

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 24 JUNE 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 24 June, 1879.

Petitions.—Formal Motions.—Answers to Questions.—
Question.—Divisional Boards Bill—second reading.

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

PETITIONS.

Mr. BAILEY presented a petition from
miners, selectors, and storekeepers of Kil-
kivan and the surrounding districts, pray-
ing that they may not be deprived of Tele-
graphic Communication.

Petition received and read.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Mac-
rossan) presented a petition from inhabi-
tants of Townsville, praying that a certain
Deviation of the line of Railway may be
carried out.

Petition received and read.

Mr. STUBLEY presented a petition from
electors of Kennedy, respecting a pro-
posed Deviation of the Townsville-Charter's
Towers Railway.

Petition received and read.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL—

That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be laid upon the table of this House, a copy of a Circular Despatch, of the 27th November, 1878, addressed by the Right Honourable Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to His Excellency the Governor.

By Mr. WALSH—

That there be laid on the table of this House, all correspondence, receipts for expenses incurred, and any other information relative to the Seizure and Sale of Timber by Crown Lands Ranger, at Port Douglas, in intestate estate of Handley and others, on the Daintree River.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

Mr. HENDREN moved the adjournment of the House to direct attention to what he considered the vague, unsatisfactory, and evasive manner in which the Minister for Works had answered certain questions on Thursday last. When once questions had passed the House, and a Minister was authorised to give an answer, it was his duty to do so without evasion. He (Mr. Hendren) had got no answer at all to some of the questions he had asked, and he therefore wished for advice under those circumstances, on the ground that, as a new member, he did not know what course to take. He had been requested by some of his constituents to ask the questions referred to, and hon. members, by reference to *Hansard*, could see for themselves the kind of answers he had received.

AN HON. MEMBER: What questions?

Mr. HENDREN said he had not proposed to read the questions and answers, but if it was thought necessary he would do so. The first was as follows:—

1. With what object is a new survey now being made of the Fassifern branch line of Railway between the police paddock at Church-hill and the Peak Mountain?

2. Is the Minister aware that the main Warwick road merely separates the two latest surveys as made there by Messrs. Gardner and North?

3. From what vote is the surveyor (Mr. North) being paid?

4. Have the Department any reports on this proposed Railway?—If so, will the Minister lay same on the table of this House?—and when?

He did not complain so much about the answer to this question, because, although it was beside the mark, it was probably so through want of information on the part of the Minister for Works. The other question had reference to the appointment of Mr. Gammie. The first was—

1. Is there a person named Gammie employed on the construction staff of the Bunda-

berg railway?—If so, in what position, and what emolument does he receive from the Crown?

To this question the answer was—

1. Yes; as Inspector of pile-driving and timber; salary £156, and allowance £40 per annum.

He next asked—

2. On whose recommendation was Mr. Gammie appointed, verbal or in writing?—Is Mr. Gammie's speciality that of a stonemason? If so, what is the total estimated quantity of cubic yards of masonry on the Bundaberg Railway? Also, the total estimated cost of that masonry?

To this the Minister for Works replied—

2. Appointed by the Secretary for Public Works.

The third question was—

3. Has it been considered desirable by the Engineer-in-Chief to obtain the services of an engineer from Victoria to superintend the Bundaberg Railway?—If so, why is no provision made for this additional engineer in the Estimates, 1879-80, on the construction staff, Bundaberg Railway, to be paid from Loan?

And the answer—

3. The Chief Engineer at one time considered it desirable, but the Government did not.

Lastly he asked—

4. Will the hon. the Minister for Works lay on the table of this House, copies of all papers and correspondence relating to Mr. Gammie's appointment?

And received as answer—

4. No objection if moved for, and the House approves.

He did not consider that any of these replies conveyed the information he sought to obtain, and with reference to the last he had given notice of motion for the production of the papers. Whenever questions were put by hon. members, they ought to be properly replied to by the Ministers to whom they were addressed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he scarcely thought it necessary to reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Bundanba, because any person of common-sense would see, on comparing the questions and answers, that he had given all the information the hon. member could expect, and perhaps more than he had a right to expect. The hon. member asked many complicated questions, and, though but a young member, he adopted the practice of very old ones in that respect, and asked as many questions as anyone. He (the Minister for Works) did not think himself bound to answer such a foolish question as what was Mr. Gammie's speciality. What had he to do with any man's speciality? He believed, however, that Mr. Gammie's speciality was that of a stonemason, but was not directly aware

of it. Mr. Gammie's appointment was that of inspector of pile-driving and timber.

Mr. HENDREN said that a few weeks ago an inspired article on this appointment had appeared in the Press, and his object in putting the questions was to satisfy the public as to the reasons which had induced the Minister for Works to give Mr. Gammie the appointment. It was the duty of that hon. gentleman to have made himself acquainted with Mr. Gammie's speciality before giving him the appointment, for it was evident a stonemason could know precious little about pile-driving or timber.

Mr. BAILEY said he thought the answers given were tolerably complete, the only exception being that the Minister for Works did not explain how a stonemason was competent to judge of the quality of timber or the way in which pile-driving should be done. No doubt the hon. member for Bundamba was under the impression that this was a political appointment, given for political services rendered during the recent elections, and for which the country had to pay £156 a-year. The Minister for Works might have simplified the matter by saying that, although this was a political appointment, yet that from his personal knowledge he knew that Mr. Gammie was a good judge of pile-driving and timber.

Mr. REA said it ought to be the duty of a Minister to find out what was the speciality of a man before giving him a Government appointment. The answers given by the hon. gentleman were such as a French Chamber might get from a French Ministry, but they were an insult to the commonsense of this Assembly.

Mr. McLEAN said that, although he knew Mr. Gammie, he was not aware, before, that his speciality was that of a stonemason. He believed the appointment was not a bad one, and that Mr. Gammie, whose knowledge of timber was of no mean order, would be a faithful servant, and would see that the timber used in the works on which he was employed was worth the money paid for it. He was only surprised that a higher salary had not been given to Mr. Gammie, more especially if the appointment was a political one. The answers given to the hon. member for Bundamba were no doubt evasive; for, although the questions were somewhat complicated, the Minister for Works could easily have given all the information required.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

QUESTION.

Mr. STUBBLEY asked the Minister for Works—

If it is the intention of the Government to remunerate Messrs. Johnson and Watson for their loss sustained in trying to complete the

Burdekin Bridge before the wet season, on account of a promise from the late Government that they were to receive £100 each month under contract time?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

No; as no such promise was made by the late Government.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said that, in moving the second reading of the Divisional Boards Bill, he had no intention of going over the ground traversed, last year, during the debate on the Local Government Bill. Had this been the first time that the question of local government had been introduced here, it would have been necessary for him to do so; but as the principles which underlaid this Bill were exactly the same as those embodied in the Local Government Act, he should take it for granted that those principles had been affirmed by both sides of the House. Although admirable in all its provisions, some of the clauses of the Local Government Act were so complicated and cumbrous that they were not adapted for the colony generally. While applicable to towns, cities, and, possibly, the more thickly settled rural districts, they were not applicable to the pastoral or sparsely populated portions of the colony. Their prognostications that the Act would prove too cumbrous had been fully borne out by the fact that since it had been in operation only two localities had taken active steps to place themselves under its provisions by petitioning the Governor in Council to that effect; and even those petitions happened to be informal for want of the proper number of signatures, and could not be accepted as petitions by the Government. The object of the Government was to simplify as much as possible the provisions of the Local Government Act, while adhering strictly to the principles on which it was based. He took it for granted that hon. members were well acquainted with the provisions of that Act, and they could see in what respect they differed from those of the Divisional Boards Bill. Turning to the first large division of the Bill, it would be seen that power was given to the Governor in Council to appoint what were called Divisional Boards. His own idea was that, at all events for the present, those divisions should be as nearly as possible coincident with the electoral districts of the colony, that more boundaries should be utilised for the new division. Under the old Act, it was provided that the number of councillors should be either six, nine, or twelve. By clause 3 of the Bill it was provided that any number might be appointed, being not more than nine and not less than three. It would also be seen—and, no doubt, objection would be taken to it—that the Gov-

error in Council was empowered to appoint all the members of a Divisional Board on the Bill first coming into operation. That might seem an objectionable feature; but, as most of the money to be expended would be the money advanced by the Government, he thought it would not be considered an unfair arrangement that nominees of the Government should have the control over its expenditure. At the same time, he did not consider this an essential part of the Bill. One-third of the Board would have to retire annually, and at the end of two years the Board would entirely consist of elected members. But the Government did not lay any particular stress on having a nominee council to start with. They thought it the best system; but if any plan could be proposed by which all the members of a Board might at its commencement be elected, the Government would have no objection to accede to an amendment embodying it. The next large division of the Bill referred to the qualification and disqualification of members, which was to a considerable extent taken from the Local Government Act. There was one exception, however, which seemed to place publicans in a somewhat invidious position, and that was that no person holding a publican's license should be eligible for membership of a Board. The reason for that was that, as the Boards had to elect their own chairman, who was *ex officio* a justice of the peace, it might possibly occur that in some small bush constituencies the publican—on whose premises most of the cases arose which went for adjudication before the Court of Petty Sessions—might be the chairman of the Board, and, being in virtue of his office a justice of the peace, he might adjudicate in cases in which he was directly interested. The rule had always been not to appoint persons holding a publican's license to the Commission of the Peace, and it would have been a departure from that wholesome rule had not some such disqualification been inserted in the Bill. The next large division dealt with the qualification of voters. Here hon. members would see that a reduction of three or four clauses had been made by doing away with the provisions for making up the rolls and ensuring their correctness. The qualification was shown in clause 12—namely, that every person whose property was liable to be rated upon a value of less than fifty pounds was entitled to one vote; less than one hundred pounds, two votes; and over one hundred pounds, three votes. This provision was simpler than the corresponding one in the Local Government Act. If a person's name appeared in the books he was liable to be rated, and, if rated and all rates actually due had been paid, he was entitled to vote according to the amount of his property as defined in

the clause. By clause 24 hon. members would see that a greater space of time was allowed between nomination and election, justified by the subsequent clause (25), which provided a novelty in this colony well worth the attention of the House—namely, voting by post. To make the ordinary system of voting applicable to large and sparsely populated districts very expensive machinery would have to be adopted, involving an expense which the Board could not well incur, and which the Government would not bear. The consequence would be that, rather than secure the votes at such an expense, the votes would not be secured at all. The election of Boards would, therefore, either lapse or be left in the hands of the Government, or they would be elected by small cliques in bush townships, a result which would nullify any good that might be expected from the Bill. In trying to find a remedy for this evil, the object had been to get the votes of all property-holders actually qualified to vote, and it could not be found without sacrificing some element in the present system. They had, therefore, been obliged to sacrifice the secrecy of the ballot, and adopt a system by which every man who came to vote would give his vote in writing, to be afterwards certified by a justice of the peace, so that a justice of the peace would see how each individual voted. He considered that the advantage arising from the secrecy of the ballot had been a great deal overrated. The Government, however, had thoroughly considered the matter, and he was quite satisfied that a great advantage would result from securing the voters of the districts at such a small sacrifice. Such a sacrifice had been made in places where the ballot system was supposed to be in operation. In Victoria, for instance, if the practice had not been altered, the ballot was not secret, because every ballot paper was numbered, so that if the papers were examined afterward the identity of each man's vote could be made out. The violation of the secrecy of the ballot, for the sake of convenience, in that case, did not amount to more than was proposed to be done in the present case. He submitted that the system of voting by post, although attended with that disadvantage, would confer the advantage of securing the votes of a much larger number of property-holders than could be obtained under the ordinary system. It was not necessary for him to explain, hon. members having read the Bill, how the system would be carried out; but he would refer to an objection to it—or rather a suggestion—which had been made and supported by the Press. It had been said, why not adopt the dual system for outside voters, and allow any man to vote by ballot in the ordinary way? Such a system would,

however, defeat the great object of the Bill. In order to make the machinery as simple and efficient as possible, it had been decided to stand to the one system, and all votes, therefore, would be dropped into the post office. An immense gain from the system of voting by post would be, that personating and double voting would be rendered impossible. All the clauses from 25 to 31 referred to voting by post, and were necessarily new clauses; and 32, 33, 34, relating to results of election, were also new. Clause 51 defined in short terms the duties of Boards, which were pretty much the same as under the present Act. By clause 52 they had control of public reserves, public works, buildings, erections, machines, implements, reservoirs, and other things constructed, purchased, or provided for by moneys appropriated by Parliament. The control of such works might be vested in the Boards; and by clause 53 they might take charge of benevolent institutions, schools of art, botanic gardens, parks, or commonages. Similar power was conferred upon Boards by the present Act. Clause 54 gave power to the Board to limit the number of public-houses in the district. He had always considered that the people in various localities should have control of the liquor traffic in their own hands, and have the power of saying how many public-houses there should be in each district; or, in fact, whether there should be any at all. This clause gave power to the Board to limit the number there should be at any time. It had been adversely criticised as being injurious to the publicans, but he considered the tendency was quite the other way in making permanent monopolies of the public-houses at present in the townships. Clause 55 defined what should be the revenue of the Divisional Board; and clause 56 what the rateable property should be—very similar to the corresponding definition in the present Act. The next clause (57) was one to which the leader of the Opposition had taken exception. It provided that “every person occupying Crown lands for pastoral purposes only shall be rated in an amount not exceeding 8 per centum upon the annual rent thereof, but this proviso shall not extend to buildings and other improvements on such lands.” He had failed to catch what the objection was, and could only state that he thought it a fair provision that leases should be valued in that way, and improvements taken in addition in the same way as other property. He would, however, leave the matter for further criticism from the leader of the Opposition. The system of surveys and valuations under the Local Government Act was very cumbrous, and simpler machinery was provided by clause 57. The provision for endowment was similar to that in

