikers, tinsmiths, engine-builders, trimmers, painters, carpenters, waggon-builders, lifters, boiler-makers, pattern-makers, and labourers, had to be dismissed. They could dispense with such officials as these, and they were dispensed with wholesale;—and here was the first serious retrenchment in the Estimates. The Government had already defended their policy of retrenchment, and had given a great many reasons for it. The House knew, perhaps, more than they wanted to know about it; suffice it to say that he believed the Government were going to take some men on at Toowoomba, if the Darling Downs electorate went on all right, and if it did not they would not. There was also some retrenchment in the Postmaster-General's Department, and it was of a most pitiful character. The country telegraph offices, which had become a necessity, and which were carried on at a loss of, perhaps,

£40 or £50 a year, were to be shut up. The convenience of the public—the desire to facilitate business in the country districts—did not weigh for one moment with the Postmaster-General. He was trying to make the department a paying concern; but he would never do it as long as he lived, and he knew it, and in trying to do it he would cause great injury to the country districts of the colony. He found another place where there was great retrenchment by the present Government was under the head of "Polynesian Immigration." He did not think there was any intention to retrench the number of Polynesians coming to the colony; on the contrary, because, if they were driving the white population out of the country, it must be supplemented by some kind of labour. Labour must come from somewhere, and if they were driving out white people by Polynesians, there was no necessity to provide for them. He found that the Inspector of Polynesians at Maryborough, who was appointed by an extravagant Government at £400 a year, was still to be paid that salary by the present Government. He would ask the Government if it would not have been much better to have allowed the Police Magistrate of Maryborough to have performed that gentleman's duties, which took him about an hour and a-half each day, and have paid a couple of labourers to have done a year's work? But, no!—the present Government had no idea of making retrenchment in Polynesian inspectors, or Government agents, or anything of that sort. On the contrary, while £2,000 was sufficient for that under the previous extravagant Government, the present economical Government required £2,170—an increase instead of a decrease. He had alluded to the reasons given by the Government for retrenchment. The Treasurer had informed them why there was a deficiency in the revenue, and a very remarkable reason he gave—it was, that the area upon which sheep grazed was less this year than it was last year—in fact, they had heard nothing at all during the debate but sheep, sheep, sheep, until he was quite tired of sheep; and if these sheep arrangements went on much longer they would almost expect to hear Ministers "ba-a." But there were other and more serious reasons why the revenue had decreased. On referring to the tables of the Treasurer he found on page 19 that, while the exports from Queensland during 1878 were £13 10s. 3d. per head of the population, in 1876 they were £19—that was, £5 10s. per head more than they were in 1877-8. The exports which decreased most were copper, gold, tin, wool, and so on. Now, would it not have been a much more sensible policy on the part of the Government if they had tried to develop these industries by assisting them in some way so as to come up to their

normal standard, instead of putting all their eggs into one basket and saying that wool was the only thing upon which they had to depend to enable the colony to retrieve its position, and therefore they must have 500 miles of railway so that they may produce more wool. The reason why the exports had fallen off was because there were such natural difficulties in the way of production which the people as individuals had not been able to surmount. Those difficulties caused less production and depreciated the means of living until a large number of people were driven into the towns and formed perfect swarms—of what he might call middle-men—as traders. These were the reasons for the present deficiency in the revenue. The practical conclusion to which the Government has come was this—"Let every industry in the colony go. As for copper, let copper-mining be a thing of the past. As for coal-mining—if you can develop coal-mines by individual effort you are welcome to do so, but we will give no help. As for agriculture—why, though your wheat may be rusty and you want £300 to find out why, we are not going to give it to you;—but sheep, sheep, we thoroughly believe in, and to any extent, at any cost, and at any risk—we intend to develop the pastoral interest—sheep are our main and sole care." And he might make a slight change in the words of a rather foolish poet of some years ago, and say—

"Let trade and commerce, farming and mining die,  
But leave us still our old squattoeracy."

That was the policy that would be attempted to be forced upon them by a strong majority. Now, he would point out that upon every question that had cropped up this session—whether it had been upon the bank question, or the electoral question, or the financial question, or any other—the Opposition had always pronounced their verdict, and their verdict had been supported, so far as they knew, by the country. That verdict of the minority in that House was the verdict of the country. Ministers knew very well that the verdict would be again declared in a few days, and as time rolled on, month after month—as seats became vacant—there was no doubt that the verdict of the people would be that of the present minority in the House, and the sooner it became a majority the better for the country. They knew that they had right on their side. They knew that in this financial policy of the Government there was only one idea, and that was nothing but sheep. Would it not have been far better policy for a Government, coming into power in the way that the present Government did, to say to the miners of the colony—"Here, we will give you £50,000 to go and prospect for fresh goldfields." That would have given employment to

a large mining population, and would have done far more good than this grand central never-never country railway. But miners must now fossick away as best they could with poor paltry scrub roads that were carefully and grudgingly dolled out to them; while, at the same time, the colonists along the coast were asked to mortgage their estates and their revenue in order to provide £1,500,000 more to commence—not to finish—500 miles more of Western railway to go into country of which they knew little and cared to know less. But they would see what the country would do. If sheep had voices they might vote with the Government; but so long as human beings had votes, and so long as they were the representatives of human beings and not of sheep, so long would the verdict of the minority to-day be the verdict of the people and of the majority very soon.

Mr. McLEAN: I have no intention at the present time, like the hon. member for Blackall, of discussing the Divisional Boards Bill, or the land question, neither of which is at present before the House; but I wish to deliver a few remarks on the Financial Statement as made by the Treasurer. Hon. members will remember that it was stated some time ago that the Opposition were gradually beginning to discover what the policy of the Government was or would be, and that the Colonial Secretary told us that when the Financial Statement was made we should learn the policy of the Government, and that it would be a policy which would startle the Opposition, and be generally satisfactory to the country. I do not think, sir, that the country has been startled by that policy, nor has the Opposition, as it is embodied in the Financial Statement of the Treasurer. In commencing his speech that hon. gentleman told us that the country had recovered from the depression it had been suffering from for a considerable time, and that we might reasonably expect that the Customs revenue would increase as the depression passed away, and that as there were evident signs that the depression was passing away we might expect our Customs to have a progressive tendency. There is not the slightest indication of that depression passing away; the country is quite as much depressed as it was twelve months ago—nay, even more so. I believe that since the present Government took office, the country has been more depressed than during the late droughts. I can prove that the action of the present Government has tended to increase that depression much more than to reduce it. Can we expect that the Customs revenue will increase when we have the knowledge before us that those who contribute to the taxation of the colony through the Custom-house are leaving the colony? The member for Wide Bay has told us that there is

an increased provision for the introduction of Polynesians, whilst the white population are leaving us—and there is no denying that our white population is less at the present time than it was some time ago. The action of the present Government in their dismissals, and in the feeling of dread that there is among the Civil Servants generally, has tended rather to increase depression than to lessen it. I was glad to hear the member for Wide Bay say that if the Government had proposed to spend £50,000 in prospecting for new goldfields they would have done some good to the country. I intended to bring this matter before the House, as, whilst the Treasurer told us that the quartz goldfields had kept up their character, there has been a decrease of £250,000 in the amount of gold sent out last year. The Estimates show that the Government have provided the sum of £2,000 for prospecting for new goldfields, but that will be a mere drop in the bucket at the present time when the old alluvial goldfields are worked out. If the Treasurer had proposed £10,000 for prospecting new country no one would have objected—indeed, I am surprised that the Minister for Works, who is well acquainted with the requirements of the goldfields, has not come down and proposed such a sum. We all recollect that it was in consequence of the rush to Gympie, and the opening up of other goldfields, the prosperous times after the crisis of 1866-7 were brought about. It was after Gympie was opened that we had the commencement of the prosperous times. According to this Local Government Bill, the principal retrenchment of the Government is in the amount to be voted for roads and bridges. That amount is something like £76,000 less than was put down for last year. I believe it is the intention of the Government, under the Divisional Boards Bill, to take in hand the maintenance of the main roads, but I see nothing provided in the Estimates for that purpose. There are certain sums there, but, if I understand them aright, they are to supplement the amounts raised in the various districts. I cannot understand this way of dealing with the Estimates, and I can tell the Minister for Works that the country does not understand it. The people cannot comprehend how it is that the Estimates are so materially altered from what they were last year. The Government should have waited until this Divisional Boards Bill was passed, and then have formed their road estimates accordingly. They do not know that the Bill will pass, and if it does not this lump sum will be at the disposal of the Minister for the time being, and we all know that influences can be brought to bear on a Minister to cause a larger sum to be spent in one district than in another. If the Bill had been passed the Government would

have had some ground for lumping the sum in their Estimates as they had done. The Treasurer told us, the other evening, that no easier way suggested itself for remedying a decreasing revenue than increasing the Customs duties; but I could suggest to the hon. gentleman another way, and probably many on this side could do the same, though it is not for me to dictate how he should act. With reference to the retrenchment and reductions of which we have heard so much, I should like to point out how far in accordance with the Financial Statement retrenchment has taken place. The hon. gentleman says that reductions have taken place in the Treasury, and in the Lands and Mines Departments, and I will ask him in what way there has been a reduction in his own department? There are only two officials less employed, so that the reduction has not taken place in salaries;—in fact, I believe that in salaries there is rather an increase than a decrease. In the Department of Lands the reduction has been pointed out to us to be represented by the dismissal of a few chainmen and one or two surveyors. But if the Government had gone on the principle of retrenchment pursued by the Berry Administration in Victoria, and had commenced at the top of the tree, they would have had the approval of the House. Major Smith, a few days ago, told a meeting in Victoria that the Government, there, began the work of retrenchment in this way—that they commenced with people who could afford it best; and that was the case, for the Berry Government, on that ever memorable Black Wednesday, began the work of retrenchment with those who could best afford it. This Government have begun at the other end, and commenced with those who can least afford it—the chainmen in the Lands Department and the workshop men at Ipswich. I will ask hon. members to look at page 55 of the Estimates, and see how the retrenchment is to be effected. The Government propose to increase the number of “watchmen,” &c., from sixty to sixty-five, and at the same time to reduce the amount required for them by £1,230—in other words, there is an increase of five men and a reduction of £1,230, which clearly shows that the Government did not commence their retrenchment with those who could best afford it, but with those who could very ill afford it. On a previous occasion we were told by a member of the Government that all the men employed were not represented on the Estimates; but we find, here, that all the men are distinctly specified. At Ipswich, where 103 men were dismissed from the workshops, we find that there is a reduction of only £6,143; but if 103 men were dismissed, and it is the intention of the Government to adhere to that reduction, and