the present Act—namely, for the first five years £2 for every £1 raised, and in subsequent years £1 for £1. Clause 64 specified that the Colonial Treasurer should place to the credit of the Divisional Board “such sums of money as may be specially appropriated by Parliament for the construction of public works and improvements within such division.” That was a very important clause, and would prevent a good deal of the misconception and confusion as to the Government accounts which had resulted from the present system of handing over moneys which were unaccounted for to municipalities. A case in point had recently occurred. Between £13,000 or £14,000 had been expended on account of the Warwick water-works, and it seemed that a considerable amount further would be required to finish them. Under the present system under which the Government expended money and looked to them for interest, municipalities had a chance of defeating that object—namely, to secure the interest when actually due. The Warwick municipality took up the position that the Government had no business to spend such a large amount; that they considered £9,000 would have been quite sufficient, and were prepared to pay interest on that amount alone. This clause and other provisions made it clear that each division was responsible for all interest on money voted by Parliament for each division. This provision, with the arrangement for auditing accounts provided in clause 70, would be perfectly sufficient for the purposes of the Bill. In the provisions for loans there was a difference in two respects from those of the present Act. In the first place, there was no necessity for a *plebiscite* appeal to the whole people when a certain amount of money was to be asked for. The majority of the Board might borrow money from the Government as in the present Act, but the amount which they might borrow differed. The third sub-section of the seventy-second clause provided that they might borrow an amount which “should not in the aggregate exceed a capital amount, the interest upon which, at 5 per centum per annum, should be equal to an amount represented by the net revenue yielded by works and services previously carried out on loan in the division, added to the endowment paid or payable by the Treasurer to the fund of such division for the year then last past.” That was a more equitable arrangement than the provision of the present Act, and under it there was virtually no limit to the amount a division might borrow from the Government, and so long as their works were reproductive they could always borrow. That was, no doubt, the position in which municipalities should be placed. Their power of borrowing should not be ex-

hausted simply by the amount borrowed, but should be limited by the amount of interest they could secure from reproductive works made with the money already borrowed. He had now gone through the principal features of the Bill, the great object of which was to simplify the Local Government Act, and to enable people to manage their own affairs in their own way, Government interfering as little as possible, and only to see that good use was made of moneys voted by the House. He might mention, in reference to the main feature of the discussions on the Local Government Act, that this Bill would put the country and the town on exactly the same footing, and make the whole colony one big municipality, the various divisions getting endowments from the general revenue at the same rate. He knew of no objections to the Bill beyond those he had noticed, nor what shape opposition to the Bill, if any, would be likely to take, because the principles of the Bill had been already affirmed. He only hoped it would not take the form that the alternative was given to farmers of paying for their own roads or getting them made by the Government. There was not the slightest doubt but that the money for making them must come from somewhere, and, from whatever source, the farmers must ultimately pay for them. The Government considered this was the best form, because it directly saddled the property to be improved with the expense of improving it, and the plan of subsidising the making of all roads entirely by money from general revenue did not attain that object at all. The Bill should have the sympathy of hon. members on the Opposition side of the House, who initiated, very much to their credit, the Local Government Bill, last year. He had no reason to suppose they would oppose the principles of local government this year, because in the discussion which had taken place up to the present time they had expressed themselves so desirous that local government should come into operation. This measure would allow the principles of local government to come into operation sooner than they otherwise would. Without disparaging the Local Government Act, of which he thoroughly approved, he commended the Bill to the consideration of the House as being simpler and more adapted to the position of the country, and likely to attain the same end—namely, the proper development of the colony by means of roads and bridges. That end would be attained more speedily under this Bill than under the cumbrous machinery of the present law. He therefore begged to move the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said the argument used by the hon. gentleman in sup-

port of this Bill appeared to be, principally, that the machinery provided by the present Act was too cumbrous to be adapted to the less settled parts of the colony. It was admitted, when that Bill was brought in last year by the late Government, not that the Bill was too cumbrous to work, but that the necessary incidents of local government could not be carried out in those parts. It was said that, among a scattered population of a few hundreds, they could not get the electors to elect a council, or that the council, if elected, would not be able to meet often enough to supervise the carrying on of local public works. Another reason given was, that there was not the same necessity for carrying on or supervising public works as in the more thickly populated parts of the colony. The hon. gentleman had truly said that nearly all the principles of the Bill were to be found in the Local Government Act of last year—and that it was a simplification of the statute: it was an abbreviation of it, but brevity was not always simplicity. In Victoria there had been in force, for many years, a Local Government Act for the country districts, every material provision of which was embodied in the Act passed in this colony last year; the only difference between the two was, that the Act of this colony was infinitely more simple. In Victoria, however, it had not been found that the local government laws were too complicated, but that the residents of the rural districts were just as intelligent and practical as the townspeople. What had been the history of the Local Government Acts in Victoria? The first was comparatively short—merely laying down a few general principles, which was a very easy task; but, from that time, there had been continual amendments, and, in each instance, details had been filled up, the omission of which threatened to render the whole scheme impracticable. Here, in this colony, the Roads Boards and the Provincial Councils Acts were both brief measures, and had both been found unworkable on that account. He would now point out those parts of the Bill which differed from the Act of last year, so that the House might be able to form an opinion whether they constituted an improvement; and then he would refer to the applicability of the Bill to a great many parts of the colony, which latter was a matter of policy and of infinitely more importance than the former. The hon. gentleman had said that the action of the public proved that the provisions of last year's Act were too complicated for use. Did anyone suppose last year that the public would rush to take advantage of the Act? Was it not said that one of its most important provisions was the compulsory power which it gave to the

Governor in Council to create municipalities? The fact of the public not taking advantage of the measure did not prove anything, considering the extremely depressed condition under which the colony had been labouring ever since the Bill became law, in August last. Nothing was to be inferred from the circumstance of the people not taking advantage of it, under those circumstances. With regard to the hon. gentleman's statement that there had been only two petitions received, both of which had been informal—one came from Gympie, and the other from Bundaberg; but there was no necessity for any petition, and in the case of Gympie the necessary notice had been given by the late Government, and all that was left to the present Government to do was to carry it into effect. Surely the Government did not mean to say that Gympie was not as fit for the application of the principles of local government under the Act of last year as under the provisions of the Bill? The Government, however, had taken no steps whatever to enforce the law. The hon. gentleman also said that his present intention was that the divisions should be coincident, as far as practicable, with the electoral districts. He would, as an instance, refer to the electorate of Darling Downs to show that this idea would be quite impracticable. What sort of Divisional Board could manage the affairs of Darling Downs from one end of the electorate to the other.

The PREMIER: It can be done by subdivisions.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that subdivisions were not separate divisions. He would ask where, for example, the hon. gentleman expected the councillors from Killarney and from the northern extremity of that electorate would meet? Take, also, the case of the Warrego district. How were they to get local government there, under the provisions of the Bill? It was perfectly clear that, although they might go through the form of creating Divisional Boards, in these large districts they would do nothing. The hon. gentleman did not call attention to an important provision contained in the 51st clause, which empowered the Governor in Council to except from the jurisdiction any division of any highway, road, street, and bridge; in which event the Board would not be charged with their maintenance. In the unsettled districts there was nothing else to take care of than main roads and bridges, and if the Board were relieved of the construction and maintenance of these there would be nothing left for it to do; and it would come to this, that the burden of the local government of such districts would fall upon other parts of the country. British people would not be governed by force. The Government thought too much of governing by force, and wished to carry

everything in a high-handed manner—to thrust duties upon people whether they liked or not; but that system was not adapted to the temperament of the people of Queensland. He believed in local government, but he did not believe that the way to enforce it was to draw maps and to say, "These are the divisions, and all places inside them must manage their own affairs and tax themselves, and if they do not they shall have no roads." The result would be that the people would rebel, and would reply that they would not have local Government at all, but would prefer to go back to the old system. He was quite as much in earnest as the Premier with regard to local government, but it should be introduced gradually and wisely. If an attempt were made to thrust it down the throats of an unwilling people it would not succeed; and therefore he regretted to hear the Premier say that local government should be enforced;—it was, however, an idiosyncrasy of the Ministry to govern in that way. The proper way would be to induce the people by wise administration to accept the principle, and not to bring it into operation by a sudden jerk. He would now refer to the provisions of this Bill. With respect to the constitution of Boards, there was no difference from the provision of the Act of last year except, as had been stated, in the minimum number of members being three instead of six. A great many gentlemen would agree with him that what was new in the Bill was not good, and what was good was not new;—one of the things that was new was, that the minimum number of members should be three. Then came a remarkable clause (number 4), which provided that every petition to the Governor in Council to do or perform any act or thing authorised by the preceding sections should be signed by not less than one-third the total number of ratepayers in the division or subdivision whence it proceeded. He had not the slightest idea to what that referred;—it could only have any operation upon the subdivision of a division. The next change was to be met with in clause 7, in which, in addition to the previous disqualifications, it was provided that no publican and no person convicted of felony could be a member of a Divisional Board. He did not approve of these additional disqualifications. The only reason given for disqualifying a publican was, that he might be the chairman of the Board and entitled to a seat on the licensing bench as a justice of the peace. He had not heard that any injury had yet resulted from a publican being entitled to act as a justice of the peace through holding the office of mayor; but, if it was an evil, the best way to remedy it would be to provide that if the chairman was a publican he should not be a magistrate. Publicans were often public-

spirited men, and should not be shut out from the management of local affairs. The hon. gentleman said that he had left out the provisions regarding voters' rolls as too cumbersome: there was considerable difference about the matter last year, but it was held that rolls were desirable. He did not know whether it would cost much to revise the rolls, but, when they considered that under this Bill the returning officer could return anybody he liked, the change was not an improvement. The returning officer made out the roll and decided to whom the ballot-papers should be sent: he was not supervised in any way, but the matter was entirely in his hand. He had to take the rate book to satisfy himself as to who had paid the rates, and then to send out the voting papers in an envelope, and that was the only chance a ratepayer would have of voting. The effect of having no voters' roll would be to increase the enormous power that returning officers already had under this Bill. The next change was that the Governor in Council should have the power of appointing the first Board of every division, who would, of course, have the power of rating. He did not like this idea, for in British communities it had always been held that the imposition of taxation should be in the hands of elected representatives. It was quite true that there must be a provision to bring the Act into operation; but, if it was necessary that the first Board should be appointed by the Governor in Council, why should two-thirds remain in office after the first election? He doubted whether the first election could take place next February. If the Bill became law, it could not well pass before the middle of August, considering the other business in hand; then a Board would have to be constituted, a valuation would have to be made, and a rate struck; fair notice must be given to do this, and the result would be that the rate could not be paid in time to hold an election in February, and that the Board would remain in office until February, 1881, when one-third would retire. He was merely calling attention to the new principles of the Bill. Next came the voting scheme. The only part of the world in which voting by post was allowed was in the Universities of Great Britain; but the analogy between such voting in Universities and in sparsely-populated districts was very small. It seemed to him that the Ministerial scheme might aptly be called "personation made easy." The only electoral roll was the rate book, which was kept by the clerk or returning officer. When a poll had to take place the ballot-papers were printed, and then the returning officer went to the rate book, saw who was entitled to vote, and addressed to each

ratepayer as many voting papers as he was entitled to have. It must be borne in mind that there was no safeguard, such as in the Elections Act, that a returning officer did his duty correctly; he did not know of any provision where so much was entrusted implicitly to the honour of the returning officer. Supposing the returning officer did wrong, who was to find him out? Supposing he omitted to send voting papers to ratepayers likely to vote against the party that he favoured, nobody could find him out. He could reply, when a complaint was made, that he had sent the papers and that they must have been lost. Assuming, however, that he posted to every ratepayer the voting papers he was entitled to, was there a postal delivery for every elector?

The PREMIER: Yes; everybody gets his letters.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that possibly they did in course of time, but the time at which the election would close was limited. Presuming that Allora were the place where the Divisional Council for Darling Downs sat, and the place at which the rates had to be paid—if collectors were sent round to collect the rates it would cost a great deal, and if none were sent it would be a great hardship to the electors to come all the way to Allora to pay; on the other hand, if collectors were sent out the scheme might be so worked that only those ratepayers whose politics or whose views agreed with the chairman's were called upon in time to qualify themselves to vote: that was a difficulty inherent in all sparsely-populated districts. The result would be, in any case, that in a great many instances, the ballot-papers would not be received in time. Then the voter had to go to a justice of the peace. Justices were not so plentiful that they were more numerous than the polling-places of a district. And then there was this objection, that some justices would take so great an interest in an election that they would collect the votes of those who favoured the same party that they did;—that was how the scheme might work. If an elector was supposed to go to the nearest post office, after signing his ballot-paper before the magistrate, to post his letter to the returning officer, why should not every post office be made a polling-place?—if the postmaster could be trusted to send on the letters, he could surely be trusted to receive the votes of the electors. Under the proposed system the ratepayers had to take their chance of getting their voting papers in time; and there was no safeguard that the proper man would receive them. There was but one provision against personation, but there was no provision to find out the person who committed it, except it was said that the clause referring to voting before

a justice of the peace met the difficulty. It appeared to him that every safeguard devised for securing the purity of elections was removed by the Bill, and that in its place a system was substituted by which an unscrupulous wire-puller could readily manipulate elections. In the provisions applicable to voting by post in the Universities of Great Britain, there were safeguards; but, on comparison, it would be seen how utterly unfit they were for conducting an election in a colony like this. He sincerely trusted that the part of the Bill to which he had been referring would not become law. He would prophesy that, if it did become law, it would be but a short time before there would be an indignant outcry against it. There was a mention in clause 33 of scrutineers; but, strange to say, there was no provision for scrutineers. He found in clause 34 another function of the returning officer—namely, that at the scrutiny the returning officer should reject every ballot-paper not signed by the voter and witnessed by a justice; and also every ballot-paper which was manifestly irregular. The returning officer was to be sole judge, and he might object to the spelling of a man's name, or to the spelling of a candidate's name, or to some blank being filled up. Why, the effect was that the returning officer could elect whoever he liked. It was worse than close boroughs. The following clauses up to clause 41 were mere transcripts of the Local Government Act; and he observed that clause 41 referred to preceding clauses in the Act that had been omitted from this Bill, and was consequently unintelligible. It said that in any subdivided division the preceding sections relating to the election of the Board should be read as applying to elections of members for each subdivision, instead of for the division at large. What did that mean? Was it that there should be separate ballot-papers, or a separate returning officer, or that the same returning officer was to send out all the ballot-papers himself? Questions innumerable could be raised under that clause. This was another instance in which it was clear brevity was not simplicity, and it would only lead to litigation. The experience of all legislation in dealing with complicated matters was, that it was impossible to be brief. Sections 43 to 50 were also transcripts of the Local Government Act, with a few verbal alterations, except that the Boards were to meet once in each quarter instead of once in each month, and he was prepared to admit that that might be a useful amendment. Then they came to section 52, which the hon. gentleman referred to as something new, but it again was a transcript of another section of the Local Government Act; and, with regard to clause 53, he thought the people might

well say, "Thank you for nothing." It provided that the Board might be required to take the charge and management of any hospital, orphanage, benevolent institution, school of arts, botanic garden, park or commonage, and might vote moneys in aid thereof from the divisional funds. No doubt they might, but where were they to get the money from? He thought that was a boon quite unasked. The hon. member said it was a boon they would have to take, and that reminded him that the idea of the hon. gentleman seemed to be that the country districts were not animated by a desire for the good of the country; that they, associated together in Parliament, were antagonists or rivals to the different parts of the colony, and that hon. members were obliged to force the people to do what was right. But the whole was not a rival of its part, and surely they had a common interest—they represented the whole colony, and were not rivals to any part of it. They had no animosity against the different parts of the colony; on the contrary, they simply represented them. To insist that they should undertake a responsibility they could not undertake was an absurdity. Let them remember that they represented the whole colony, that the interests of the colony were the same, and that it was absurd to legislate on the basis that any part of the colony was inimical to the rest, or should be sat upon or crushed by anyone. With regard to clause 54, he had not formed a very definite opinion as to the provision it contained, but he did not think it was an advisable provision, and it required modification. Sections 55 and 56 were transcripts of the present law, as was also clause 57, in its two first paragraphs, and then they came to some changes. It was provided that no homestead or conditional selection should be computed as of greater annual value than eight per centum upon the capital value of the fee-simple at the time of selection; but this proviso did not extend to buildings and other improvements upon them. He did not know exactly what was meant by "capital value at the time of selection." Did it mean that the minimum was to be fixed, or that it was to be ten times the annual rent? It appeared to him that this provision left the law exactly as it stood, because the provision in section 177 of the Local Government Act, as to rating property, was that no rateable property should be computed as of an annual value of less than eight per centum upon the fair capital value of the fee-simple. It seemed to him that there was no material change in that, so far as the Bill was concerned; but when they came to the next proviso, about Crown lands, they saw a very material change in the law—something that was new but certainly not good,

Under the Local Government Act of 1878 it was provided by section 177 that every person occupying Crown lands for pastoral purposes only should be rated in respect of such annual value, and not on the capital value. What was the difference between "annual value" and "annual rent?" If this was a change, it was a change for the benefit of some one, and if annual rent and annual value were the same, this proviso was not wanted; and if the annual rent was more than the annual value, the property would be thrown up; so that the only possible meaning of the clause was that the annual rent of pastoral property was less than the annual value, and therefore this proviso was only for the relief of the pastoral tenant, who was to be rated at a less value than any other class in the community. He should like to know how this was to be justified? Take, for instance, a division consisting chiefly of pastoral property—of course, it could not be wholly pastoral, because there would be some town portions in it—for all the property in that town, and all selectors' property, a minimum rate was fixed; but when they came to the property of the pastoral tenants a maximum was fixed—fixed at 8 per cent.—not upon the annual value, but upon the annual rent, which was admittedly less than the annual value. But no minimum was fixed, so that in a pastoral division they could fix the rate upon pastoral property at one or one-half per cent. on the annual rent. He certainly thought the hon. gentleman could not have been aware of the nature of that provision, which, he would point out, was really a qualification of clause 60. He would like to know how the Government was going to justify the imposition of a different rate on pastoral property from that on every other property in the colony? Seeing, however, that hon. members opposite represented pastoral property, he was not surprised to find that they should endeavour to give relief to that section of the community; but he thought "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," and, if they were going to force a Local Government Bill on the people in the settled districts, they ought to take a share of the burden themselves, and not try to obtain exceptional provisions to relieve themselves of all liability. The minimum to be fixed for them should be the minimum for all; and he certainly hoped that proviso would not become law. Passing on he found that clauses 58 to 62 were transcripts of the present law, and in clause 63 there was the new provision that if at any time the revenue derived from any work or improvement carried out by means of borrowed money was insufficient to provide interest upon capital expended, the Government might cause a special rate

to be levied. That was another instance of taxation without representation. The Local Government Act provided for imposing special rates for such works before the loan was incurred; but, if it was left to the Government to make a rate, practically the rate would never be made. That was a tyrannical power that might be very well exercised in Turkey or Egypt, where the despot levied his tax and collected it, but it would not do for such a thing to be done in this colony. Provisions of that kind only defeated their own object, and prevented a desirable system of local government from being brought into operation. The rest of the provisions were about the same as in the present law, with some slight verbal alterations. The hon. gentleman referred to clause 70 as containing a more useful provision for audit than the present law; but the provisions objected to were optional, not compulsory, so that they would not make the working any more complicated, because they would never come into operation unless the Council wanted them put into operation. The provision in clause 70 was the same as in the Act, with the exception of some few words. Then they came to the provision about loan, and that was a change that might or might not be good, but on the face of it there was not enough to show him the advantages of the change. The limit of the loans was that in the aggregate they should not exceed a capital amount the interest on which, at 5 per cent., should be equal to the amount represented by the net revenue yielded by works and services previously carried out by loan, added to the endowment paid or payable for the year then last past. He was afraid that if the endowment was swallowed up by interest on loans, the working of some municipalities would very soon come to a stop. Let them see how it would work. In the first place, no endowment was to be paid until the first year's rates were received, so that under no circumstances could there be any endowment payable until January, 1881; and as the loan was not to exceed a capital amount the interest on which, at 5 per cent., was equal to the endowment for the year then last past, that could not be estimated until 1882. This might not be the meaning of the section, but it appeared to him that the interest on loans would swallow up the whole income. That required some consideration and some very serious modification. Then he came to the general provisions, and, with the exception of clause 74, which was quite insufficient, there was nothing remarkable in them. Great care should be exercised in regard to the bye-laws, because, although there had not been many cases here of appeals against bye-laws, there had been elsewhere, and the bye-laws were found to

be *ultra vires*. When he was Attorney-General, he found that in eight cases out of ten in which bye-laws were submitted to him some of them were *ultra vires*, although many were transcripts of bye-laws already approved of. He would now refer to those parts of the Local Government Act which had been omitted from the Bill and referred to as cumbrous, to see whether they were necessary machinery or not. Parts 1 and 2 of the Local Government Act related to the past; part 3 made provisions with reference to the constitution of municipalities, and, practically, there was no change in that. The first two sections of part 4 were kept in the Bill, but slightly altered. Then there was an important omission. The Government seemed to have taken up an old draft without taking the trouble to correct it. Part 5 of the Act provided for ouster of office, which was a simple and inexpensive way of settling disputed elections; but that had been omitted from the Bill, and the consequence was that such questions would have to be decided in the old fashion and by an expensive process. Part 6 related to the making up of voters' rolls. Part 7 related to the election of councillors, and contained the usual provisions for the nomination and polling that were inserted in every electoral law, and they were not in any respect cumbrous. Part 8 related to the election and privileges of chairman, and contained only three or four clauses which there could be no difficulty in understanding. Part 9 contained only four clauses defining "audit," and part 10 related to the proceedings of the council; and there were certainly no great difficulties in working those provisions. They were the ordinary provisions to be found in every Bill dealing with this subject. Part 11 related to accounts and audit, and 12 to contracts—and this was an important omission. The provisions omitted were those to be found in every Bill of this kind, and the consequence was that there was no provision in the Bill with reference to the making of contracts by councils. Part 13 related to officers, and was extremely useful. Part 14 related to bye-laws, and stated the various purposes for which they should be made: that was not in the Bill. As to general rates there was no difference between the Local Government Act and the present Bill except those he had already pointed out, and those were changes which were not for the better. Power to levy special rates was included in the Act, and there were general and complete provisions for the recovery of rates; whereas, by the present Bill they had mere fragmentary provisions, which meant that if a man liked to pay rates, well and good; and, if not, he need not. The provisions as to the vetoing loans in

the present Act were altogether omitted in the Bill, but the provision as to endowment of municipalities was copied verbatim. The general powers contained a great deal which might or might not be exercised—such as the prevention of fire or the erection of inflammable buildings. Any honourable gentleman who had read the Bill would agree with him that it was not fit for every part of the colony. There were other questions which would arise sooner or later, as they had done in the other colonies. He had taken the trouble to compare the Bill with the Acts of New South Wales and Victoria; and he had not been able to find any measure attempting to deal with matters of this kind in this fragmentary way. The draftsman of the Bill had evidently taken the Local Government Bill as his basis, and drawn his pen through what he did not understand; and he had pointed out the changes which had been made from it. They had at present a law applicable to all parts of the colony fit for local government, whilst in the unsettled parts the Bill would not deal with the difficulty as regards voting. A radical change should be introduced gradually and wisely; but if an attempt was made to force it on an unwilling people, the Government would defeat their own object. He had pointed out that this Bill would not be applicable to the whole colony. Its object was said by the mover to be to provide that property which was improved should bear the burden of the cost of improvement. It was quite time that principle should be recognised; but it should be recognised everywhere alike. Instead of this, the Bill provided that when property was fenced in and improved by roads the owner was to be taxed for the purpose of extending the necessary means of communication to other parts of the colony; but cost of such extension was to be distributed all over the colony, including those who were already taxed. That was unfair. He wanted to know who was to pay the interest on the loans for the extension of railways into the interior, as the hon. gentleman declined to put on any tax for that purpose? Why did not he, however, apply the same rule in that case which he stated was embodied in the Bill—viz., that the owners of property benefited by the work should pay for the improvements? If the policy of the Government was to burden the settled parts of the colony, and to raise, so to say, a double revenue upon them by improving other parts without requiring any corresponding revenue from them, he could assure the Government that they would find it a very difficult matter to pass such a measure, for the country at large would, so far as they could, express a very strong opposition to it—they had, in fact, done so already. At the last election not one

person thought that the present Government would come forward with a policy like this, which was having the effect of setting class against class. It was because the Government wished to legislate for one part of the colony at the expense of the rest that it had been brought into the great unpopularity in which they were now held all over the colony.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member had finished his remarks by saying that the present Government had brought upon themselves a large amount of unpopularity by setting class against class; but if there was any unpopularity attached to the present Government it was by their having to remedy the evils which had been brought about by their predecessors, and enter, in consequence, upon a system of retrenchment. Seeing that this was the case, the hon. gentleman had no right to speak of their unpopularity. If there was any unpopularity, the hon. member and his party were the sole cause of it, by bringing the colony into a state which, with the exception of one or two years, it had never experienced before—viz., of not being able to bring its expenditure within its revenue. It was all very well for the hon. gentleman to get up and talk about railway extension; but this Bill had nothing whatever to do with railways. If they were to take the first part of the hon. gentleman's speech on the Bill they would come to the conclusion, notwithstanding all his protestations in favour of the Local Government Bill, that he was entirely opposed to it; and that remark applied to all hon. members opposite, notwithstanding their protestations to the contrary. He did not intend to follow the hon. gentleman through all his criticism of the Bill; but it seemed rather strange that he should have ended with a grand peroration setting forth that the Bill would set class against class, whilst he had previously stated that the Bill was a digest of his Local Government Bill. The hon. gentleman stated that local government was a thing that should be taken up firmly, and spring up gradually. They all knew that. But how long was it that the House had been trying to adopt a scheme of local government that would suit the country? Hon. members opposite had for years a Local Government Bill before the House, and it was only last year, when compelled by pressure, that they actually made a serious attempt to pass a Bill into law. It became law; and what had been the result? Had any single place in the colony come forward to put itself under local government, or would they ever do so? The hon. gentleman had tried to put the present Government in the position of despots—said they were trying to press a measure upon an unwilling people; but they would never get people to come forward and submit to any measure of local

government so long as the general Government would consent to make their roads. If they were not able to place a local government measure on the country in its present depressed condition, how would they be able to get the money for making the roads and other public works? If they could not get the money by local taxation, could they get it by general taxation? Probably the hon. gentleman meant that they should raise the money for making roads and bridges in future through a Customs tariff. If that was what he meant, then he (Mr. Macrossan), for one, was not agreeable to such a thing, inasmuch as the non-property holders of the colony had too long been taxed for the benefit of the property holders. Yet the hon. gentleman and his supporters were quite willing to continue that system of government and still call themselves the Liberal party. But to whom were they liberal except to those who had property as against those who had no property at all? He (Mr. Macrossan) protested against the ordinary workman of the colony, who derived no benefit from the improvement of property by the general revenue, being taxed any longer for such a purpose, and he maintained that those who did tax them were not Liberals in reality, although they might be professedly so. It was known that in all despotic countries, even in Russia, property was taxed for improvements, and that the ordinary working man, who had no property, was not subjected to taxation for such purposes; but, here, those gentlemen who were loud in their protestations of liberalism, and who were the professed friends of the working man, would not adopt such principles, but said that the time had not arrived for local government as the colony was suffering from depression. The hon. gentleman objected to local government as it had broken down elsewhere, and had instanced the Victorian Government as having started with a very simple Bill and having been continually adding to it. The present Government were quite contented to commence with a very simple Bill, knowing that questions must arise, as the wants of the people were felt, which would make it necessary that local government should be more extended. By that time they would be in a position to amplify or amend the system, which, however, must begin in the most simple form. He should like to know how the whole of local government commenced in England if it had not commenced in the most simple form? Hon. members were sitting there, that evening, as inheritors of what was a very simple form of Government in the first instance, but, nevertheless, the germs of all Governments, complicated as they might now be, existed then, and the germs of all local government existed in the Bill he held in his hand. The hon.