the men averaged, say, £2 a week, there would have been a reduction of £10,000; but a reasonable average would have been £2 10s. a week, which would amount to £12,000. Instead of that there is only a reduction of £6,143, showing clearly that it is not the intention of the Government to keep the shops short-handed, but to engage fresh men at some future time. I have no desire to go over the ground which has been gone over by hon. members, but I wish to refer to the question of the loan as proposed by the Government, more especially that part of it which provides for £1,500,000 for the extension of main lines of railway into the interior. I for one have very strong opinions in reference to that question, and when we find that the Government have proposed £1,500,000 for the extension of main lines, and only £300,000 for the extension of branch lines, it is time for this House to pause before giving consent. It simply comes to this: that those who will have to provide increased taxation to construct our railways are to be put off with a paltry £300,000. I am not going to refer to my own district—to the Logan and Fassifern railways; but I ask the great bulk of the electors whether they will not demand that, before this £1,500,000 is voted for main extensions, some little more consideration shall be shown to them to enable them to bring their produce to market? The hon. member for Blackall, when replying to the speech of the hon. member for Maryborough, referred to the want of a better security of land tenure, and stated that before the leases of the present holders were interfered with some tangible scheme should be provided by which they could be made secure in their tenure. But there is one question which it would be necessary to ask—namely, would the present leaseholders be prepared to increase the amount they pay for their land if this increased security was given? The hon. member pointed out the difference between the security given in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and in this colony, but he omitted to mention the amount that was paid for that security. If we could secure an increased revenue from our lands in the western districts we might at once agree to give an increased tenure; but we have seen that hon. members opposite object to paying even a small tax for travelling sheep, and if they do that we may reasonably infer that they will object to pay any additional rent. With regard to the Postmaster-General's and Telegraph Departments—which is another part of the retrenchment scheme of the Government—I understand that the Postmaster-General has issued a notification that, in small places where the telegraph offices are not paying, he is prepared to enter into arrangements with storekeepers or anyone to take

charge of the telegraph. This would be most objectionable. I was told when the telegraph was extended to Beenleigh that it was intended to make the station at a store, but I rode at once into Brisbane and stopped it. If the revenue from this source is low at the present time, it would be infinitely lower under such an arrangement, when out of every ten messages now sent from a station only three would be sent. If the return is small from the Southern stations, it is because they have only been established, some of them, for six, twelve, and eighteen months, and there has not been sufficient time to ascertain whether they will pay or not; yet these stations have received notice that unless they can guarantee a revenue of £100 they will be closed. I hope the Government will find some means of continuing on these offices for a little longer. I am not going to discuss the Divisional Boards Bill or the three-million loan. In reference to the first, the present is an inopportune time; and with reference to the other, I shall be prepared to give my views when it is brought under the consideration of the House. The amendment of the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) shall have my most cordial support. I do not wish to travel over the ground so ably gone over by the hon. member for Moreton. I have been in this House for five years, and I may say I have never heard a more able speech than that; and, if I had no other reason, that speech would warrant me in supporting the amendment.

Mr. GRIMES said that the innovations in the administration of the Works Department occasioned by the economic reform policy of the present Government would press so heavily on the agriculturists throughout the colony, and more particularly on those residing in the district which he represented, that he would not be doing his duty if he allowed the debate to pass without entering his protest. He was an advocate of economic reform, but that reform as presented by the Government was of such an extraordinary character, and so one-sided, that he could not support it. He had gone through the Estimates very carefully, and might say there was only one department where there had been any real retrenchment that would lighten the burdens of the taxpayers; he referred to that of the Colonial Secretary, whom he (Mr. Grimes) congratulated on the moral courage he had exhibited in cutting down his Estimates so much. In the other departments there were small decreases, but they were principally under the heading of contingencies, and might very likely appear before the House in the Supplementary Estimates, under a different heading. It was as interesting as figures could be to read down the retrenchments in the Department of the



Minister for Works, whom he should have excepted when he alluded to there being no material decrease beyond the Colonial Secretary's Department. There was a reduction of £118,000 altogether, being principally in the votes for roads and bridges. In roads and bridges the following decreases appeared:—In East and West Moreton, £32,760; in Darling Downs, £9,250; in the Western District, £2,800; in the Wide Bay and Burnett District, £8,600; in the Central Division, £7,550; in the Northern Division, £12,900; showing a decrease in the amount of money for roads and bridges of about £74,000. It was remarkable that while there was a decrease of nearly one-half in the amount of outside expenditure in the department, there was only a departmental retrenchment of something like £5,000. The Minister for Works had claimed for the policy of the Government that it was one which would prove to the benefit of the working man. He could not understand how that statement could be made, when they considered that this sum of £74,000, which had been deducted from the Estimates for the coming year, was principally spent in daily wage. The policy of the Government was quite different from what he understood to be a policy for the benefit of the working man; or else there must be a difference of opinion as to what a working man was, and what was good for him. The Minister for Works did not define what he considered a working man to be, but his (Mr. Grimes') idea of working men included those who by manual labour earned their living by the sweat of their brow, whether working for daily wages or cultivating their own plots of land. To look upon a working man as simply a hireling was to take too narrow a view, for the small farmer worked far harder and had to put up with far greater hardships than the day labourer. The working man of the Minister for Works was evidently the day labourer, and his policy was to keep him continually working for a daily wage. From that point of view the policy of the Government might be claimed to be for the benefit of the working man, but from no other. That kind of legislation was not wanted which would divide the community into two classes. They did not want to see two classes in the fair colony of Queensland—capitalists and the would-be lords and dukes occupying an exalted position, and looking upon the working men as their serfs. Such legislation would not raise the colony to the high position it was destined to attain. They wanted the bony arm and strong sinews of the working men to develop the vast resources of the colony—no as daily-wage men or hirelings, but rather their own masters working by contract or on their own plots of land. They wanted

legislation that would raise the sober, industrious, honest members of the working classes from the position of mere hirelings, and place them on small freeholds of their own—thus, by the aid of liberal land laws, enabling others to come in and take their places as wages-men. Those people made the best and most successful farmers. A working man who had had experience in the cultivation of the soil would start farming with £20 or £30 in his pocket, and be far more successful than others who started with a capital of £300 or £3,000;—indeed, the men most likely to fail were those who entered on land with money but without experience; while those who had experience and a small amount of cash very often proved successful. The colony could not prosper without those working men who had settled down on small freeholds of their own—on whom the would-be lords of the land looked down and styled the “lower orders.” But the prosperity of those persons also depended on the number of those working men there were in the colony. The hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Mackay) remarked, the other evening, that the pastoral lessees would find the best market for their stock within the colony itself. He fully agreed with that remark, and so must those who had watched the efforts made to establish a trade in preserved meats. To establish such a trade with England would take an enormous time. Shipments of meat that had been sent home had turned out badly, owing to carelessness in preparation; and such a prejudice had been raised against it as would take a long time and much expenditure of money to overcome. By prosecuting a policy calculated to drive away the consumers of meat, squatters would be destroying their own trade, and be compelled to resort again to the boiling-down pot as they did years ago. It was lamentable to see a large population wandering about—first on the few miles of railway opened here, and then on the few miles of railway opened yonder; and, if this large shifting population was not encouraged to settle on our lands, they could just as easily shift into New South Wales as from one end to the other of Queensland. Any Government that would offer inducements to those people to settle down and form homes of their own might fairly claim that they were the advocates of a policy calculated to benefit the working man. How did the Government of the day propose to deal with those working men who had raised themselves to the position of being their own masters on their own small freeholds? The policy of the Government, as specially developed by the Divisional Boards Bill, showed that they were endeavouring to place upon the working man the iron heel of oppression—they were treating them as



the first settlers in Goshen were treated. The Government said to the working men, "You are living on the fat of the land; you are doing too well, and we will lay more burdens upon you. We will increase your burdens by a local tax. We will still have from you our usual amount of Customs duties to pay the interest upon railways made for others, but we will impose upon you the duty of making your own roads and bridges." In the electorate he represented (Oxley) there were numbers of those straightforward, honest men who, not desiring to be continually under a master, had taken small plots of land from capitalists, for which they paid a very high rental—in most cases £2, and in some as much as £3, per acre. A similar state of things prevailed, also, in the electorates of the Logan and Moreton. How would this Divisional Boards Bill affect those people? The Government claimed that the Bill imposed a burden on property which rightly belonged to it, inasmuch as the making of roads and bridges improved the property. But this tax would fall upon the occupier, and not upon the owner. The capitalist would take care to have the interest on his money, and the occupier would have to pay the tax. He would call attention to a clause in the Bill which placed it in the power of the district boards to choose whom they could lay this tax upon. In the 66th clause it was provided that in lieu of distress and sale any rates in arrears might be recovered either from the occupier or owner at the option of the Board. Now, who was likely to be dropped upon for these rates? Certainly the occupier, who was the most come-at-able, the owners in many cases living miles away or out of the colony. The occupier being on the spot would be pitched upon, and if the money was not forthcoming his horses and implements would be sold. Some of the farmers in the electorate he represented had paid as much as £15 per acre—not to private individuals but to the Government, and not in land orders but in hard cash—under the impression that part of what they paid would be spent by the Government in making roads to their farms. The hon. member for the Gregory had spoken about repudiation, but here was a case of repudiation in the strongest form if after having paid at so high a rate for his land the farmer was to be forced to pay for his own road to it. It was also to be observed that by imposing this rate they would be placing upon those who already paid a large share of taxation an additional burden. The owners of all the land cultivated in Oxley, Logan, and other agricultural districts paid to the Government at least 10s. per acre, for every acre cultivated, in the shape of Customs duties. He had found from his experience that a man

would cultivate eight or ten acres, and no more. Most of the men who had settled in the agricultural districts were married, and some had large families. Taking the man and his family to number six persons, he found that the amount of Customs duties paid by that family for the necessities of life alone was £5 a year. This was the lowest possible calculation, allowing just one luxury to the head of the household—which hon. members would not deny to the working man—his pipe; and making no allowance for grog or any luxury of that kind. These expenses pressed so heavily upon his constituents, and it would be such an injustice to agriculturists generally to increase the burdens, that he should feel bound to oppose any such increase to the utmost. The question was, would the agriculturists be able to bear an increased amount of taxation? Many hon. members might think that the agriculturists were really doing very well and making their fortunes, but he could assure them that such was not the case. The amount of profit a farmer made from his two principal crops did not exceed 10s. or 12s. per acre at the present price of produce. He would make the statement so that it might go forth through *Hansard*, and if there were any inaccuracies in his calculations there were plenty of farmers who might challenge his figures. Taking the case of maize first, the expense would be—preparing land, ploughing, and harrowing, £1 10s.; hoeing, 10s.; rent of land (calculated at £2 for the year), £1; harvesting, husking, and threshing, 16s.; selling and delivering to market, £1. The returns for that acre of maize would be forty bushels, which, at the present market price (2s. 6d.), hon. members would see, left a balance of just 4s. Perhaps it might be that the expenses of delivering were reckoned too high, but he did not think so. He knew many cases of farmers paying fully 9d. per bushel to bring maize to the market, and if brought from the Downs by railway the cost would be as much. That was a very small profit after working for six months. Then, take oaten hay. Generally speaking a farmer put in one crop of corn, and after it a crop of oaten hay to make up the year. Supposing the farmer to be working an ordinary stiff black soil, as found in the Downs or plains country, the cost would be—preparing land and ploughing twice over, £1 15s.; seed oats, £1 2s. 6d.; rent, £1; harvesting, 15s.; trussing and delivering, £1 5s.; making a total of £5 17s. 6d. A ton and a quarter of oaten hay at £5 would be £6 5s., leaving a balance of 7s. 6d. The present price of oaten hay of good quality was £6, but many farmers had sold it, during the past year, for £3 10s., so he had taken £5 as a fair average. That would be the return per acre, sup-

posing the land to be farmed with ordinary appliances, but if steam machinery were used the work might be done cheaper. The profit, therefore, to be got from one acre of land was 11s. 6d. per annum; and the present Government, which claimed to represent the working man, sought to lay a tax of 2s. additional upon them to make their roads and bridges, reducing thereby this small amount of profit to 9s. 6d. per acre. The hon. member for Leichhardt said that if the Divisional Boards Bill proved a burden to the agriculturist he would not support it. It would be necessary for him to go into figures to show that that Bill would prove a great burden upon agriculturists. The Government had cut off from the usual road votes something like £73,000, which amount, if voted in the usual way, would have been spent during the first part of the next year. As that amount had been cut off, the people had to rely upon a Government endowment upon rates collected in the district. If the hon. member would look at the sixty-seventh clause of the Bill he would find that under no circumstances could they get that endowment from the Government in less than eighteen months from the present time. If the Bill passed—and he sincerely hoped it would not—it would be fully six months before the Board could be constituted under it. The Bill provided that in each of the five years after the establishment of such Board a sum would be granted equal to but not exceeding twice the actual amount raised in the year last past; so that they would have to wait to produce a return to the Government of one whole year's rates before they would be entitled to any endowment. It was well known how tardy the Government was in handing over money when due. The municipalities had constantly made complaints, and no doubt these boards would complain in the same way, and it would be four or five months before they would get the endowment they were entitled to. Therefore, fully twenty months might elapse before anything more was done to the roads and bridges. This was a very important matter, because the transit of produce from the farms to market was already a very heavy item of expenditure, and if the roads were allowed to get out of order the expense would be considerably increased. For instance, it would take a man with his horse and dray a day and a half to convey 15 cwt. of produce from his farm, probably seventeen or eighteen miles from Brisbane, to market. It would take one day to come down, and half the next day to return. He therefore reckoned the day and a half of the man's time 12s., which, with 3s. expenses for the night in town, amounted to 15s. He heard the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) say the man could sleep under his dray;—

that was no doubt the kind of treatment the working man might expect to receive at the hands of the hon. member. Supposing the farmers' roads got out of order, as they would do, if nothing were done to them for twenty months, the same horses and drays would only be able to bring 10 cwt., thus increasing the cost of transit of the farmers' produce to market by one-third;—that would be 3d. per bushel more upon his corn, and would wipe away the full amount of his profit on the crop for the season. He thought he had shown that the Divisional Boards Bill would be a great burden upon agriculture if it became law in its present shape, and he trusted the hon. member for Leichhardt had seen it, and that his vote would be recorded against the measure on the second reading. Before proceeding, he should like to quote from a speech made by the hon. member for Bowen (Mr. Beor), in 1877, on the Railway Reserves Bill, as it completely expressed his views on the matter to which he had been alluding—

"It also appeared to him that until the Government could afford to keep the roads throughout the colony in something like decent order, it was wrong for them to turn their attention to the construction of a large extent of railways, which could only favour certain districts. The roads throughout the colony were in a dreadful state."

Then he called attention to the roads in his constituency, and went on to say—

"He considered that so long as these roads and others throughout the country were in their present state, it was monstrous for the Government to turn their attention to extensive schemes of railway-making;—until they could relieve themselves from the position of not having sufficient money to put the roads in good order it was monstrous of them to undertake the construction of railways."

Standing on the Opposition side of the House he could endorse those remarks, but he could not understand how any hon. member could make use of such language and yet support the Ministerial party. It was astonishing how views differed with a change of seats. When speaking, the other night, the hon. member made use of very different language, and he could only account for it by assuming that hon. members opposite faced the rising sun, and possibly received more light when they occupied those benches. He could not, however, congratulate the hon. member's constituents on the change that had taken place in their representative's views. Speaking, the other evening, the hon. gentleman said—

"Another subject which was most prominent and noticeable in the Financial Statement, and which had engaged a good deal of attention, was the subject of local taxation. More than one hon. member on the Opposition side had urged that it was wholly wrong, at

this particular period, to enforce upon the people who used the roads throughout the colony the expense of construction and repairs. Hon. members who had attempted to pose before the country as the working man's friends had said that it was wrong to relieve the working men of the colony of the onus of providing roads, and to make those who used them pay for them. If the roads were made and repaired out of the general revenue, the general body of the people, composed to a great extent of working men, had to contribute towards paying the expense instead of it being borne by those who used the roads. He congratulated the working man on the advocacy he had found on the Opposition side of the House."

He could not, he repeated, congratulate the hon. member's electorate on the change that had taken place in his views. He had a few remarks to offer on the loan vote and railway policy of the Government, for, if there was one thing which he gave more prominence to than another in addressing his constituents, it was to state that on no account would he vote for money being spent on any railway unless there was a reasonable hope that it would pay working expenses and interest upon the cost of construction. The Premier had not shown in his Financial Statement how he intended to raise the extra revenue for the payment of the interest on the proposed loan; neither had he given any details to show that the railway would prove remunerative; and until this was done it was his (Mr. Grimes') duty to his constituents to oppose it in every shape and form. The hon. member for Dalby attempted to show how the railway to the West would pay, stating that, if they could get four million of sheep at the end of the 500 miles of line, the carriage of the wool of these sheep alone would pay working expenses and interest. The hon. member, however, did not succeed in proving his position, and from the way he handled figures he (Mr. Grimes) should not like to engage with him in any speculation. In the first place, he might tell him that Government did not borrow money at 4 per cent., for the average cost of the money already borrowed was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The hon. member had also calculated that the working expenses of the traffic could be done at 4 per cent., but he was under the belief that it was considerably more, and that the maintenance of the railways would be 2 per cent. on the cost. If they reckoned the cost of money at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and the cost of working expenses at the like amount, there would, on the hon. gentleman's own way of calculating, be a deficit of something like £40,000 or £50,000. That, he supposed, was not much to be paid by the working men, in the eyes of the hon. members opposite. The hon. member also told them, with particular emphasis, that it had cost him 5d. per acre for the last ten years for the transit per railway of

the produce from his station down to Brisbane;—it might seem a large amount to the hon. member, but it did not do so to him. Perhaps the hon. member would allow him to show what his next-door neighbour would have to pay if he were a *bonâ fide* agriculturist. Supposing he held 100 acres and farmed 50, leaving the other 50 as a paddock, the produce on the 50 acres at the present rate of freight would come to £2 13s. per acre—a striking difference!—and on the whole 100 acres it would be £1 6s. 6d. per acre. Then, as to the proportion of the profits, he had ascertained from one of the principal land-owners on the Darling Downs who was now engaged in sheep farming, that the profit on fenced-in paddocks would be 6s. 8d. per acre to the grazier, and 11s. 6d. per acre to the agriculturist; and yet the former only paid fivepence per acre for the transit of his produce, whilst the latter had to pay £1 6s. 6d. per acre. He would call the Colonial Treasurer's attention to this matter. The hon. gentleman complained, the other evening, that there had been a falling off of the traffic on one of their main railways, and that it was not paying nearly so well as it should do;—there was the interest of something like £40,000 per annum which had hitherto been coming out of the taxpayers. The hon. gentleman would know where he could place an increased tax. He (Mr. Grimes) certainly objected to the agriculturist paying for his neighbour's wool being brought to market when he had to give £1 6s. 6d. for the produce of his acre, while the cost to the wool-grower was only fivepence per acre. He hoped the Treasurer, when he amended his tariff, would remember this, and that, if they could not get a good stiff tax on the uncultivated lands on the Darling Downs, at least they would have a good stiff tax on wool sacks or something of that kind. The Premier said that this railway to the far West would encourage "close settlement." He did not know what the honourable gentleman meant by close settlement; but if he meant that it would encourage the settlement of agriculturists upon that railway line he would be very much mistaken. It would be far better for an agriculturist to go upon the Downs and pay £3 or £4 per acre per annum for land, there, than to go out to the western district, because the cost of transit of his produce to market would make so much difference in the value; and as long as there were a few acres of land to be leased upon the Darling Downs they would not see many farmers beyond Roma, except it was a few that would grow stuff for consumption up there. He did not know where the cry had been raised for this railway; but it certainly was not amongst the pastoral lessees round about Roma. He had a conversation with one