gentleman in criticising the Bill had made some mistakes. He agreed with criticism as long as it was fair and honest, and he believed the hon. gentleman's criticism was, as far as possible, fair and honest from his own stand-point, but he had made some mistakes. In speaking of the impossibility of holding elections under the Bill until a certain time, the hon. gentleman must have overlooked clause 12, which said that every person of the full age of twenty-one years whose name appeared in the books of any division as a person liable to be rated, and who should have paid all sums due in respect of such rates, should be entitled to vote. But no rates would be due at first, and consequently the provision of having paid the rates would not come in, as, the day after local government was imposed on any division by the Government, any individual who was qualified to be rated would be entitled to a vote. Then, again, the hon. member said a great deal about the novel system of voting through the post, and took upon himself to call it a system of voting-made-easy, and went on to ask what guarantee there would be of the honesty of a returning officer, and whether there was any other system where it depended upon the honour of such an officer. The hon. member, however, must have overlooked clause 40, which imposed a very heavy penalty for any wilful neglect of a returning officer, or postmaster—a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds, to be recovered in a summary way before two justices. He looked upon that as being a very fair safeguard against the chairman of any Board, or returning officer, acting in the way suggested by the leader of the Opposition. That hon. gentleman's suggestion was, that the chairman of any Board, if a strong partisan, might omit to do certain things, and that there was no proof to be found whether those things had been done or not; but that was not the case, as the books would be a check. Then he asked, how it was to be proved that the books were correct? In answer to that, he would say that every ratepayer in a division would know that his name was on the books as being liable to be rated, and he would certainly call the returning officer to account if he found that his ballot-paper was not sent in. In connection with clause 40 he directed attention to the penalty not exceeding £50, which it inflicted on any returning officer or postmaster who should be guilty of any misfeasance, or wilful or negligent act of commission, contrary to the Act; and this, taken in connection with the rights which the ratepayer had to demand a duplicate ballot-paper under clause 29, should be regarded as proof that the author of the Bill had taken sufficient care to see that the ratepayers were protected in giving

their votes. Clause 29 said that at any time before 4 o'clock in the afternoon on the day of closing the election, it should be lawful for the returning officer to issue a second or duplicate ballot-paper to any qualified voter whose original ballot-paper should have miscarried. Supposing that the returning officer were a political partisan, as the hon. gentleman had suggested, his object in trying to return whoever he pleased would be frustrated by the action of this clause, because every ratepayer whose ballot-paper had not reached him could demand a duplicate at any time in the afternoon of the election before 4 o'clock. Voting by post was about as safe a method as could be devised in districts where the distances between the residences of the ratepayers and the polling-places was very great. In this and in every other colony under British dominion, the post office was the safest method of carrying letters. Its secrecy was inviolable, and from the moment the returning officer passed his ballot-paper out of his hands and deposited it in the post office, it was beyond the control of anyone connected with the election until it reached the official hands on the day of the election. Taking that into consideration with the safeguard provided in the Bill, voting by post, although it might appear novel, was rendered quite safe, and the best system that could be devised for recording votes in sparsely settled districts. The hon. member had also said that rolls were absolutely necessary for purposes of voting, but he ought to have recollected that the Municipal Act, 1864, provided that the ratepayer whose name was on the roll for voting purposes must first be qualified by payment of his rates, as this Act provided. Although the hon. gentleman had said that the Municipal Act of 1864 was a failure, yet it was a failure for this reason, that the municipal councillors had not the power to tax—they could not raise revenue; and the Government never provided them with it. It did not fail because of any of its provisions, but simply because it did not give power to impose taxation. By the Local Government Act of last year, passed by the hon. gentleman himself, if a ratepayer's rates remained unpaid on the 1st November, he was disfranchised for fourteen months, whereas by this Bill he could pay his rates up to the very day of election; consequently he was really provided with more privileges and better safeguards than under the Local Government Act fathered by the hon. member for North Brisbane. That hon. member also found great fault with the Premier's remark that as far as practicable the divisions would be coincident with the electoral districts, and instanced the Darling Downs as an electorate which it would be difficult to make coinci-

dent with a division under this Bill. But it was not intended that this should be absolute, for it could only be carried into effect in districts so situated that they could be made coincident. The divisions in the Central and Southern portions of the colony would be small as compared with those in the outside districts; but, in any case, the criticism was scarcely worthy of the hon. gentleman, and could not be used as an argument against the Bill. The hon. member also said he did not understand the meaning of clause 4, and wanted to know what the people were to petition for. They were to petition simply for a division to be divided, or for two divisions to be made one. The leader of the Opposition also complained that the Government were attempting to force local government on the people. This was the first time, in an English-speaking community, where local government had been looked upon as loathsome—as something that had to be forced upon the people. In every country under the sun where the English language was spoken, with the exception of one or two small colonies, where English were living in connection with inferior races, local government was established. The people of Great Britain had fought hard for the right to govern themselves locally, and the same might be said, as hon. members well knew, of every country in Europe. Local government existed in Victoria, the most democratic of the Australian colonies. There, the people were called upon to tax themselves for their own roads, bridges, and public works; and yet they were told by hon. members sitting on the other side of the House—who professed to be advocates of local government because they dared not say anything else, but whose professions differed from their actions—that in Queensland local government was something that was hateful to the people. There was nothing the people ought to prize so much as local government, and there was nothing so likely to benefit them; for although they might be called upon to put their hands in their pockets, the advantages of the system would be far more than commensurate with the cost, for they would be able to see that their money was not wastefully and unintelligently expended. It was impossible under any system of Central Government, in a colony as large as this, to expend money so profitably and so much to the advantage of the people as it could be under local supervision, as had been abundantly proved wherever local government existed. He now came to the question of rating. The leader of the Opposition had tried to make out that an unfair system of rating was intended to be carried on under the Bill as between the settled and the unsettled districts, basing his argument on the alteration of the words “annual value”

in the Local Government Act to “annual rent” in the Divisional Boards Bill. But the hon. gentleman had failed to tell them how it was possible to arrive at the annual value of a leasehold held by a pastoral tenant otherwise than through the annual rent. So far from any unfair advantage being given to outside districts, he (the Minister for Works) maintained that when an assessment of 8 per cent. was levied on the annual rent of a pastoral leasehold, and an assessment also on the improvements, which in many cases amounted to £10,000, £20,000, or £30,000, the pastoral lessees would consider themselves the reverse of favoured under the Bill. According to the Bill it was provided that no homestead or conditional selection should be computed of greater annual value than 8 per cent. upon the capital value of the fee-simple at the time of selection, such powers not to extend to buildings and other improvements upon such homestead or conditional selection. The value of a homestead selection was 2s. 6d. per acre when it was taken up, and that was the highest value upon which the selector could be rated. Surely the Bill gave to homestead and conditional selectors as fair a system of rating as it did to the pastoral lessees. The hon. gentleman also said that the people in the outside districts would have nothing to pay because their roads would be made by the Government. But did not the hon. gentleman's own Local Government Act, passed last year, provide the very same thing? and if the criticism applied to this measure it also applied equally to the other. The Local Government Act gave the council of every municipality the care, construction, and maintenance of all public streets, highways, roads, and so forth, the same as this Bill did; and then it added, “provided the council of a shire shall not be charged with, or bound to see to, the construction or maintenance of any main road.” Thus the hon. gentleman's criticism as to this Bill fell to the ground, and was no argument at all against it. The exception was a very reasonable one, as he might illustrate by giving as an instance the road to Sandgate. That road was used by ten times the number of people living in the district, and it would be very unfair to call upon the people living in the neighbourhood of that road to keep it in repair, when the people of half the colony used it for other purposes than traffic or commerce. Just in the same way other main roads might be excepted, but the Bill was not so absolute in that respect as the Local Government Act. Clauses 76 and 77 met another objection which the hon. gentleman had taken, for they provided in an easy way for the adoption of the Local Government Act in districts fit to take upon themselves the working of it. Districts which found themselves further

advanced in the art of local government—and they all required to be educated in that direction—might, by the provisions of those clauses, come under the operation of the Local Government Act of 1878; and therefore the hon. gentleman's objection again fell to the ground. It was incumbent on those who objected to this system of local government on the ground that the holders of property would not be able to tax themselves for the maintenance of their own roads and bridges, to tell the House where the money was to be obtained for that purpose. It was not sufficient for them to raise an objection against this Bill. They must, if sincere, show how the money could be obtained otherwise, without undue pressure upon those who were not entitled to pay for improvements of property. Were they ready to maintain the doctrine that a man who had no property should pay as much as the owner for the improvement of another man's property? Was the hon. member for Brisbane (Mr. Griffith), who owned considerable property in the neighbourhood of this city, prepared to compel the working man, who lived on a weekly wage earned by the sweat of his brow and owned not a single acre in the colony, to pay an equal share with him in the improvement of his property? The hon. member said, "no;" but, if not, he must adopt the principle of the Bill, as by any other means than self-government the man who had no property would pay as much as the hon. gentleman himself. It was incumbent on those who objected to the Bill to declare themselves fairly and openly upon this point, and show to the House how the money was to be obtained to carry on local works hitherto carried out by the Central Government. That would be the only reasonable objection to the Bill, all others being nothing else than detail and matters of small criticism. That was the point at issue. The Government said that property holders should pay for the improvement of their property, and the opponents of the Bill said the people of the whole of the colony should pay. That was not a doctrine that should be advocated by any man professing to advocate the rights of the ordinary working man. He hoped speakers who followed him would pay attention particularly to that point. It was no use criticising the Bill in small matters, because it had been thoroughly well criticised in the Bill of last year. The difference between the two Bills was trifling—one being, as had been said, a digest of the other. There was no criticism, therefore, with the exception of the novelty of voting by post, that would not tell equally well against the Local Government Act, 1878.

Mr. DICKSON said the Bill was one of the most important measures brought in by the Government, and it was right and proper that it should receive full consideration,

not only in this Chamber, but also from the large portion of the community outside. He had listened with considerable attention to the remarks of the Premier and the Minister for Works, in order to learn the necessity for introducing the Bill at the present time, when there was already on the statute book, an Act which equally well suited our requirements, and which, for the purposes of self-government, would be quite as efficacious as the Bill before the House. He could not learn why the measure should be introduced; but, from the remarks made by the last speaker, it seemed that the Ministry prided themselves principally on introducing a Bill which was a production of their own, rather than on any intrinsic merit it possessed, as compared with the more comprehensive measure passed, last session, by the hon. member for Brisbane; but, if that were the only merit, he failed to perceive the necessity for loading the statute book with a piece of superfluous legislation. He did not think it could be inferred from the remarks of the hon. member for Brisbane that that hon. member considered local government, or its attendant consequences, as odious or hateful to the people. He (Mr. Dickson) was of opinion that they must by degrees come to a complete system of local government; but his contention was, that this was not a time to attempt to force upon the country a system of local government in its entirety. The people in many parts of the community were not in a position, just now, to have transferred to their shoulders the whole expenditure for works which the Central Government had hitherto provided. There were parts of the colony—for instance, in the electorate he represented—where local government might be very properly extended; but a measure of such great importance, and embodying so radical a change from previous practice, should be ushered in gradually, especially in those parts of the country where the circumstances of the people did not enable them to receive it. His chief contention was that it was the duty of the Government to consider the peculiar circumstances of the colony, and introduce the measure by degrees, rather than make a complete change at once for the purpose of assisting the Colonial Treasurer to make, by anticipation, a more favourable balance-sheet than he otherwise could, by transferring the large amount of £73,000 from taxes to rates. The Act of 1878 was sufficient to do all that was required, without adding to our legislation a Bill containing little new except objectionable clauses. He should like to learn what action the Government contemplated taking to provide for the maintenance of roads and bridges until the machinery sought to be provided could be brought into operation. There

was no adequate provision upon the Estimates for that purpose, nor had the Government shown an anticipation of the early introduction of the measure by increasing upon the schedules the amount for loans to municipalities. There was, in fact, nothing in the Estimates to show that Government believed the measure would come into operation to such an extent that the endowments to municipalities would have to be increased during the present year. That furnished an answer to the Minister for Works when he retorted upon the hon. member for Brisbane that the unpopularity the Government had earned was in consequences of the *laches* of the late Administration. There was a right way and a wrong way of doing things, and the Government could not exculpate themselves from the unpopularity that must attend all measures, however well-intentioned, which were introduced injudiciously, and possibly at an improper time. Therefore, if a large amount of unpopularity did attend the measure, the present Administration could not say it was occasioned by the late Government. It was created entirely by the introduction of a measure, however good, which was not suited to the circumstances of the times. The measure at the present time was inopportune, and its introduction must be attended with much odium in consequence of laying a very heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of a class who were least able to bear it. He took exception to the fact that the measure did not provide for voters' rolls. The hon. member for Brisbane was misunderstood on that subject. The hon. member did not condemn the omission altogether, but said his mind was in suspense. He (Mr. Dickson) would go further, and say that it was highly desirable that a roll of the electors should be formed and maintained, both as a means of giving information to the electors themselves and for the guidance of returning officers. He could not see any advantage to be gained by the omission of the rolls, especially as under the existing Act great care had been taken and the subject fully discussed before the clause by which voters' rolls were created was passed. Clause 16 stated that the first Board should be appointed by the Governor in Council, and the reason for that assigned by the Premier was that they would have the control of moneys supplied by the Central Government. But he failed to see whence those moneys were to be derived, as he presumed the amount appearing on the Estimates-in-Chief did not represent the sums which would be handed over to those nominee Boards. Those amounts were so remarkably small that they must be expended in the maintenance of roads and bridges long before the Boards could be created. The schedules did not show any provision for endowment, as the Boards could not

claim any sum until the end of the following year, the sixty-seventh clause providing that a detailed account must first be produced of all sums of money raised during the year "then last past." So that the nominee Boards could not have the account here referred to in earlier than February, 1881. How were they to be maintained in the meantime with funds to carry out necessary improvements? They could not borrow, because, by a subsequent clause (72), it was provided that their borrowing power must be based upon their revenue for the preceding year. The position, therefore, resolved itself into this—that nominee Boards might be appointed before the end of the year, but until next January twelve months they could make no claim for endowment or loan, as they had no income.