of them the other day, and he stated plainly that there was no desire amongst the pastoral tenants around Roma, because he said the railway to Roma had bridged over a piece of country that was very difficult to travel over, and there was now no difficulty in the way of going right out to the western districts; grass and water being plentiful, there was nothing to hinder their teams from travelling. He believed the cry for the railway was from those whom it would benefit most—three or four squatters and capitalists and one or two speculators who had taken up large areas of country in the far West, which, he was told, were not measured by miles but by degrees of longitude and latitude. Those were the people who would benefit by this line, which, at the same time, would prove to be a very heavy additional burden on the taxpayers in general. He looked upon the policy of the present Government as such that, if carried out, it would be ruinous to the colony. He viewed it with the greatest alarm and apprehension. It was stated that a certain cute Kentuckian once made this extraordinary remark, "That when the history of the United States was written, if the administration of James Buchanan was placed in parenthesis, or removed altogether, it would not destroy the sense of the narrative." He thought it would be a happy thing for Queensland if, at the end of the administration of the present Government, they could say the same thing; but he was afraid they would not be able to say it. He believed that in the future history of Queensland there would be recorded such a chapter of disastrous results from the policy of the Government that the record would be unintelligible and incomprehensible, unless they also had recorded the pernicious administration of the McIlwraith Ministry.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he dared say hon. members were beginning to feel weary of the debate, which had been protracted to considerable length, and he should not have ventured to trespass upon the indulgence of the House if he thought his remarks would be merely a repetition of observations falling from hon. members who had already spoken; but he thought it just possible that he might suggest some ideas which had not struck hon. members who had already addressed the House. He felt it his duty to hold some opinions that perhaps might be deemed original, and he desired to say a few words with reference to the policy that had been laid before them in the speech of the Treasurer, delivered last week. He thought, with regard to the manner of that speech, nothing but that which was commendatory could be said. He approved of the extreme clearness with which the Treasurer placed his Statement before the country, and the extreme brevity

with which he managed to afford the House that information which they had been all so eagerly looking for. As far as he could gather the policy of the Government from the Financial Statement, it seemed to him, in the first place, that it implied a retreat from the principle established by the Railway Reserves Act, and the throwing of the accumulated sums realised under that Act into the Consolidated Revenue. Now, he regarded this matter with very serious apprehension. Thoughtful people in New South Wales and other colonies had come to the conclusion that the policy which had dictated the alienation of Crown lands and placing the proceeds thereof to the general revenue was a policy fraught with prodigious mischief to the future interests of these colonies; and when they found that a portion of the New South Wales Press had been speaking in laudatory terms of this very Railway Reserves Act which the Government seemed now desirous of repealing—when they found that some of the most intelligent and enlightened members of Parliament in the neighbouring colony were indulging in hearty applause of what they regarded as a progressive policy, he felt pained to find the Treasurer proclaiming the direction of his march of advance as being indicated by a determination to repeal that Act which had earned such liberal commendation elsewhere. The hon. member talked about a progressive policy; but he (Mr. Rutledge) wanted to know if it was a progressive policy to revert to principles and to practice and to a system which had everywhere been tried and found wanting? It seemed to him to be just like a man who had a certain amount of capital sufficient to build a house from which he might reasonably expect to receive a considerable rental, but who employed this capital to pay his tradesmen's bills, pledged the income he expected to receive as rent for many years for the purpose of finding security for a loan with which to build his house, and not only deprived himself of the rent of it but was also obliged to pay every year a large sum in interest on the loan. The true principle was embodied in the Railway Reserves Act—to apply the proceeds of the sales of land in certain districts to the construction of trunk lines through those districts in which the lands sold were situated. By a faithful adherence to this principle it would be an easy matter for the Treasurer to strike out in a new direction and earn something like a claim to be considered the foremost statesman in the colony, by agreeing to impose a land tax upon land-holders who were benefited by the railways constructed, and thus provide a special fund to pay the interest on the loan necessary for the construction of branch lines, which must go through alienated land.

Such a policy as that would meet with the hearty applause of all classes of the community. The Treasurer, in his Financial Statement, indulged in some very sanguine expectations in regard to the revenue to be derived from sales of land. He stated that his estimate of revenue for sales of land by auction, during the coming year, was £70,000; and he further estimated to realise by pre-emptive purchases a sum of £35,000. That was to say, that the total proceeds of sales of land, during the coming year, would be £105,000. Now, on referring to table U, they found that the amount realised from these two sources of revenue during 1877-8 was something over £80,000, so that the estimate of the Treasurer, for the coming year, was nearly £20,000 in excess of what was realised in 1877-8. Now, while it was right for a man to view, always, the bright side of the question, rather than indulge in melancholy prognostications as to the dismal things which he anticipated would happen in the future; and, while he always liked to see a man—be he a statesman or a private individual engaged in commercial enterprise—looking at the bright side of the question, he thought the Treasurer had allowed his imagination to play some strange fantastic tricks on this occasion. On what did the hon. gentleman base his estimate of £105,000 from these two sources? Did he forget that the very cream of the land sold by auction or pre-empted by squatters, or taken up by those who intended to reside on the land—that all accessible land had already passed into the hands of the people? Did he forget that by far the best portions of the land available for agricultural purposes had already passed out of the hands of the Crown;—and where in the world were they to look for this increased revenue from these sources? The hon. gentleman also lost sight of the fact that it was absolutely necessary, in order to expect an increase from these sources, that they should increase the number of people who were candidates for the ownership of this land; but one of the very first acts by which the present Government signalised their acceptance of office was the peremptory stoppage of immigration. He would like to know how they were to have sales of land on this extensive scale if they were at the same time to stop the influx of the very people who would enable the Treasurer to realise the glowing expectations he had indulged in? With regard to pre-emptives, he would not travel over the ground so ably explored by the hon. member for Moreton, the other night. That hon. gentleman clearly explained the fallacy of expecting a large return from pre-emptive purchasers in the future, by pointing out that pastoral lessees would not pre-empt if they had to pay interest

at the rate of 6d. per acre upon land which they pre-empted, while under the Government the same land could be held for something like a fraction of one penny per acre. The next feature in the policy of the Government, as far as he could gather, was that of retrenchment and the avoidance of increased taxation. Everyone, no matter the particular colour of his political views, would approve of the honest endeavours of a Premier or Colonial Treasurer to reduce the expenditure of the Civil Service of the colony; but that was a thing which was liable to be abused, and there was nothing which required greater judgment than to carry out a determination to retrench. They knew that, in a young and growing colony, there must be a very large expenditure, and there must be a greater proportion in the Civil Service of a growing colony than would be justifiable in an older and more settled community. Every man knew in his private capacity that, when he began talking of economising his expenditure, it would be fatal to tell his youngsters that they must not have so much to eat or so many clothes. Were a man to do such a thing it would, perhaps, be attended with anything but beneficial results. Anyone acquainted with horticulture knew that a too frequent and vigorous application of the pruning-knife to a young tree would do it more injury than if he did not use the knife at all. The Treasurer talked about doing without increased taxation, and very properly took credit for doing so. The Government thought it was a very improper thing to impose more taxation on people who were already sufficiently taxed for the necessities of life; but whilst he approved of the determination of the hon. gentleman not to increase the duties on certain articles imported here, and generally not to unnecessarily burden the people with taxes, he considered the hon. gentleman had had an opportunity of rectifying some of the abuses in our tariff which had for long been felt most oppressive on the people. Was it not possible, for instance, to have proposed the reduction of the duty on tea and coffee, which were taxed 50 per cent.? Other articles were also taxed at from 10 to 20 per cent., whilst many articles, chiefly luxuries, had no other tax than an *ad valorem* of 5 per cent. If the Treasurer had made up his mind to equalise the incidence of taxation, he would have increased some of the Customs duties, and would have decreased those which were found to press most heavily on the people. The hon. gentleman spoke of Queensland as being the most heavily-taxed colony in the Australian group; and it was certainly a lamentable thing for a young colony, possessing in itself advantages and resources not enjoyed by any other, that the people in it should be burdened with such heavy taxation. But what

was the cause of this? To a very great extent they were indebted for this unpleasant state of things to the policy that was persistently persevered in by the old type of Tory squatters—by men whose creed it was to get as much out of the colony as they could and to spend as little in it as possible. When Mr. Jordan was carrying out the provisions of the Immigration Act in Great Britain so successfully that in three years he sent out 36,000 persons to this colony, who brought with them a million and a-half of money, some of those gentlemen he had referred to arranged that a stop should be put to that good work, and by so doing inflicted a blow on the prosperity of the colony from which it had never recovered. He did not want to stir up old party strife, or to repeat the cry about that mysterious entity, the poor man, that had been repeated so often in the House—he would make no *ad misericordiam* appeal on his behalf. He did not believe there were any poor men here in the same sense in which the term was used in other parts of the world, but he believed that the poor man was frequently made a stalking-horse of. Nor was it his intention to set one class against another, as he regarded the squatters, as a whole, as a class deserving of all sympathy and consideration. He trusted that the House would never consent to any legislation by which these men would be unfairly prejudiced; he admired men who, leaving the comforts of town life, went forth into the wilderness to make homes for themselves under such heavy disadvantages. He had no feeling but that of respect for those hard-working, self-denying men; and, if he and others could give them what both considered fair play, they would benefit the colony by so doing. It was not the present class of squatter who had made Queensland the most heavily taxed of all the Australian colonies;—Queensland was labouring under the curse of absenteeism. That was what was playing mischief with Queensland. There were men who, having accumulated princely incomes in the colony, went to Europe to spend them. Their lands were being improved at the cost of the residents, while they went away to sport about as commissioners at this or that exhibition, and do the grandee, button-holing dukes and lords and princes, and all that sort of thing. That was the class of squatter they must enter their protest against, and that was a class which was draining the life-blood of the colony. If the Treasurer could only by some well-devised scheme arrange that those men should bear their share of the burdens that the colony was now struggling under he would do what would entitle him to the gratitude of the whole country. There was another feature of the policy propounded by the Government which was dealt with at great

length by the hon. member for Oxley—namely, the Divisional Boards Bill; and he had been afraid the hon. member was going to analyse that Bill too closely, seeing that the proper time for doing so would be when it was before the House. He (Mr. Rutledge) would not follow the hon. member's example in that particular; but one important feature of that policy was a proposal to relieve the Treasury of the great strain to which it was now subjected, and to cast upon the people themselves the responsibility of finding money to build their own bridges and to make their own roads. He should be the last to say one word in deprecation of such a principle, but, if that was what was to be done, why were they not content with the Local Government Bill already upon the statute book? He could not see that the Divisional Boards Bill was one whit superior, while in many respects it was decidedly inferior to it. His own quarrel with the Local Government Bill was, that it was optional with the Government of the day whether it should be enforced or not, and the only question arising in his mind was whether its provisions should or should not be made compulsory at this time; the question resolved itself into one of expediency as to whether the present was the proper time to make a Local Government Act compulsory all over the colony. But the Treasurer had propounded the doctrine of Local Government as though it were something new—something that the colony had not heard of before. The hon. gentleman propounded the theory in the full belief that, if it once became universally accepted, an immense relief would be experienced by the Treasury chest, and that the people themselves would have to find the money for their own roads and bridges;—henceforth there would be no deficits, and the great problem would be solved. The hon. gentleman, however, was very much mistaken if he thought that a compulsory application of the Local Government Act would be a panacea for the ills from which the colony was suffering, and which he expected it to prove. Supposing, for instance, the area possessed by the landowner was the basis of assessment, what would take place? Why, that the owner of an immense estate would only pay, relatively, precisely what the owner of a few allotments would have to pay. But, on the other hand, if the assessment in the shape of taxation on land possessed by individuals were upon the recognised value of the whole area of the land concerned, it followed that the owner of a magnificent estate of some thousands of acres, instead of paying relatively only as much as the owner of an insignificant estate would actually pay less. And that came about in this way, that in districts like the Darling Downs, for example, where

owners possessed the fee-simple of, say, from 10,000 to 50,000 acres, the demand for the construction of roads and bridges would be exceedingly small, and consequently the rate levied on the various properties would be reduced to a minimum: that would be the case where the whole of the lands were parcelled out among a few proprietors. They knew that in the electorates of Moreton, Oxley, Stanley, Enoggera, and other places which were more thickly populated, the traffic on the roads was five times as great as in the districts he had alluded to, and persons in those electorates would actually pay a great deal more in the shape of taxation for local purposes than the wealthy proprietor of 20,000 or 30,000 acres of land. The local boards would not inflict taxes for the sake of having princely revenues—that they did not want to do. They would only impose taxation to make the necessary roads and bridges, and, in those districts where the houses were miles apart and vast estates in the hands of a few individuals, where would the expenditure be required to any considerable extent for roads and bridges? The only class of persons who would feel the burden were the small holders of land in those electorates which were near the metropolis where the holdings were of diminished extent. He had a theory on this matter, and, if he might presume to suggest it to the Colonial Treasurer, he could show him how he might raise the requisite revenue, not merely for ordinary purposes but for the purpose of carrying out the extensive scheme to which he was committed. Hitherto the colony had been at enormous cost in sending railways hither and thither, and they had these railways passing through magnificent country, of which a few men had acquired the proprietorship in fee-simple. The result of this had been that on the Darling Downs the value of the lands had been raised to four times what it originally was. This was the effect of their railway policy, so far—that they had been building railways which had the effect of making the lands of certain proprietors at least four times, and in many cases six times, as valuable as they were originally. The Colonial Treasurer now said we must hand over these districts to the care of the local boards, who should impose a certain tax for the purpose of making roads and bridges in country that had been made six times as valuable as it was before. These roads and bridges were not much wanted, and therefore it was placing these favoured districts on an equality, as regarded expenditure, with places languishing for railway communication, where the land had not been improved in value at the public cost. What he suggested, then, was that the Local Government Bill should have a

universal application, and that there should be a special tax of a substantial character imposed on those lands so enormously increased in value by public expenditure. Why should it not be so? If by the construction of railways the land had been so enormously increased in value, it was only a fair thing that a special tax should be borne by those lands for the purpose of providing for railway communication in other parts of the colony, so anxiously looking for increased facilities of communication. In all places where the lands had been increased in value by railway construction there might a special tax with great justice be imposed; and in this way, and not as the Treasurer proposed, would the great burden under which the colony was staggering be relieved. The next part of the Statement which attracted his attention was the expression by the Government of a determination to carry out public works, in the shape of trunk lines, with extraordinary vigour. Now, they should not simply condemn the determination to extend trunk lines merely because they were trunk lines. They should not be justified in saying, because the people struggling out in the West with bad seasons and other difficulties were squatters, that the notion of trunk lines should be altogether discarded; but, when they went in for an extensive loan, to appropriate one-half to the extension of trunk lines into the interior and only £300,000 for branch lines, it was a most inequitable distribution. It was not as though it was simply one trunk line that might be extended; but what was proposed was three trunk lines into the interior; and if these were carried out they would just be creating antagonisms between the several divisions of the colony, each jealously watching the expenditure in the other districts, and all becoming dissatisfied if they did not share alike in the extent to which the trunk lines were pushed out. Would it not be far better to take a considerable portion of the loan and decide upon taking one trunk line as far as they reasonably could, devoting the other half of the amount to the construction of branch lines in the settled districts? Was it fair that these people on the coast districts who had been for many years struggling with all the difficulties incident to the original settlement of a country, who had been encountering the disabilities entailed by bad roads, bad markets, and the rest—was it fair that these people should have their just requirements entirely ignored, and that the Government should be so solicitous to push the trunk lines into the interior? It was surely not the interest of the pastoral tenant the Treasurer was advocating when he talked about pushing out these lines! The hon. gentleman said, "Away out in the Mitchell, the Aramac,



the Diamantina, and the far Western country, there is glorious land fit for close settlement. We will bring in any number of selectors to settle upon those lands, but we will build the railway first." Was that justice, to spend so much for the benefit of people yet to come, while they were neglecting the just requirements of people who had been fighting the battles and bearing the burdens of the colony without any advantages for years past? He maintained that those who had borne the burden and heat of the day, and lived by their toil, and thrift, and industry, making the colony what it was, were those who were entitled to the first consideration. And if the Treasurer would only moderate his proposal, and devote a moderate sum to pushing out one trunk line, and devote the rest to branch lines, he would have his hearty support. There were many other subjects upon which he would like to address the House, but would not do so lest he should be unfair to other hon. members who wished to contribute their portion to the debate.

Mr. GROOM said it had not been his intention to take any part in the present discussion; but as a very large section of the people of the Darling Downs were entirely unrepresented in the House on the present occasion—not from any fault of their own, but from circumstances over which they had no control, and upon which they would pronounce a very emphatic opinion next Monday—it was necessary for him to speak a word or two on their behalf. He congratulated the Government upon having a *locum tenens* to represent the Minister for Lands while that hon. gentleman was absent on an electioneering tour on the Darling Downs, and he hoped the hon. member who was representing that Minister would be able to give him (Mr. Groom) certain information which he had a right to obtain respecting lands on the Darling Downs. The last speaker referred to the amount which the Treasurer contemplated receiving from the land sales, and he (Mr. Groom) thought there would be no difficulty in realising the amount if the information he had received was correct. Although he did not wish to make the working man—the poor man, as he had been called during the debate—a stalking-horse on which to hang a threadbare argument, he must say that, if his information was correct, the lands that would shortly be thrown open in the neighbourhood of Allora had been fixed at such a price that if the £70,000 could be squeezed out of the pockets of the people it would be done. Private gentlemen on the Darling Downs at the present time were disposing of the best of their lands at £2 10s. per acre, and the Government had, in their wisdom, fixed the price of the Allora lands at £5 an acre. That was the information communicated to him, and which the un-

fortunate people of Allora had been very sorry to hear. When the exchange was proposed this was not the result they expected. The land exchanged was valued by the late Government at 30s. an acre, and that had been reduced by the present Government to £1 per acre. Upon the principle on which the exchange was fixed, the Allora lands should have been valued at 40s. an acre; but even if they fixed £3 it would be fair and reasonable. To ask those men to pay £5 at a time like the present, when they had been suffering from a three years' drought, and had spent all their money in the bare effort to live, was an injustice to which they should never have been subjected. There was one part of this subject to which the Treasurer made no allusion in his speech; he did not specify the amount he expected to get from homestead and conditional selections, and it was very necessary that he should have done so. There had been a discussion in the House upon a class of people known as the East Prairie selectors. The late member for Aubigny (Mr. Perkins) thought it his duty to bring their case under the notice of the late Government, and the Premier promised it should have his serious consideration. These East Prairie selectors did not pay their rent on the 31st of March, and the ninety days' grace which they were allowed expired on the 30th of June. He (Mr. Groom), was in a position to say that these men did not intend to pay their rent and penalty. Someone, he did not know who it was, had given these men a promise that they should have their lands reduced to the same price to which the other lands had been reduced—namely, £1 per acre. He looked at the Bill introduced by the Government, but could not see any allusion to the matter. The people on the Darling Downs were very anxious to know who gave the authority for the Government candidate to declare to the East Prairie selectors that, if he was returned, their land would be reduced to £1 per acre, instructing them at the same time not to pay their rent till the time came to bring other cases before the House. If it were true that this promise had been made, it should be made not only to the East Prairie selectors, but to the other selectors on the Downs, who were equally entitled to it—such selectors as those of Beauraba and elsewhere, who took up their land in 1876-77-78, all outside the wire fences, for £1 or £1 10s. per acre, while the land around was now reduced to 12s. 6d. A man came into Toowoomba the other day to borrow money, and when he told the capitalist in Toowoomba where he lived and what he paid, the capitalist told him that the Government had knocked off £100 from the value of his land by their treatment. By reducing the price to 12s. 6d.