The PREMIER: Look at clause 68.

Mr. DICKSON said that clause 68 gave the Colonial Treasurer power, under the direction of the Governor in Council, to place special appropriations to the credit of any divisional fund, but had the Colonial Treasurer placed on the Estimates any special sums of money to be handed over to the Divisional Boards? There was nothing in the Estimates to show that Parliament was to be asked to make a special provision to assist the Boards until they could raise revenue in the manner proposed by the Bill. The clauses relating to voting by post he certainly viewed with great alarm and apprehension, because he took it that if this scheme, which introduced such a great departure from the proper conduct of elections by ballot, were legalised, it would extend in time to elections for that Chamber; and that it gave peculiar facilities for falsifying the ballot. The Premier had wished to impress upon them the importance of giving every facility to electors to record their votes, even at the risk of infringing the secrecy of the ballot; but if reasonable facilities were given to electors to vote, and they did not choose to avail themselves of those facilities, they need not be pitied—the State should only be expected to provide convenient polling-places. By the scheme proposed by the Government, not only was the secrecy of the ballot infringed, but the returning officer had it actually in his power to issue duplicate ballot-papers before 4 o'clock on the day for closing the poll. A man might have posted his ballot-paper, and thereafter go to the returning officer and assert that he had lost it; and on making a declaration that officer would be bound to issue to him a duplicate. The precautions provided by clause 29 were not sufficient to guard against serious misdoings. The Minister for Works pointed out that, in such a case, the man would be liable to receive twelve months' imprisonment; but how often were these

penalties carried out? Personation was committed to a large extent, yet the offenders were allowed to go with perfect immunity; and therefore he did not consider that the clause providing the punishment for illegal voting, or the clause providing the punishment for a returning officer who acted illegally, struck either at the root of the matter or would prevent serious misdoings. Voting by post was one of the most objectionable features in the Bill, and should be eliminated, however desirable the measure might be in other respects. With regard to clause 51, defining the duties of Boards, they heard some time ago, and could also gather from the remarks of the Minister for Works, that it was intended to exclude from the jurisdiction of the Boards what were called main roads. If the Bill came to a second reading, would the hon. gentleman be prepared to place on the table a schedule of what he considered main roads?—that would be but a proper complement to the Bill, and would show whether his views coincided with the views of the members for the different districts. Clauses 52 and 53 provided that the Governor in Council might give Boards the temporary control of public works, reservoirs, &c. and might require them to take charge of hospitals, orphanages, benevolent institutions, schools of art, botanic gardens, parks, and commonages. These provisions should have been preceded by the Premier placing on the Estimates sufficient sums for the maintenance of the existing schools of art, hospitals, &c., and then the Government might have transferred these institutions to the Boards for administration. The country would not be at all satisfied, nor would the local Boards take much heart in being compelled to assume the management of these different institutions, without the Central Government furnishing sufficient money to assist in their conduct. The valuation clauses had excited much comment, and Ministers had not yet placed them fairly before the House, or in such a manner as to command approval. The more he read them, the more difficult he found it to interpret them and the more ambiguous they appeared; they certainly should be the most intelligible clauses in the Bill. The first provided that no rateable property should be computed as of an annual value of less than 8 per cent. upon the fair capital value of the fee-simple, and that no homestead or conditional selection should be computed as of greater annual value than 8 per cent. upon the capital value of the fee-simple at the time of selection, but that this provision should not extend to buildings and other improvements thereon. He was not clear about this clause, and should be glad if subsequent Ministerial speakers would place it intelligibly before the House. He took it that the “capital value of the fee-

simple of conditional and homestead selections at the time of selection” was meant to represent the purchase money payable to the Crown—not the annual rent, but the aggregate rent; and that the valuation should not extend to buildings or improvements. Was there to be a valuation of buildings and improvements? If so, what was to be the basis of their assessment? The next proviso dealing with Crown lands said that every person occupying Crown lands for pastoral purposes only should be rated in an amount not exceeding 8 per cent. upon the annual rent thereof. To his mind this meant that the actual annual rent paid to the Crown was to be the basis of assessment, at a maximum percentage of 8 per cent. Was that so? The Bill was not very clear upon the point, but he imagined that to be the meaning of it. Then it said this proviso should not extend to buildings or other improvements on such lands; but he should like to know what scheme was to be devised for valuing those buildings and improvements? What was to be the basis of that assessment? The Board had power to appoint surveyors or valuers, but the Bill did not give the basis of the assessment; and he put it that, if there was to be an assessment, it would constitute a larger source of revenue than the assessment of the pastoral rents, and hence he thought it was of equal importance to furnish a basis upon which that assessment should be made, extending over buildings and other improvements. If his view of the case were correct, it stood thus: That a man who owned a small farm of, say, ten acres under cultivation, the capital value of which, at £50 per acre, would be £500, he would be assessed at 8 per cent. on that amount, which would amount to £40; while a pastoral tenant with, say, 100 square miles of country, paid £50 a year; and 8 per cent. on that would be only £4. He would give Ministers an opportunity of correcting him if he were wrong; and even if a Minister rose and said he (Mr. Dickson) was mistaken he would put the case the other way, for he was not afraid to take it in all its bearings. The agriculturist with his ten-acre holding, worth say £500, was assessed on a basis of £40, and the pastoral tenant with 100 square miles paid £50 pounds a year, and he was assessed at say 8 per cent., which was allowing the maximum fixed by the Bill, so that he would pay £4; and, supposing 1s. in the £ was levied on the owner of the ten acres, he would pay £2. He said that was monstrously unfair and unjust. That was placing the case in the most favourable light for Ministers. Of course, it might be contended that the assessment on buildings and other improvements would equalize it; but the Bill contained no provision which would enable them to judge

what that assessment would be, and, until that was clearly demonstrated, he said there was a gross case of favouritism established in favour of the wealthier class of the country. That at once established an answer to the Minister for Works, who said hon. members on that side of the House were averse to property owners paying a fair share towards improvements. He said they were not, and that the Bill did not go in that direction. If the hon. member could show him that all property owners were to pay a fair share towards improvements he would go with him heartily; but why should a man with ten acres contribute to the improvement of properties in the interior, the owners of which were so much better able to contribute than such a man? He did not wish to introduce the "small man" or the "working man"—he referred to owners of property. A man of ten acres was as much an owner of property as a leaseholder with 100 square miles; and, he said, in proportion to their respective ability, should they be called upon to contribute towards the revenue to enable the Boards to administer this Act. With reference to the clause providing for audit, he thought if the Auditor-General had to make these periodical examinations, which were compulsory, and they extended over the whole of the Boards, the Treasurer would find that his next estimates for that department would require to be considerably increased so as to provide for the large augmentation of the staff which would be necessary. He came, now, to the question of loan, and he could not congratulate the Treasurer upon the limit of his loan contrasted with the limit which was formed under the Local Government Act. Under that Act the borrowing powers of a municipality were limited to five years' revenue; and that to his mind was a wise provision, by which municipalities were precluded from borrowing money on interest which would swallow up the whole of their revenue. They were limited to borrowing five years' revenue; so that there was always a guarantee that they had a revenue of 20 per cent. upon their obligations. Five per cent. of that revenue went to pay the interest, leaving a margin of 15 per cent. to enable them to carry on current operations. Under this Bill they would have power to borrow up to the full extent of their annual revenue, and would indulge, probably, in schemes which would necessarily absorb the whole of their revenue to pay interest, leaving nothing to provide for current expenses. He thought if local government was to be a success in this colony, it was essential that it should be seen that the Boards maintained sufficient revenue in hand to carry on current works; and not merely for the sake of entering into some undertaking, mortgaged the whole of their revenue for years to

come, leaving their hands so tied up that they could not proceed with necessary works in their respective districts. Another objection was this—that while there seemed to be no restriction upon the borrowing powers of the Board, and while the ratepayers had no veto upon such borrowing, the Governor in Council, upon receipt of a petition signed by not less than one-third of the total number of ratepayers, had power to suspend, amend, or rescind any resolution of any Board, and might prohibit the expenditure of any moneys for the divisional fund which was considered unnecessary, or which would impose undue burdens upon the ratepayers. He thought it would have been a great deal wiser if this provision had been anticipated by inviting or insisting upon the ratepayers giving an expression of their opinion before the Board committed itself to loan obligations. As he had already said, he believed this Bill was considered by the country as one of the most important measures yet introduced by the Government, and it was one that should be thoroughly analysed and criticised both inside and outside the House;—in fact, legislation upon such a measure as this would be greatly assisted and strengthened by the deliberate opinion of the communities interested in it, and he should be glad to see their opinions invited and fully recorded in the shape of petitions either for or against it. It seemed to him that the question that remained yet unanswered, and which it was more incumbent upon the Government to answer than the interrogatory that had been put by the Minister for Works, was—where was the money to come from to assist the Treasurer in constructing these roads and bridges? It was a very novel proposition in Parliamentary Government that the Opposition should be called upon to form a policy for the Ministry of the day, and he was sure the Treasurer would be far above accepting any advice they might tender him, however excellent that advice might be. They had suggested to him on previous occasions many excellent recommendations that he (Mr. Dickson) would be glad if he accepted, but up to the present time they had not had that effect upon his counsels that, perhaps, upon more mature consideration of such advice, he might accept hereafter. However, the subject he invited hon. members to speak to was this—it was a question put by the hon. member for North Brisbane in the debate on the Financial Statement, and contained the whole gist of the matter. In reference to the contributions to be made by the property holders of this colony under this Bill, he asked how were the Ministry to reconcile the position of asking the pastoral tenants to contribute only about £13,000, and asking the other classes of the community to supplement the bal-

ance of £72,000 which he estimated from this source? That answer, if satisfactorily given, would tend greatly to reconcile the country to the Bill. At present the distribution of assessment under it was so unfair that it was generally objected to, and until it could be clearly shown that all classes of property holders would contribute equally in proportion to the means they possessed, he was convinced that it would meet with the disapproval of a large majority of the people.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins) said he had listened very attentively to the speeches of the hon. members for Brisbane and Enoggera, and all they proved was that it was much easier to destroy than to construct. He could have wished that, during the last fortnight, they had had the same opportunities he had enjoyed of ascertaining how the selectors on the Downs viewed the Bill. He had lived for some time in a part of Queensland where local government should be a success—where there was a greater want for it than in any other part of the colony; and he had also been in another colony where he had seen the effect of local government coming into force some twenty-two or twenty-three years ago, when the same outcry was raised against it as had been raised against the present Bill. He had not seen anything in the speech of either the member for Brisbane or the member for Enoggera to show that they considered the Bill unnecessary, but they were continually referring to something that was or ought to be in operation. He had himself come to the conclusion that either the Local Government Act was inoperative, or that it did not meet with that favour from the people which it should do; because he could not understand why, since its passing on 30th August, 1878, up to the present time, it had not been availed of anywhere. If there was one place where that Act should have been tried it was on the Darling Downs; and yet when an attempt was made there, some time ago, to have it brought into operation and a petition was forwarded to support it, a counter-petition was got up by other people for reasons best known to themselves. He would read a letter he received, a short time ago, from a gentleman at Drayton, dated 12th May, 1879:—

“Knowing that your sympathies are with us in our attempt to initiate local government on the Downs, by our petition to his Excellency to form Drayton and its environs into a shire, with a shire Council having its seat of Government in the town of Drayton, I am emboldened to trouble you with a few remarks, which I would feel glad if you would bring under the notice of your honourable colleagues when they have the subject under consideration. As you are no doubt aware, a petition has been forwarded to His Excellency the Governor, praying him to form Drayton and its environs into a shire; you are, no doubt, likewise aware that

a counter petition or petitions is or are being signed, and have been or will be shortly in the hands of the Executive. Now, I beg most respectfully to state that, if I have read the Local Government Act of 1878 correctly, the Governor in Council has the power, notwithstanding there may be a counter-petition, no matter however numerous signed, to grant the prayer for local government, provided the counter-petition fails to show a sufficient cause why the petition should not be granted. I beg to refer you, for confirmation of this statement, to sec. 25 and sec. 30 of the Local Government Act of 1879, and I most assuredly believe that a desire to avoid self-taxation is not a sufficient cause, and I trust will not be allowed to be considered as such; and this desire to avoid self-taxation is really and truly the ruling motive for getting up the counter-petition.”