the Government had ruined this man, who was unable to borrow the necessary capital to carry on his improvements. He might also instance the case of the selectors on the Back Plains, where the land had been reduced from 30s. an acre to 15s. These men were equally deserving of consideration. It was not, therefore, the East Prairie selectors alone who were entitled to be considered; and, if any reduction in the price of land took place, this matter ought to receive the earnest consideration of the Government. Hon. members would agree with him that the reduction of the price of large areas of land for electioneering purposes was anything but a commendable proceeding. Whatever the cause was, a considerable amount of injury had been done to *bond fide* men. If any relief was to be given to the selectors on the Darling Downs it should be given to all, and not solely to those who would support the Government candidate. They were all entitled to have their liabilities to the Crown reduced to a minimum price. If the Government seriously intended to enter upon a policy of retrenchment they might have commenced at the Mines Department, for it was entirely useless. Of what use was the Secretary for Mines, with his £700 a year and his retinue of clerks? When Mr. Herbert was Under Secretary of both Works and Mines he had far more work to do on £600 a year than the Under Secretary for Works had at present. Why large numbers of working men should be discharged in all directions, while a useless office like that was maintained, he was at a loss to conceive. That department might very well have been dispensed with. He would much rather have seen that done than see the very small sum doled out to agricultural and horticultural societies disappear from the Estimates. If the Government were sincere in their expressed desire to promote agriculture they had taken a very peculiar way of showing it. That had been a most useful vote;—indeed, he might go so far as to say it had been a reproductive vote. While it had promoted competition in agriculture it had brought in to the Government, in the shape of increased traffic on the railway in consequence of the agricultural shows, far more than the amount of the vote. He was sorry it had disappeared from the Estimates. The same remarks would apply to the vote for schools of art, which were now placed in a very peculiar position. He hardly knew whether the disappearance of this vote was not a direct act of repudiation. He would mention one case in point. For the School of Arts at Toowoomba £1,500 was raised by public contribution, and £1,500 was borrowed by the trustees, and they erected the building at a cost £3,000. They went into this speculation—if such it might be

called—with the distinct belief that the Government subsidy would continue from year to year, never dreaming that in the retrenchment scheme of any Government it would be struck out. The consequence, if the vote was not restored, would be that this School of Arts at Toowoomba, as well, no doubt, as those in other towns, would close, and the result would be a loss to the public in more ways than one. Schools of art had done, and were doing, a considerable amount of good in their way. The managers did their work without fee or reward, and as public disseminators of sound knowledge the colony owed a distinct debt of gratitude to these institutions—as any one might see by perusing the annual reports sent in to the Registrar-General. At a time like this, when all business men were obliged to submit to diminished profits—when men like himself, employing sixteen or seventeen workmen, had had to reduce wages all round—that system should have been introduced into the Government departments. Why should not Government have said to every officer receiving over £200 or £300 a year, “Now that times are bad, and the revenue is decreasing, and all classes are receiving decreased incomes, you must submit to have your salaries reduced 10 or 15 per cent.” No one would have objected to such a course. But to discharge working men in all parts of the colony was anything but a commendable action. He would have preferred seeing a repetition of the policy adopted in 1866. On that occasion, when Government cheques were dishonoured, and when thousands of men were almost on the point of coming down to Brisbane and besieging Government House to obtain bread, the Legislature authorised the Government to borrow £300,000 on Treasury bills at 10 per cent., and these bills being sold in Sydney, enough money was obtained to keep the working men in employment. This was far better than driving them out of the colony—and there was too much reason to believe that they were being driven out of the colony. Since it became known that Messrs. Amos Brothers had received the contract for the extension of the railway from Tamworth to Uralla, from 300 to 400 of the finest men in the colony had gone to the borders of New South Wales to obtain employment under that contract. If the Government had been a little more liberal—if even the money which the House voted last session had been expended—those men would have been kept within our territory. Had there been any real necessity to dismiss the working men it ought to have been done by degrees—say, ten or fifteen this month, and a similar number the next, and so on; but to dismiss them wholesale was anything but sound policy. He did not think

the people of the Darling Downs were so shortsighted as to be led astray by the Premier's remark about its being a desirable locality to try branch railways; nor were they so shortsighted as to believe that £300,000 was going to form many branch railways. It had always hitherto been found that, when they were told a railway was going to cost £3,000 a mile, it meant £10,000. Whether the present Minister for Works meant to inaugurate a new system he was not informed; but it would never be done under the present Engineer-in-Chief. When the Fassifern line and the Mount Esk lines were finished—and the members had been returned to support the Government on the distinct promise that those lines would be made first—how much would there be left for the deluded district of Darling Downs? What was the value of the gilded bait held out to induce that electorate to return Mr. Graham to this House in place of one of the two gentlemen by whom it had been hitherto so well represented? He believed the Darling Downs men had their wits about them; he had met them during last week, and knew their opinions on this matter; and he would inform the Government that, next Monday, those opinions would be pronounced even more strongly and emphatically than was done at Fortitude Valley, a few weeks ago. He would now refer to the £1,500,000 for the railway to the West. He had the pleasure of being one with the Premier, and fourteen or fifteen others, who sat against sixteen on the other side for many weary nights and weeks; and he was prepared to resume that course, with 5 per cent. added to it, rather than vote that money on the present occasion. He was quite prepared to give the hon. gentleman a loan if he wished it, but it must be one which should comprise a million of money for branch railways. It was almost an insult to attempt to lead astray the most settled portion of the population, and those from whom the largest amount of taxation was raised, with a paltry offer of £300,000 for branch railways; and, to add to the modesty of the proposal, while the settled districts were to be satisfied with this, the great western interior was to have £1,500,000. Further than this, the people in the settled districts were to be taxed to pay for it; because, on the repeal of the Railway Reserves Act, the interest on the construction of the line to Roma, and on the £1,500,000 to be spent beyond Roma, would fall upon the settled districts. The Premier had already told them that they were the most heavily taxed class in the community, and the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) had shown why that was so. There was no doubt it was the railway policy which had brought about the necessity for this heavy taxation. If they were the most heavily

taxed people in the colonies, the Premier must accept the responsibility of wanting to make them still more so. The Divisional Boards Bill would tax the industrial classes of the colony more than any measure ever passed by the Legislature; and he had received a distinct understanding from his constituents that he must give that Bill his most determined opposition. He was a thorough believer in the principle of local government; but it was certainly not the proper time—at the end of a three years' drought—to introduce it. Last week he had to go into some selectors' huts in this colony, where the occupants had neither bread nor meat, but were living on the grain they grew in their paddocks, which, as it ripened, they took to the mills and ground down. As for selling the maize, it was impossible—the market was glutted with it; and yet these people were braving all difficulties, and putting up with all hardships, rather than run into debt at the stores, and encumber their little plots of ground. To tax these men for roads and bridges would be the acme of injustice, and he for one, as representing a country district, would never consent to it; and the two members who would be returned for Darling Downs, next week, would receive their commissions to oppose it to the uttermost. By-and-by, when the colony had recovered from the effects of the drought, and the monetary depression had passed away, the question of local government might well be considered. The Premier said that all the industries of the colony had been nursed by the State. The squatting industry had been very well nursed, indeed, at the expense of all the other industries of the colony. What were the railways but nursing machines to enable squatters to send their wool down at a cheap rate? Their wool would be in the London market and sold in February, whereas in 1862 it would not have left their stations at that time. Consequently, he said that their industry had been nursed as much as any other. At the present time almost all branches of industry required to be nursed, owing to circumstances which had affected all the colonies and England also. The course now proposed of reducing the expenditure on public works, and calling upon people who had only small means to submit to increased taxation for their roads and bridges, was a procedure to which he could not give his consent. He could not throw any additional light upon the statement which the Treasurer had brought down. He had been in hopes that the hon. gentleman would have come down to the House and proposed a comprehensive land tax, and he certainly expected that the Minister for Works, if no other member of the Ministry, would have favoured such a tax. That hon. gentleman, when sitting on the Opposition

side of the House, moved for a return which he believed was one of the most valuable ever made, and which cost in compilation between £300 and £500; it was a return of the number of land-owners in the colony who held estates over 10,000 acres, and of those who held from 1,280 acres upwards. In "Votes and Proceedings" appeared a progress report and a final report, and from those they found that there were a large number of persons in the possession of estates of from 10,000 to 130,000 acres. There was one firm in the colony owning 130,000 acres of freehold estate through which two railways ran. Another held 93,000 acres through which one railway ran; and there were numerous others owning areas averaging from 50,000 to 75,000 acres. Why did they not tax those men who were so well able to bear the burden at the present time? There were men living, some in England, some in New South Wales, some in Melbourne, who held estates of 60,000 or 70,000 acres, with only a sheep overseer and a few boundary riders upon them throughout the year, except at time of shearing. Those runs were occupied by 120,000 to 200,000 sheep, and the owners of them could very well afford to pay a moderate tax. From the opinions he had heard the Premier express with regard to the Darling Downs, he was in hopes the hon. gentleman would have proposed such a tax, and, had he done so, he would have received his (Mr. Groom's) support. Even now he would assist to raise such a tax; and, from calculations he had made, a revenue of £75,000 to £100,000 might be raised, even if all estates under 1,280 acres were exempted. Half the deficit would be then provided for, and the burden would fall upon a class of the community well able to bear it. If one estate contributed £1,000 a year, it would only be £500, or perhaps less, from each partner. A means of providing for the deficiency would then be arrived at without the wholesale discharge of working men, and without knocking off the Estimates useful sums from public institutions, the loss of which might lead to very disastrous results. He had given utterance to his opinions very briefly, because he considered that long speeches did not have the effect of altering one person's vote. Had the members for the Darling Downs been present to give utterance to the views of that electorate he should not have spoken, but, through no fault of theirs, they were not here. He had no hesitation in saying they had been unjustly and unwarrantably disfranchised, and without rhyme or reason. No one who read the evidence could come to any other conclusion than that they had won their seats fairly and honourably after incurring great expense, and it was almost

an insult to the electors to send them back. That insult would be resented in a very strong and condemnatory manner. He regretted, however, that, during an important debate like the present, a large district numbering 2,033 electors and peopled by 10,000 to 12,000 persons—the bone and sinew of the country, selectors who had advanced civilisation more than any other class of the community, and who were struggling with greater difficulties—should be disfranchised and unrepresented, and through no fault of their own. He would very much like to know whether any member of the Government could supply information with regard to the promised remission upon the price of land—whether it was the intention of the Government to make provision, not specially in one part, but generally for the remission of rent? He wished to know whether the Government proposed to introduce a measure, this session, by which the remission of rents, and in which the reduction of the price of land would be made general and not special, in the way these men had been given to understand?

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said, in the exhausted state of the debate, and at such a late hour of the evening, it had not been his intention to speak, but he must say he had just listened to one of the most extraordinary speeches he had ever heard. The hon. member must agree with him that he had made to-night one of the finest electioneering speeches possible; but he (Mr. O'Sullivan) thought it was a most unwarrantable thing to refer to the absence of any hon. member from the House. The hon. member said the Minister for Lands and other hon. members were away electioneering. If he (Mr. O'Sullivan) went away from the House, the hon. member would have no more right to say he was electioneering than to say he was thieving or killing somebody. Such a license should be stopped. Still, in spite of his electioneering, the hon. member had said some very good things. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) had as much right to be opposed to absentees as any hon. member in the House, and he knew pretty well the bad effect of it. He would join with the hon. member or with the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) in making the absentee princes pay to assist the revenue, through the expenditure of which, in the construction of railways, their properties were so much increased in value. He would insist upon their being made to pay, through their properties, their share to the taxation of the colony. The hon. member had spoken very confidently of two hon. members coming down here, next week, pledged by their constituents to oppose the Divisional Boards Bill; but he would suggest to the hon. member that he was counting his chickens before they were

hatched. Many hon. members were no doubt in some respects opposed to that Bill, and he himself was not altogether in favour of it. The hon. member also said that a great many people were living on corn. That might be an unfortunate circumstance, but he wished his children would live a little more on corn and a little less on lollies. No one would regret more than he that people should be in such distress as to be compelled to live on corn; but there were a great many people in the world who would not live upon corn if they could steal anything better. He had brought in a couple of cows in the dry season, and to save the lives of their calves boiled some corn; but he found his children lived as much on the boiled corn as the calves did, and consequently he had not had a doctor in the House ever since. The hon. member said he would support a large vote if for branch lines, and he would go with the hon. member in that respect even to the extent of voting a million for that purpose. Branch lines at home did not pay, because good roads were made before them; but in this colony, as the roads were not yet made, they might as well make branch railways at once, because that was evidently the fashion all over the world. The district he represented, and West Moreton generally, required such lines as much as any part of the country. The hon. member was not quite correct in all his statements. He said that railways in this colony had been calculated to cost £3,000 per mile, and had generally cost £10,000; but he would point out that a railway contract had recently been taken at less than £2,000, and the line would probably not cost more than £3,000 per mile. As to the discharge of working men not being commendable, he entirely agreed with that opinion—but where was it going on? The present Government had put three men to work for every one discharged, and scarcely a man had been discharged that could work. However, so much had been said about that that it was quite unnecessary to say more. The whole of the speech of the hon. member was simply intended for the election of Darling Downs, on Monday next. The paper which the hon. member edited stated that, when the question of aid to non-vested schools was before the House, one of the candidates for Darling Downs walked out on the division taking place, but it did not say what the hon. member himself did on the same occasion. When the then hon. member for Kennedy intended to maintain the vested interests of the non-vested schools for ten years, the hon. member for Toowoomba (Mr. Groom) took the matter out of his hands, stating that the proposition would come better from him; but when he moved the amendment it was for the maintenance of these interests for five years, simply;—that was a

thorough piece of deception on his part. As regarded the withdrawal of subsidies from schools of art, he had witnessed the proceedings of these institutions since he had been in the colony, and believed he was justified in saying that the majority of the people took no advantage of them; every institution he had seen had been monopolised and managed by select little parties—by clean-shaved little articles who attended for private purposes. In this colony there was scarcely anyone who had not a small library of his own, and as a general rule heads of households found that reading to their families at their own fireside was quite as useful as going to schools of arts, which were frequently turned into play-houses. The hon. member for Toowoomba had said that the promised reduction of the rents of the East Prairie lands had been offered as a bribe, but he (Mr. O'Sullivan) did not believe that such a thing was possible. The grossest statement, however, that the hon. member had made was, that the price of the Allora exchanged lands was £5 per acre. He had the authority of Ministers for saying that no price had yet been placed upon them, and that the price would never be £5 per acre. Was it not as clear as daylight that the hon. member's statement was a gross untruth? He did not wish to be unparliamentary or personal, but the hon. member must have known that no price had yet been put on the land. What, then, became of his electioneering speech? It had disappeared, like himself. He would be more severe were the hon. member present, but he believed he had said enough. There were a great many things in the Financial Statement at which they might tilt when the Estimates came before the House in Committee—they might freely discuss them, then; but he would support the Financial Statement, as a whole, as it now stood.

Mr. REA was understood to say that, in reference to two of the most momentous events which had ever taken place in the career of any Ministry—events which had only occurred so late as the month of April—the Financial Statement was especially silent; and that hereafter the Ministry would be called the April Ministry, in the same way that the French Ministries, at one time, were characterised by the months in which they came into power. The action of the Government in regard to one of these matters had involved a fraud upon the public Treasury, yet the Financial Statement was silent about it. The whole burden of that extraordinary statement was the emptiness of the Treasury; still, when the Ministry had an opportunity of replenishing the Treasury such as no Government ever had, they would not avail themselves of it, but violated the spirit of the Pastoral Leases Act of 1876 by the

way in which the runs in the settled districts were disposed of by them. Hon. members who would support such a Ministry were parties to this fraud upon the public Treasury; but it had escaped their memories, apparently, and it was frauds in prospective only that they could now think of. There was also another event which would commemorate the Ministry, and it occurred on the 26th April, when they made a special bargain with regard to the banking business of the colony, such as had never been concluded in any country in Europe or any colony in Australia. He challenged hon. members opposite to name an instance where it had ever been arranged that the whole of the public moneys should be deposited in a limited liability bank. Hon. members should not blink at the action of the Government, however respectable the bank with which the arrangement was entered into might be; and if the bank was placed in an invidious position it was owing to the Ministry themselves for identifying themselves so intimately with the institution as to call marked attention to the transaction. The other evening the Colonial Secretary blurted out withering complaints that the private character of the Ministry had been attacked with respect to this matter, but he would ask who was responsible for this except the members of the Government themselves? Were members sitting on the Opposition benches to be muzzled and not allowed to look the transaction in the face because hon. members opposite placed themselves in a position no Ministry had ever been placed before? Reference had been made to the case of a New South Wales Minister, who was a bank director, accepting office; but it was not at all parallel with this. Were he in New South Wales he would not care twopence which member of a Ministry was a bank director, for, on looking to the state of political parties there, he found that no member of the House had such a following as the Premier of this colony had. The danger to the House and to Parliament lay in the fact that the Premier here had at least a baker's dozen of the Crown tenants at his back, who always took care to vote as one man on every occasion. The secrecy which was observed by the Financial Statement in regard to two most important matters made those matters more conspicuous than all the others that were dealt with in it. The very designation of the Statement was a misnomer: it should be called a "fnical" statement. It had only been by accident that he had obtained the correspondence with respect to the bank tenders for the Government account, and he must say that he had never perused a document which had any resemblance to it. It showed that before any tenders for the banking account were invited, and the moment

the present Ministry got into office, in January, they arranged to let the bank with which they were so intimately connected have the use of a large amount of the public money. When he reflected that there was a prospect of the whole of the next loan being placed in the hands of the same limited liability bank, he did not feel re-assured. If the House had the power, he would rather see the names of the persons to whom money had been lent by the bank, instead of the names of its shareholders, for that would give him more confidence. It might be said that he was trenching too much upon private matters; but, if he was, it was the fault of the Government for bringing the finances of the colony into such a questionable shape. He remembered what a very learned judge, in England, Lord Tenterden, had said with regard to the purchase of a large landed estate by the agent in whose hands it had been placed for sale; but he could not get the deeds. The owner was perfectly satisfied; but one of the parties died, and in the course of a suit in Chancery commenced by his heirs, the learned judge made this remark, which had so impressed itself upon his (Mr. Rea's) memory that he remembered it from that day to this—that a vendor and a vendee should be kept at arm's length, no matter how honest they were. Therefore, he said, with regard to a bank director and a Minister of the Crown, no matter how honest they were, they should be kept at arm's length. This was a question he hoped hon. members on the Opposition side of the House would search into on every possible opportunity, no matter what jeers and jibes were indulged in by hon. members opposite. They could rest assured that they would never hear anything about it from the other side, because all they cared about was the land tenure. They had now an inkling what pastoral tenants wanted—an exchange of the old leases for new. That was the compact, evidently, on the other side, with regard to placing three or four millions in the hands of a bank in which the members of the Cabinet were interested. That was the position in which he looked upon the silence of hon. members opposite in regard to this Financial Statement. He knew he should be abused for it, but he asserted the fault lay in the conduct of the Ministry; and if they wanted conclusive ground for it, it was in the paper he held in his hand, which he produced as justification for what he said in this matter. He now came to the question that was treated by the hon. member for Blackall and others, and he must say that the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) had shown great simplicity in supposing that there were no squatters in the House similar in designation or standing to the old squatter. Why, never before in the history, not only