That was the opinion of a man who had lived the greater portion of his life at Drayton, and if there was no machinery in the present Act for putting the law in force in a place like Drayton, surrounded as it was with farms, he must come to the conclusion that the Act was inoperative, and, being so, that the necessity for the present measure arose. Notwithstanding that there might be minor matters in the Bill that required amendment, he failed to see that any substantial objection had been made to the Bill itself. The hon. member (Mr. Griffith), when speaking of the Local Government Act in Victoria, said that it would not work; but he could assure him that the Shire Councils Act, as it was called, had from the first day it became law been productive of the most satisfactory results. It was true it had been amended once or twice, but, notwithstanding, it had been one of the most successful Acts ever passed in Victoria. The hon. gentleman was also pleased to say that the Government wanted to bring this Bill into force either by pressure or violence. This was a view of the case which had been spread about the country most industriously. An attempt had been made to persuade the people that the amount of taxes they would have to pay would be unlimited, and selectors had been worked upon to such an extent that they had come to the conclusion that they would be very heavily taxed. He hoped before sitting down that he should be able to draw a comparison between the Local Government Act and the Bill before the House that would prove the contrary. In the Act in force there was a provision that selectors could be taxed on the total annual value of their selections at the rate of 5 per cent.; but how did the present Bill propose to deal with them? He would take an eighty-acre homestead selection, the total annual value of which was 2s. 6d. an acre. Worked out under the provisions of the Bill, all the man would have to pay would be a ¼d. per acre. The conditional

selector who paid at the rate of 10s. an acre would pay a 1d. an acre per annum for the improvement of the roads in his district. The same remark applied to other grades of selector as to the homestead selector. He wished the House to bear in mind that, of all classes of the community, the Bill would most benefit the selector, no matter his grade in the colony at the present time, because in most cases homestead selectors got land for 2s. 6d. an acre that would, when they had paid for it, be worth from £3 to £4 an acre in the market. Under the Act of the late Government the selector would have to pay 1s. an acre where under the proposed Bill he would only have to pay a farthing. This should be sufficient to arouse selectors to a sense of their position, and to convince them that there was no desire to press upon them. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickson) had been pleased to give some illustrations in support of his arguments, and among other things he told them that ten acres of farming land at £50 an acre would come to £500, 8 per cent. upon which would be £40, which would be the annual value; and then the hon. gentleman added that the man who had 100 square miles of country would only have to pay £4. He (Mr. Perkins) would, however, like to know where there were any farming lands worth £50 an acre, except in the immediate vicinity of Brisbane? Such land would not pay for farming, and he was certain if there was any it could be only an isolated case, so that to induce the House to believe that a poor man with ten acres of land would pay ten times as much as a squatter with 100 square miles seemed to be a very crooked argument indeed. The leader of the Opposition was pleased to suggest doubts about tampering with the ballot, and that the parties might not give their consent at all, or that the returning officer might tamper with the ballot-paper; but he might tell the hon. member that the day was not far distant when the people of this country would demand an alteration in the mode of conducting elections. Nothing could be more unfortunate than the present system. Nothing could suit certain people better, perhaps, than the present system, under which it was possible for men to come and vote twenty-seven times, as he had heard someone had done in the immediate neighbourhood. It was well known this had been done, and rings had been formed to do it; and if the proposed method of recording votes was clumsy and inadequate to the requirements of the country, it could not be more clumsy or uncertain than the present mode of conducting Parliamentary elections. It would be admitted, at all events, that the most unpleasant position a member of the House occupied was the way in which he was continually pestered by his constitu-

ents requesting him to do their errands with the Government, and try and obtain money for all manner of purposes. His experience for two years in this direction had been such that he had often seriously considered whether he would not give the whole matter up. He had seriously pondered over the annoyance to which he was subjected, and the unreasonable requests made to him to advance claims which he could not conscientiously do. As an illustration, he could mention that he was one day passing by Helidon, and a man came to him stating that the handle of the windlass was broken, and requesting that as it was a Government well the Government should supply a new handle. It was useless to suggest that if Government found the well and water, the least the inhabitants could do would be to keep it in repair; and equally useless to point out to the man that the time occupied in complaining about what the Government had not done might have been successfully utilised in executing the necessary repairs. This was not a single case, for, from an exchange of ideas with other hon. gentlemen, he found that requests equally unreasonable were made to them. Complaints were often made of log-rolling; and it had been stated that the Treasury was looted towards the close of last session to a very considerable extent; but if the Bill now before the House came into operation, as he hoped it would with slight alterations and modifications, it would do away with that pernicious system. Members would not be pestered on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the community would know for a certainty what they would get. Looking over a vast extent of territory like this, they all knew that where £100 or £200 were voted for certain roads the value of the expenditure was not received. An overseer was sent to do the work, and a number of men were employed; but from observation he (Mr. Perkins) had come to the conclusion that the work was not in correspondence with the outlay. He saw a bridge near Helidon upon which £80 or £90 was expended, and where, had the work been done by private persons, it would have cost no more than £10. If the people had the expenditure of the money raised by taxes, however slight they might be, they would be taught habits of self-reliance and economy, and would take care that the proper amount of work was done for the money spent. If they learned nothing else they would soon learn how to do that, as they had done in the colony of Victoria, where the greatest interest was taken in the shire elections, and where seats were coveted almost as much as seats in the Legislative Assembly. Under the present system no one could say that the colony got value for the money expended. Since the colony had been formed immense sums of money had been voted for different

works which persons were sent from Brisbane to carry on. He himself saw an instance where, in putting a simple culvert over a creek, men were planing and smoothing logs which would never see the light of the sun, and finishing them off as if they were to be pillars for the Parliament building or the museum. Admitting, then, that money had been wasted without the country getting an adequate return, this Bill would cure many evils in that direction, and £1 would go further in improvements than £5, or even £10, under the present system. As to the statements about the Western country, and the amount it would be called upon to contribute, he would remind hon. members that it had been stated that no roads were wanted in the West. A late Minister for Works (Mr. Miles), when a vote was brought forward for £5,000, stated that not a shilling was required for roads in the western district. He (Mr. Perkins) believed that the roads there were much better let alone, and that the greatest want of the West was the making of culverts over certain creeks. He was not an advocate for breaking up the surface of the road at all, except where there was very heavy traffic. It was quite sufficient to make provision for carrying away the water. But if the western people only contributed £13,000 they would have to get £26,000 from the Central Government, and their experience, generally, of men from the West was, that they were quite competent to expend the money judiciously. He failed to see that there was any reason in the cry raised upon this point, but he would be glad if the hon. gentleman who had raised it would suggest some other mode of determining the value of a run. As everybody knew, a run or station was of very uncertain value. The hon. gentleman, however, hid or forgot the improvements upon a station, and that, even though the annual rental was assessed at first, the improvements were of a very expensive nature. This £13,000, therefore, might be doubled or trebled. He (Mr. Perkins) was unable to say what the extent of the improvements out west were, but from what he heard on every side they were of a very valuable nature. From the number of men employed, those improvements must have amounted to thousands of pounds, and no doubt the expenditure had produced an adequate return. It was unfair to state only one side of the case, and if the hon. gentleman was not acquainted with both sides he ought to be. He (Mr. Perkins) was therefore justified in coming to the conclusion that, when all things were taken into account in the west, the amount would be a very large one. As to the mode of getting at these improvements, there must be a beginning somewhere. Would the hon. gentleman

(Mr. Dickson) say it was impossible to arrive at the value of these improvements? How did they arrive at the value of anything but by employing men who made a specialty of the subject of valuation? It was not impossible, therefore, to find persons, either in the east or in the west, who could determine the value of the improvements upon these runs; and he was quite sure the pastoral lessees would be only too willing to show their books and offer every facility to any person sent out to determine such value. Confidence in a measure ought not to be shaken because someone chose to say that this or that thing could not be done. The members of the late Government—who had succeeded in passing a measure now lying dormant and inoperative, and who must have ascertained by this time that the country would not accept it, and who must admit the urgent necessity of some such measure—should, instead of obstructing or destroying the Bill before the House, lend a hand to make it as perfect as it was possible, and this more especially as it was not a party question.

Mr. BAILEY said that the hon. member who had just spoken had paid the greatest compliment to the late Government that he possibly could when he claimed for the Bill before the House that it was founded by the late Government. What, however, the late Government proposed to put into action by the will of the people, he (Mr. Perkins) proposed to put into action against the will of the people. That was only the difference between the two sides of the House. As for the Bill itself, it was simply an ingenious scheme to place the whole of the settled districts of the colony under the power of the Ministry of the day. On page 2 it commenced with the words, "the Governor in Council"—and those words, they knew, only meant the Ministry of the day, wherever they were used—who might, by proclamation, constitute divisions. By proclamation he might unite two or more divisions into one division, or subdivide a division, or abolish any existing division. By clause 3 the same authority might determine of how many members a Board should consist; and by clause 16 should appoint the first Board of each division. By clause 44 the same authority—the Ministry of the day—could, if there was a vacancy on any Board, appoint some qualified person to fill that vacancy. By clause 52 they could from time to time compel a Board to take into its hands, for temporary management and control, any public reserves, public works, buildings, erections, machines, implements, wells, reservoirs, and other things which might have been commenced to be constructed, purchased and provided for by moneys appropriated by Parliament. Now, would this work? Take such a case as Rockhampton and its inhabitants and the

Fitzroy River. If the people there had to finish the works commenced by the authority of Parliament, would they ever do it? On the contrary, they would find themselves hampered with a very great white elephant, and rather an expensive one as well. By clause 53 the Ministry of the day could compel a Board to take sole charge and management of any benevolent institution, school of arts, botanic garden, park, or commonage; by clause 63 the Ministry in power could compel a special rate to be levied if they were not satisfied with the amount of revenue derived from a work, to pay interest on the money borrowed for it; by clause 77 they had power to apportion the assets and liabilities of any portion of a division, subsequently incorporated, as they thought equitable;—in fact, there was to be a transference of power, and the Ministry of the day were to have about ten times as much power as they had now. The settled districts were to be at their mercy, since the assessments were to be made as the Government pleased, and were to be either bribed or punished according to the fancy of the Ministry of the day. The country was watching the conduct of the Government in this Bill. He was afraid that in this case, when the country spoke out, as it would do in the course of a few weeks, it would give forth no uncertain sound. The country spoke, yesterday, very loudly indeed. The Minister for Lands raised an unkind laugh when he deplored the present system of voting on the Darling Downs. That hon. gentleman had great reason to deplore, not the system of voting, but the fact that there were so many electors on the electoral rolls; and those electors, yesterday, denounced the Bill at the proper place—the ballot-box. He hoped the Ministry were not going to rush through to a division to-night, and make the House affirm the principle of a Bill which the country would not have at any price. Much had been said as to the difference in the mode of valuation between the selectors in the settled districts and the pastoral lessees, and he could give a more practical illustration of this difference than that given by the hon. member for Enoggera. A farmer some years ago bought land—then valueless, and which had been rejected by the squatter—at £1 an acre, and after many years of struggle that land which when he entered upon it was not worth a shilling an acre, although he had to pay a pound for it, had increased in value to from £15 to £20 an acre. That man had during the whole of those years paid his taxes, which had been devoted to the construction of roads in all parts of the colony—to the construction of railways even—and, to-day, this Conservative Government said to that man, and to thousands similarly situated,

“You have paid for our roads in other portions of the colony; you are contributing yearly to the construction and maintenance of our railways; you can just go and make your own roads.” There was another point of view from which this Bill might be approached—it seemed intended to retard settlement. Who would be so daring, now, as to go into an unsettled district and select land for agricultural purposes? Those who did so would have the fact staring them in the face that the half-dozen of them would have to make their own roads, for very little help would they get from the pastoral lessees. There was one remarkable thing about the valuation of the two different classes of property. The value of the rateable property of the agriculturist was to be computed at “not less than 8 per cent” upon the capital value of the fee-simple, while, curiously enough, the value for the property of the pastoral lessees was “not more than 8 per cent.” As much less as they pleased, but 8 per cent. must not be exceeded. It was strange that in dealing with the two classes of men the phrase should have been so ingeniously varied. As to homestead selectors, he understood what the hon. member for Enoggera seemed doubtful about, that he would only be rated at 8 per cent. on the capital value of the fee-simple of his holding. But if that homestead selector were so foolish as to put up a decent house upon it, and to fence it round, or to put a plough into it, he would find that the low rate at which he was to escape would be trebled and quadrupled. In short, the man was to be fined for improving his land, and the man who did not improve it was to be rewarded with roads made at the expense of the man who worked industriously on these farms. He did not intend to say much about the Bill. He was waiting for the verdict of his constituents and of the country upon it. He hoped the Government would not push the Bill to a division to-night, but wait to hear the opinion of those people who would have to suffer and be punished if this Bill passed.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Leichhardt) said that, as he believed in the principle of the Bill, he should vote for its second reading, reserving to himself the power of altering any clause in committee which required amendment. He was afraid the hon. member for Wide Bay had a very short memory on some matters. That hon. member had said a great deal about the powers to be exercised by the Governor in Council—or, in other words, the Ministry of the day—under this Bill; but he had forgotten that equally as great power was given to the Governor in Council under the Local Government Act of 1878, as might be specially seen in clause 15, which defined the general powers of the Governor in Council and

elsewhere. This Bill was not intended to supersede the Act of last year, which, as was predicted during the debate upon it, would never work outside the thickly-populated districts. Since the passing of that Act he had had a little experience in its working in the town of Rockhampton, of which place he was an alderman. In that town it had been found that this Act involved very much more clerical work than the old one; that it greatly increased the advertising expenditure; that it necessitated constant reference to a legal adviser; that in contracts it occasioned great delay; and that the electoral roll was anything but an improvement on the old plan. Indeed, the new plan had disfranchised large numbers. In Gladstone, they were all disfranchised, and were consequently unable to elect an alderman. The old system, which allowed rates to be paid up to within seven days of an election, brought in a large number of overdue accounts. The loan provisions in the new Act were in many respects very objectionable, and he agreed with the hon. member for Enoggera that some limit should be put to the borrowing powers of municipalities or shires. He did not believe in giving them unlimited power, and should be very glad to see that provision altered. The special rates that were required in the Act passed last session, and the reference to a *plebiscite*, were highly objectionable. He could see no force in the objection raised that the present was a bad time to initiate this system. As the country must, under any system, provide the money for its roads and bridges, it would be done far better by means of local than of central government; and under local supervision of works, a very much smaller sum of money would be needed. All who had travelled much about the country knew the lamentable waste that was incurred under the present system, and it was utterly impossible for any official, however able, with the great districts under his control, to prevent it. He could not go so far as the Minister for Lands, and say that £1 under the new system would go as far as £5 under the old one, but he believed that £3 would go as far as £5, and a saving of two-fifths was not to be despised. Of course, a measure like this required intelligent men to work it, and men of that kind could not be made by machinery; but if the settlers would throw their hearts into it they could make it a success. The House could easily punish districts which only raised a miserable sum by reducing the amount of the grant, and to tell them that if they wanted much done to their roads they must subscribe much. The sum intended to be given during the first five years, £2 for every £1 raised locally, was a very liberal inducement indeed. Any other system than voting by ballot-