of Queensland but of Australia, had the squatting party ever made such an attempt upon the public Treasury and the public lands as they had done in this Financial Statement. At what time did any of the old squatting party ever dream of having £1,500,000 spent in doubling the value of their back country runs? Never, in his remembrance. He remembered the old days, when they thought it a great boon to get the right to purchase 640 acres to build their stations upon;—that was the first concession, and they had to fight very hard for it. But here they had, in this Financial Statement, the announcement boldly made that £1,500,000 was to be spent, and that at once; and in addition to that, when the 500 miles of railway had been constructed out of the public funds, a further extension was to be made by giving land away for the construction of that railway. He was quite prepared to follow the Treasurer if he would accept the condition that he (Mr. Rea) suggested in his hustings' speech in the North, and which met the approval of the electors. He then said that he would support trunk railways—and he was confident that there was no electorate in the colony more desirous of seeing trunk lines carried into the interior than Rockhampton—on the condition that those who were benefited by those railways should pay for them. That was the condition on which he would support the hon. gentleman to any extent he liked to go. At page 293 of *Hansard* the hon. gentleman, in his Financial Statement, said—

“After what has already been said, the Committee will not be surprised to see that the largest item in the proposed Loan Estimate is the £1,500,000 for the extension of our railways into the Western interior. This sum provides for extensions to the extent of 500 miles, at £3,000 per mile.”

Now, if the hon. gentleman would consent to add this clause to that part of his Statement he (Mr. Rea) should agree to follow him—

I do not intend that this million and a-half shall all be a charge on the townspeople of this colony or those residing in the coast and farming districts. I propose that each run within 100 miles of any railway, or proposed railway, shall be examined and reported on to the Government. I propose that five (5) sworn commissioners shall be appointed, who are competent to form a correct judgment of the fair average capacity of a Western squattage, as to the amount of sheep such run will probably carry on an average of seasons—no matter whether at the time of examination such run may be held by either cattle or sheep. That said commissioners shall take into account the natural water supply, as well as the natural grasses, on said run. That said commissioners shall set forth the distance in miles of said station or run from the seaport from which supplies are received or wool sent.

They shall state the nature of the dray-road to such sea-port—whether good, bad, or medium; they shall state the average rate of carriers' actual charges per ton to such station—where carriers have been employed, or where any other station near at hand has employed carriers.

They shall state the distance in miles by the common road to the nearest railway line then in existence, or to a surveyed line of railway not yet reached by the contractors, and the probable cost per ton of carrying wool to said nearest point, and supplies back.

With this data to go upon, the Central Government can by a simple rule-of-three process ascertain what the owner of each run will be benefited in his pocket by the immense saving in money outlay by the Government railway—

1. In carrying his wool to port and supplies back.

2. Money saved by avoiding damage to wool and supplies in a long inland journey over watercourses and in floods.

3. Saving of interest of money in his merchants' books by quicker sales in London; by lesser quantity of supplies to be stored at one time; and by saving of horse-flesh for buggy and saddle work; also wear and tear of vehicles in making journeys to Brisbane or other out-port.

When these annual savings have been ascertained on each run, the amount of annual interest payable on the construction and working of an inland railway can easily be apportioned; of how much of said loan interest shall be levied on such runs in the same way as a municipal rate is now levied from house to house.

By these means the coast residents and the town residents of this colony will be relieved from the injustice of paying taxes on far-away inland railways—for no other purpose than that of doubling the selling value of far-away inland squattages, held mostly by run-gamblers, whose constant dreams and waking thoughts are directed to hurry on the time when they may sell out at the flood-mark of a fictitious and ephemeral prosperity, brought on by the lavish spending of millions of borrowed public money; and when they thus sell out they will take their thousands with them, to be spent, like others who have gone before them, in flaunting imitation of Parisian and London high life.

That was exactly where he differed from the hon. member for Enoggera—not that it was the men who were spending thousands in London and elsewhere that should be now exclaimed against, but those who were now trying to bring legislation to bear that they might be able to do the same thing. That, he thought, was a more dangerous class than absentee-men now in London. He would follow the Premier in voting any amount of money if he would accept that qualification. He remembered that, in his election speeches, the hon. gentleman propounded some suggestion like that, but when he came to be cross-questioned on the hustings he said it would be impossible to say how far back the benefit of a railway would ex-

tend. But by his (Mr. Rea's) plan that was simplified, and a man would pay in proportion to what he saved in carriage by the railway. There could easily be a check upon whether or not he stated the truth, because they could see the amount actually carried, and it would be for the commissioners to say who should and who should not be charged this annual interest. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Blackall with reference to indefeasible leases, he remembered a proposition he (Mr. Rea) made ten years ago, on the 10th of May, 1869, to give an indefeasible lease to every squatter, but it was to be in this way—that when the land was wanted it should be taken away from them, and, if they wanted compensation by arbitration for the part taken away, that compensation should not be given by the State—because he held that not one shilling of public money or one acre of public land should be given as compensation—but the holder should be compensated by his brother squatters, by a mutual assurance fund, in the same way that employers of officials provided against loss or damage that might occur from their misconduct or blunders. He pointed out how the runs might be classified, and so on; and he sent a copy down to the hon. member for Blackall, who was then in Parliament, and, if he remembered rightly, he had a letter from the hon. member approving of it. But after that hon. gentleman's speech he did not know whether he referred to the indefeasible lease he (Mr. Rea) proposed, or to a new one; and he asked him what he meant by “indefeasible lease?” Suppose, for instance, a man held a lease, and Mr. Ballard wanted to run a railway through it and take away part of it, would the Government have to settle it?—and he said he supposed the Government would have to pay. But then there was this difficulty that, if Mr. Ballard wanted to carry the railway in a straight line, the arbitrators would give an award for damage done by taking away part of the run. They would also ask for payment for fencing, and for extra labour, loss for dividing the run into two, and a number of other things, so that it might come to this—that the Government would be mulcted into paying compensation that would amount to more than the whole of the rental the leaseholder had paid, and he would be in the position of getting his land for nothing, and money in his pocket besides. That was one result of an indefeasible lease; but by his project, when land was taken away not one penny would be taken out of the public funds, or one acre out of the public estate, as compensation; and the leaseholders would not be losers, provided they were honest enough, and were willing to pay a small sum annually to a fund to meet such

cases—in fact, they were donkeys that they did not do so years ago;—it would not have amounted to more than £100 on each run, and it would compensate every man who had a railway or a township taken out of his run. The great objection hon. members opposite had to the Railway Reserves Act was not because their lands were resumed under it, but because they had to go to their bankers to borrow money to buy it in order to prevent the selectors from getting it. He trusted the House would set its face against the repeal of that Act—or, at any rate, throw the onus of its repeal on the gentlemen who sat on the Government side of the House. In connection with the Financial Statement was the question of local government, and, now, just when people were in difficulties owing to bad seasons, it was proposed to increase their burdens by making them provide the money for their roads and bridges. It had been said that one advantage arising from the Divisional Boards would be that young men would learn something about government; but he would undertake to say that he could teach them more out of the Financial Statement than they could learn anywhere else. It would teach them that if taxation was necessary they should impose the heaviest portion of it on others, and take care to make it as light as possible on themselves. With regard to railway extension, the hon. member for the Warrego, a few evenings ago, made a statement which he (Mr. Rea) should never forget—namely, that it would be a repudiation if the squatter in the West did not have a railway. On the other hand, it was contended by the hon. member for Maryborough that a re-arrangement of the rentals would be a fair return for taking railways into the inside districts. For his own part, he would not assess the squatters on the full carrying capacities of their runs for making this railway; but the commissioners should allow one-fourth, so that the run would be assessed at three-fourths of its value; and he would also make a portion of the loan interest a charge on the whole revenue. He had been sorry to hear the member for Blackall denounce the speeches of the member for Maryborough and others as tending to set class against class, as of all things most likely to have such an effect was the Financial Statement, as it placed the Western squatters in a position entirely distinct from any other class in the colony through the persistent way in which the sum of £1,500,000 had been put down for 500 miles of railway in the West. There was one matter more, in regard to leases, and that was the proposition to exchange the old leases for new ones. He hoped hon. members opposite would not attempt to press that, as if they did there would be a cry

throughout the colony against such a concession being made, more especially when it was known that the squatters of Queensland had had more concessions made to them than had been enjoyed by squatters in any other colony. Those were a few of the inklings he had gathered from the speech. In conclusion, he would say that he could compare the present Parliament with no other that had sat before—in this respect, that it was in the dilemma of having a domineering majority, and that it was useless for any member of the Opposition to move any amendments not in accordance with the views of the majority opposite. The colony was now governed by a baker's dozen of Crown tenants in that House. That was the real state of things—that a baker's dozen of Crown tenants could pass anything, and if the Premier proposed that this dozen should have a present made to them of their country they would pass a Bill for that purpose, if they were not afraid that such conduct would be too outrageous for the country.

The Hon. G. THORN moved—That the debate be now adjourned.

Question put and passed.

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