papers through the post would be a complete failure in the large pastoral districts of the colony. He saw no objection to posting ballot-papers. Who cared a straw for secrecy in a thing like that, or whether it was proclaimed who he voted for? Impersonation could not be carried on under the Act, and in the case of a person getting a second ballot-paper he had to sign it, so that if he attempted to vote twice the returning officer could bring him very deservedly under the penalties of the law. The penalties under the present Act it was hardly possible to enforce, but those under this Bill might be enforced, and he would do his best to bring them to bear against anyone guilty of illegal voting. The exclusion of publicans from a seat at the Board had been made a great deal of. He did not think publicans were, generally speaking, worse than other people, but he quite approved of this provision, and with very good reason. If that restriction was not in the Bill, it was highly probable that in small townships up the country one or two publicans would have seats, and that one of them would come to be chairman, and as such be an *ex officio* justice of the peace. Publicans would not like a brother publican to be sitting on the bench and adjudicating on any cases that might arise against them. This was a new clause that had been worked to great advantage in South Australia, and those who had watched the course of legislation in that colony were of opinion that many of their laws might be advantageously followed. In a recent tour through Victoria and Riverina, he had had a good deal of conversation about the working of these Acts, and he was assured by the settlers that the presence of publicans was a great blot; that as a class they were always anxious for a large expenditure, and cases were quoted in which needless expenditure was incurred by them. He should vote in favour of that clause. Of the loan clauses he did not quite approve, and would help to modify them in committee. It was, in his opinion, a great pity that a clause was not inserted requiring a part payment annually of the principal in order to prevent rash borrowing, and to show that everything could not be left to posterity. He would be glad to see introduced a clause requiring a payment of 2½ or even 1½ per cent. of the principal yearly. He also found in Victoria and Riverina that the whole of the money raised was spent in the district by the members of the Board who knew when was the best time to incur such expenditure. As a rule, it was carried on when labour was most available, and it was found a very great boon to have the whole of the rates and a large endowment spent in the district at such time. It had been said that this Bill was very unfair to the farmers, as it gave

the pastoral tenants a great advantage over them, and the fifty-seventh clause had been quoted to prove that such was the case. He did not see why this clause should differ from clause 60. In the case of a station out west, for which £400 a-year rent was paid, the assessment at 8 per cent. would be £32; whereas if the sixtieth clause was followed, the maximum rate of 1s. in the £ would amount to £20. The pastoral tenant, therefore, paid £32 instead of £20. It was highly probable that on such a station, if a sheep station, £20,000 would be spent on improvements; at 8 per cent. that would be £1,600 a year, and the assessment at 1s. in the £ would amount to £80, so that the total contribution would be £112. If a cattle station the improvements would be few, but then, as the loading was very light, the roads would be but little used. The selectors, therefore, were not called upon to pay for pastoral tenants, but only to pay for roads and bridges in their own districts. The hon. member said the pastoral tenant should pay for his own railway; but there was no analogy at all between the two cases, because the railways went through Crown lands and increased their value, and the theory of railway rates was that they were sufficiently high to pay. He had no doubt that by the time the railways reached the good country they would pay as commercial speculations. Hon. members who talked as if they were worked at a dead loss should remember that the central line, though only constructed for a short distance, paid working expenses and 2½ per cent. on the capital. He would ask why the man at one end of the line should be called on to pay the whole cost? Were not the towns and those who supplied the towns also benefited? He remembered that when he visited Brisbane for the first time, in 1865, it was a very miserable town indeed. It was the pushing of railways into the interior that had made Brisbane what it now was, and if the same course was continued he hoped to live to see Brisbane two or three times as large as it was at the present time. It would not be so, however, if railways were confined to the small settled districts. Victoria, a democratic country enough, South Australia, and New South Wales, were making the most determined efforts to secure the purely pastoral traffic from the Riverina districts. They did not do so to improve the condition of the pastoral tenant, but to bring in much grist to those who lived in the cities. Every hon. member who had been one session in the House must know the great advantage that would arise from the removal of road and bridge votes from the consideration of the House. They knew the pressure which was brought on members to pass such votes—often in the most stupid and senseless way.

When the Bill came into committee, he would give his help to amend such clauses as required amendment, as they came under consideration.

Mr. McLEAN said the Minister for Lands had told them that a report was circulated through the colony that the Bill was to be enforced for the special purpose of increasing taxation in the settled districts. Hon. members had been told, last week, by a Minister for the Crown that another report had been circulated in another portion of the colony, and that he had despatched one of his colleagues to contradict that report. Perhaps the hon. gentleman would despatch the same colleague to contradict this report, but if he did not contradict it more successfully than he had the previous one it would be of little use. A great deal had been said to the effect that the Opposition now objected to the principles of local government, but that last year they introduced the Local Government Bill from the Government side of the House. He held that the present argument was not against principles of local government, but against the policy of the present Government, and the way they proposed to enforce the principles upon the country. The Premier, in moving the second reading, told them that the object of the Bill was to make the colony one great municipality. Was the hon. gentleman prepared to state that it was his intention to enforce all over the colony the principles of this Bill? That was the question he should like the Government to answer before he voted for or against the Bill. The object of the Bill, as introduced by the present Government, was to keep down the expenditure of money as raised by the Customs, and make certain localities contribute as much as the rates would bring in for expenditure in their own district. It was the intention of the Government to put this Bill into operation by nominating the first municipalities; but they seemed to be under the idea that nothing more was necessary than to say to certain gentlemen, "We apply to you to act as alderman or councillor in a certain district," and that those parties would jump at the honour and carry out the works in connection with this Bill. If that were the idea they were very much mistaken, especially if, as the Premier said, the municipalities to be formed under the Bill were to approximate as nearly as possible to the different electoral districts. Supposing that the principles of the Bill were forced upon a very large electoral district, and that certain gentlemen were appointed as councillors, did the Government think that they would ride for days and weeks for the purpose of carrying out the objects of the Bill? The Government would find a very great difficulty in enforcing the Bill and getting parties in the

country to accept the position of councillors;—if it was their intention to enforce it all over the colony, how would they do in such districts as the Warrego and Burke, where the houses were, perhaps, distant from ten to twenty miles from each other? It was impossible that the measure could be enforced all over the colony, and the Government might just as well honestly tell the House the different districts in which they proposed to apply it. He challenged the Ministry to conscientiously name these districts, and then hon. members would know how far they should go in voting for or against the measure. He did not believe in the voting-by-post scheme, and, if the Government had the slightest desire of seeing all the voters qualified exercising their rights, they could not have taken a worse way of carrying out their intention, especially as the ballot-papers had to be signed before justices of the peace. Justices were pretty numerous; still, parties would have to ride, often, several miles for the purpose of getting their signatures witnessed by magistrates. The idea would not work successfully, and, as had been well said by the hon. member (Mr. Griffith), it was providing a way of making personation easy. The thirty-third clause referred to the ascertaining of the poll and the declaration of the result, but left everything haphazard. It was not provided that any of the voters should be appointed to be present when the ballot-box was opened or the poll was declared; but it was apparently assumed that there would be a crowd around the returning officer at the time, and that any voters who chose could scrutinise the papers and satisfy themselves that everything was correct. As to the question of the maintenance of main roads by the Government, the true point had not yet been touched upon. They had been told that there were no main roads in the interior, and that therefore it was not necessary to spend money there for the purpose of making and maintaining roads; but in the next breath they were informed by the Minister for Lands that there were bridges and culverts there. He (Mr. McLean) did not know how they were to be made except with money, and the money thus required was not to be provided by local taxes raised in the outside districts, but out of general taxation; so that the taxpayer in the settled districts would be doubly burdened, being taxed to provide the interest on the cost of the railways meant to open out the grand country to the west, and being forced to contribute to the general taxes to make the roads in the west. If there were no main roads in the interior there were bridges and culverts; and here the pastoral lessee had an advantage over the agriculturist;—the former required no branch roads, but in the settled districts a large number of branch roads were abso-

lutely necessary. The main roads were quite sufficient for the pastoral lessee, and the Government were therefore not justified in not putting the Bill into operation in the outside districts on the ground that there were no branch roads there when there were main roads, which ought to be maintained by special taxation. In reference to the fifty-fourth clause, providing that the Board may determine annually the number of public-houses required in the division, why did not the Government save the Colonial Secretary the trouble of introducing a Bill to amend the licensing laws, by providing that the Boards for the different municipalities should be the licensing authority;—that would have been more comprehensive than the fifty-fourth clause, which left it optional with the aldermen to transmit to the clerk of petty sessions the resolution limiting the number of public-houses. As to the question of taxation, the provision that no rateable property should be computed as of an annual value of less than 8 per cent. upon the fair capital value of the fee-simple was nothing more than a tax upon the labour of the agriculturist, as had been ably pointed out by the hon. member (Mr. Bailey). Why did not the Government come to the House and propose a graduated system of taxation by the acre, beginning with the towns and becoming lesser and lesser as the areas extended inland, instead of proposing to tax the capital value of the fee-simple? The House would then have seen some real honesty of purpose displayed by the Government. The Minister for Works had said that farmers must be made to make their roads, as if they were the only parties who used the roads! How did the principle of this Bill contrast with the principle of local government as carried out in Canada? Under the Local Government Act in force there, more than one class of individuals were called upon to contribute; here it was proposed to tax the property holders only, but in Canada it was provided—

“Every merchant manufacturer trader and master artificer carrying on his trade business or calling in a local municipality whether resident therein or not and whether he does or does not possess therein any real property shall by reason of such trade &c. be liable for all the purposes of this Act to assessment and the value of his business shall be estimated by the valuers of the municipality as a distinct property according to the average annual profits thereof based upon the proceeds of the next two preceding years.”

Here the Government wanted hon. members to believe that it was simply farmers who used the roads; but there were many other persons who used them just as much, and received as much benefit from their maintenance as the farmers and settlers.

Proceeding a little further in connection with this subject, he noticed that in Canada it was also provided that—

“Every judge or other civil functionary and every advocate notary physician surgeon civil engineer or surveyor residing in a local municipality and performing the duties of his office or practising his profession therein shall be liable to assessment in like manner.”

To carry out the principle of local government it was necessary that every individual in the district should be called upon to pay a fair proportion to the expenses of the municipality, and not one class merely. No doubt property was benefited by the maintenance of the roads; but as it increased in value so did the interests, in a certain ratio, of all other persons in the district. Consequently, it was unfair to call upon one class only to bear the burden. The hon. member for the Leichhardt (Mr. Macfarlane) had repeated the challenge thrown out by the other side, last week, that the residents at both ends benefited by a railway, and that, therefore, it was unfair to call upon one end only to contribute to the making of the railway;—it was stated that the towns from which the railways started benefited as much as the districts to which the lines were to be carried. Carrying that argument a little further, they would find that the towns were benefited by roads to the same extent as the farmers. Why should not the towns, therefore, contribute? They were benefited to the same extent by the farmers bringing their produce in, and taking their supplies out by the roads, as they were by railways being made into the interior. The object of introducing the principle of local government at the present time was the initiation of a system to nurse the revenue of the colony to pay the interest on the loans for carrying our railways into the far West. That was, in a few words as he could put it, the real purport of the introduction of this measure at the present time. Another way he looked at the introduction of the Bill at the present time was that it was introduced to avoid a land tax. He believed, if the Government had come down to the House and proposed a land tax it would have been received by the country with far more favour than this Bill, and for this reason—that there were gentlemen who held 50,000, 60,000, 70,000, 80,000, 90,000, and even 100,000 acres of freehold property, that this Bill would scarcely ever touch, or at any rate not to the same extent that their pockets would have been touched if a land tax had been introduced. There was one question he would ask the Government to answer before he should say whether he would vote for or against the Bill. He was not pledged to his party for or against it. He believed in the principle of local government as much as the pre-

sent Government did. Last year he raised an objection to the Bill then introduced, because he considered it was not a workable measure, and the Government now told the House that it was not workable, and they therefore introduced this Bill because it was workable. But they found that it was merely a transcript of the Bill that the Government said was workable. Now, if the Colonial Secretary would get up in his place and tell the House the different electorates in which it was the intention of the Government to introduce the principles of this measure, then he (Mr. McLean) should honestly and conscientiously tell him whether he would vote for it or not.

Mr. WALSH said it was generally admitted that a Bill of this nature should become law, but, instead of dealing with the provisions of the Bill, it appeared that hon. members opposite had been simply making electioneering speeches. It was evident that they anticipated another election soon, or they would not have gone on making the speeches they did. He protested against these electioneering speeches. He came a long distance to the House to assist as far as he could to pass what he hoped would be useful legislation, and not to listen to such clap-trap as he had listened to evening after evening; and he only wished the Speaker was vested with power to stop such proceedings, and that when an election was aimed at again he should stop the speaker. The hon. member for Wide Bay said the present Ministry were looked upon with fear by the country. What wonder was there that they or any Ministry were looked upon with fear, when they had before them staring them in the face all the misdeeds of the late Government for the past five years! They had always yielded—he defied any hon. member to contradict his statement—that they had always yielded to the pressure of the people. This Bill would prevent that to a large extent. It would relieve members of being asked to do that which in their consciences they could not possibly do—at any rate, those who had consciences—and there were some who had none. They would ask money for all sorts of absurd purposes; but for himself he hoped, while he occupied a seat in that House, he would never ask money for anything that he would not feel justified in expending if it were his own. It appeared to him, from the speech of the hon. member for Wide Bay, that it was intended to make another appeal to the passions and prejudices of the people against the present Government, because he led the people to suppose—and for this purpose ingenious rumours were circulated—that if they voted for the present Opposition they (the Opposition) would make all their roads and bridges; but if they voted to keep these wretched squatters

in power they would do nothing for them. Those were the rumours that were circulated ingeniously and remarkably well; and hon. members opposite were so accustomed to repeating the same thing that that they would believe it themselves, directly. A Bill of this nature, in which all sides were interested, should be passed, if they had the moral courage to do so, which they certainly ought to have. The necessity for it was admitted, and, if some clauses of it were unworkable, could they not be amended in committee? A great deal had been said about taxing the squatter and free-selector, and he for one would never submit to a law unless it dealt fairly and equitably with the squatter as with the farmer. Again, it had been asserted that the squatter paid no rates, and did not make the roads; but what had always been lost sight of was that the condition of the squatter and the condition of the farmer were two very different things. One was improving property which was virtually his own, and the other simply leased the grass, upon sufferance, from the Government of the day. He would give one instance of the necessity of Local Boards. One fact was worth a dozen arguments, and when the late Government were in office they spent a large sum of money—and he was sure they did it conscientiously and honestly—they spent £9,000 upon the range at Cairns. The practical people of the district saw and declared—himself amongst the number, and he took the trouble to write to the then Minister for Works, Mr. George Thorn—that no practical dray road could be got that way, and suggested that further inquiry and search should be made. But although the Government spent £9,000, the people of Port Douglas subscribed £200 amongst themselves, and expended it in such a way that they were able to get dray traffic down to that port, which they could not get at the place that the Government spent £9,000 upon. The fact was, the people themselves were interested in it—their existence was at stake;—they had gone there and settled down, and built stores, and obtained goods, and they had to make this road, because otherwise they would have had to leave, and probably be ruined. He believed he was right in stating that there was more actual work done with that £200 than any Government could do for £1,000. That fact impressed him with the necessity for local government, and throwing people more upon their own resources. These might be bad times to pass such a measure as this, but sooner or later it would have to be done, and the sooner it was done the better for the people themselves, because the present Government would not always be in office; and hon. members opposite must consider that when they were in office the difficulties they

would have in resisting applications being continually made for roads here, there, and everywhere, which would ultimately result in every member wanting a road made to his own door, or that of his neighbour, at the expense of the State. The remainder of the colony would not submit to such a system. The hon. member who had just spoken went to Canada and told them what was done there, but he would have done much better if he had told them what was going on in Victoria, where he (Mr. Walsh) believed a Bill of this nature had been in operation for some time, and was working admirably. Where, then, was the necessity for going to Canada? The hon. member also talked about taxing this person, that person, and the other; but so far as he (Mr. Walsh) could see, the only persons in the colony who were able to stand taxes were the legal profession; and if they went outside the provisions of the Bill, he said—put a tax upon the legal profession. Another thing which he thought was in very bad taste was, that hon. members opposite were talking to outside constituencies, and not to the provisions of the Bill. The leader of the Opposition had told them, in effect, that this Bill was just the same as the one he himself helped to make law, last session, and he was certain that hon. gentleman believed in this Bill, because he must believe in the last, and yet he feared to carry it into operation because by so doing he might lose support. He (Mr. Walsh) said that that was most unfair to the country. They were now suffering, and they would suffer, from their inability to carry out laws that they had passed because they displeased somebody. It was a well-known fact, as the hon. member for Enoggera had told them, that there would be petitions from all parts of the country with reference to this Bill. But did they not know that there were petitions every day upon the most absurd things? They had a deplorable instance of it that afternoon. The Townsville people had got a railway, and the Charters Towers people were going to dictate where they should have the terminus. Did anyone ever hear anything so unreasonable, and yet people would sign that petition because there was nothing to pay—in fact, people would sign a petition to hang half-a-dozen people in town if there was nothing to pay. These petitions were a great curse, and it was a pity that the time of the House should be occupied with their consideration;—the Speaker ought to be vested with power to see if there was any sense or reason in such petitions before they were received at all. The hon. member who spoke last also laid great stress upon railways, but he (Mr. Walsh) could not look at that matter in the same light that he did: railways were national works,

They had at present a large area of land that was not a marketable commodity, but by making railways through it they enhanced its value and made it a marketable commodity, for which they could get money, which they very much needed, in some shape or other. There was no analogy between that and making roads in the settled districts to the private property of farmers. The Government were perfectly justified in enhancing the value of their estate if they wanted to get rid of it. At present the country was not remunerative, and to make it remunerative it was necessary to have a system of cheap railways, and he hoped that system would be carried into effect. But he did not think they could afford expensive railways, and hoped the Government would confine themselves to a fixed amount. He should support the second reading of the Bill, the necessity for which was admitted on all sides, and if any alterations were necessary they could be made in committee.

Mr. BEOR did not want to let the debate come to an end without saying a few words on the subject. At the outset, he would remark that with the general principles of the Bill he thoroughly agreed. He agreed with the principle that the persons through whose lands or districts roads were to be made should themselves bear the charge of the amount to be spent upon them; and he held that the money to be spent upon the roads should be spent by the people in whose districts they were. It was a good principle, also, that the people should tax themselves for such purposes and should not be allowed to draw upon the general revenue—that they should make an effort to help themselves, and should show how much and in what proportion money should be spent on their roads—in what parts of the district, and particularly at what times it should be spent. At present it was necessary that money should be spent on the roads at a certain time of the year, when perhaps it was inadvisable that it should be spent, and then when it was advisable to have money spent it was not always possible to get it from the Government. He did not approve of all the details of the Bill, and he hoped when it went into committee to see some alterations made in it. With regard to the endowments which were to be added from the general revenue, and the proportions of such amounts, he thoroughly agreed with the proportion proposed to be added to the revenue collected in the districts themselves as a correct and a just one so far as the Southern portion of the colony was concerned, but he did not believe the amount proposed to be added was just or fair or right in the Northern portions of the colony, because, for many years past, money had been drawn from the Northern districts which had been

spent on making roads in the South. It would be very hard indeed that the Northern portion should be called upon to contribute in the same proportion towards making roads as the South. It might be difficult, or almost impossible, to make that distinction; but if it was found to be impossible or impracticable to provide such legislation as that, it was only another proof added to the many which now existed that it was, perhaps, impossible to govern the Northern part of the colony at all from the Southern part. Objections had been made by members opposite to different parts of the Bill—among others with regard to the mode of rating, and it had been asked how it was to be proportioned in regard to the improvements mentioned in clause 57. It had been said that provision was there made that pastoral tenants should be rated in an amount not exceeding 8 per cent. per annum, and that then an exception was made in regard to improvements; and it had been asked why, if the rating on pastoral lands was not to exceed 8 per cent., improvements should not be included? To that the answer was—the same as other properties were rated under the Bill. But it had been said that that was unfair, as there was a proviso that the rating on pastoral lands should not be more than 8 per cent., whereas on other property it should not be less than 8 per cent. Section 60, which provided for a general rate of 5 per cent., would, however, apply to Crown lands. There was no provision with regard to the minimum which applied to the value, but there was a special provision which applied to the maximum as concerning Crown lands, and that maximum was fixed at less than 8 per cent. instead of £5 per cent.—not on the value, but on the rent, which might or might not be the value. It seemed utterly inconsistent with the arguments taken up by hon. members opposite with regard to the leasing of Crown lands, as when they were asked to let those lands by appraisalment they said, “no,” that they would let them at a fixed rate of £2 per square mile. They adopted that plan with regard to leasing, but, when the same plan was suggested by hon. members on his (Mr. Beor’s) side of the House for rating, they objected and said it was unfair. If appraisalment was the best way of getting the best rent for the colony, then the rental was the only true and proper guide, as they could not send a man round the Crown lands as they would other property to appraise their value, so there could be no other guide than the annual rent. In regard to any other property, a valuation could be arrived at by appraisalment, by sending a skilled man to appraise. The value of improvements on Crown lands could be ascertained in that way, and therefore it was right

that improvements should be excepted in the case of rating Crown lands;—besides that, improvements were perishable. It would be most unfair and unjust to make the squatter pay on the higher value of his improvements, which were perishable things. The test of the annual value of anything was clearly the rental of it. If a man let a house, the best test of the value was the annual rent, and they could have no better test. An hon. member on the other side of the House (Mr. McLean) had said that it would have been much better if, instead of bringing in their measures, the Ministry had imposed a land tax. How would he make that act with the hon. member who sat beside him (Mr. Dickson), who complained of the injustice of making a man who had got his little farm of ten acres worth £500, pay as much as the pastoral tenant who had a large quantity of land at something like a similar rental? If a land tax were imposed, the small farmers were the men who would be most affected by it. They could not tax an area and impose a rate per acre. It was a most astounding proposition to take an acre of sterile, wretched land, and an acre of the most productive land in the colony—such as that in the Darling Downs—and impose exactly the same sum for one as for the other. The squatter would not feel such a tax one iota, because the true squatter was not a man who held his own freehold, but a man who settled on the land and rented it from the Crown for the purpose of raising his sheep and cattle. The squatter would lose nothing by a land-tax; but the men who would feel it would be the very small farmers for whom the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) had been contending, but for whom the hon. member for the Logan (Mr. McLean) would propose this heavy tax. In speaking of the Divisional Boards Bill the other night, the hon. member for Oxley (Mr. Grimes) had referred to a speech (Mr. Beor) made in this House two sessions ago, and pointed out that he (Mr. Beor) had contended, in speaking against the Railway Reserves Bill, that it would be far better to look carefully after our roads and bridges than spend the money wildly in railways all over the country. He understood the hon. member (Mr. Grimes) to have reproached him with inconsistency as if he had now abandoned the principles he enunciated at that time. He had not changed his opinion at all, but still held that it would have been a thousand times better if they had never undertaken those railways—such as the Bundaberg-Mount Perry, Gympie-Maryborough, and Townsville-Chartiers Towers lines; and he would be very glad indeed, now, to see all those railways wiped out, together with the enactments which authorised them. From whom had the present Government got

those railways? They received them as a present—a very handsome present—from the late Ministry, who had persuaded a majority of the House to vote for them. There they were however, and the Government had to do the best they could with them. It would have been a thousand times better if, instead of sinking large sums of money in their construction, the money had been devoted to making roads, which were, after all, more important than the railways ever would be. This Bill would be the very means by which these roads would be made; or, if not this Bill, then something very like it, for the best way in which to get the roads properly looked after was to entrust them to the people, on whom would devolve the business of keeping them in order and good repair, and whose interest would be increased in that by asking them to contribute towards the making of them, and by forming themselves into Boards who should discuss in which parts of a district roads most needed attention, and who would take care that the money was spent in the best way possible. He agreed with the principles of the Bill, and should vote for it if it went to a division, hoping at the same time that some alterations would be made in committee.

Mr. MACKAY moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER hoped the leader of the Opposition would give his best assistance to close the debate to-morrow. Some consideration should be shown to the country members, who naturally did not wish to have the session indefinitely prolonged. As on several occasions before, the debate had taken a general turn, and subjects had been introduced which hon. members would have ample opportunity of discussing when the loans for railways were considered. He hoped at one time the second reading would have been passed in one evening, so that a fortnight might have elapsed before the Bill was taken in committee, with the view of enabling the country to study its provisions and members to prepare amendments in the interval. It was impossible, however, to resist an adjournment at this hour of the night, but he hoped the second reading would be passed at an early hour to-morrow. Would the leader of the Opposition give him some idea as to how many members on his side wished to speak?

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was glad at all times to assist the hon. gentleman. He could not say exactly how many members on that side wished to speak, but he knew of four or five, and saw no reason why the debate should not close at a tolerably early hour to-morrow. He, at the same time, was sure it was not desirable to limit debate, because, from the way in which the

Bill had been brought forward, it was one of the most important measures of the session, and could not be discussed apart from the general policy of the Government. The Premier had made the Bill a cardinal part of that policy, and this was why the debate had travelled outside the Bill itself, of which, really, there was nothing to say except that it was incomplete and defective.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was one thing pretty evident: the increase of members had increased the debating power—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The talking power.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (*continuing*) said that during the present session any Bill of average importance occupied two nights before the second reading was passed, whereas it formerly was got through in one evening. He would advise the leader of the Government to give another day per week for Government business, now that there were fifty-five members;—otherwise the session would last six or eight months.

Mr. GARRICK said it was true the debates on second readings were longer than they used to be, but this was attributable, not so much to the increase of members, as to the incomplete and imperfect character of the Bills introduced. The present Bill so affected the whole policy of the Government that it was impossible to discuss it without debating the Financial Statement.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the gentleman had not represented the matter fairly. The extra time occupied by debates on second readings arose from the fact that, while the present Government were in Opposition, they acted upon the rule of beating the Government if they could, upon a second reading on the general principles; but if they themselves were beaten, of going into committee with the desire of making the best they could of the Bill under discussion. The Opposition, now, did not act upon that rule—they discussed the second reading as if they were in committee. That was why so much time was wasted.

Mr. REA said that a quite sufficient excuse was to be found in the fact that the ablest financier in the House had expressed himself as being unable to understand the rating clauses. If that was the case, how could they expect uneducated farmers to understand the Bill? The blunder was in the Ministry not knowing their work.

Question of adjournment put and passed.

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