

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 25 June, 1879.

New Bill.—Question.—Motion for Adjournment.—Questions. — Formal Resolutions. — Divisional Boards Bill—second reading. — Widow of the late Sir Maurice O'Connell.—Mineral Oils Bill.

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

NEW BILL.

Mr. AMHURST presented a Bill for the improvement of Port Pioneer, which was read a first time, ordered to be printed, and the second reading fixed for July 17.

QUESTION.

Mr. STUBLEY asked the Premier—

Is it the intention of the Government to place a sum on the Supplementary Estimates for repairs to the Bowen Jetty?

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) replied—

Tenders have been called for the works referred to, and the amount available will be supplemented by a sum on the next Loan Estimates.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. SIMPSON moved the adjournment of the House, to direct attention to some facts in connection with the petition which he had presented at the previous sitting, relating to land exchanges in the Dalby district. Referring to some assertions made at the public meeting, when that petition was put on foot, he found that the Mayor of Dalby (Mr. Landy) used these words:—

“The first exchange to which he would refer was that of the Irvingdale lands, which had lately been thrown open to selection. That transaction would have been satisfactory enough, had the terms of the exchange been carried out as originally intended. Such, however, was far from being the fact. A large portion of the lands thrown open at Irvingdale was utterly valueless, and for those lands the Jondaryan firm received an equivalent, amounting to more than acre per acre of some of the finest soil in the vicinity of Dalby, instead of the waterless country of the Prairie, as had been represented.”

The first resolution proposed at that meeting was to this effect:—

“That, in the opinion of this meeting, the exchange lately made between the Government and the proprietors of Jondaryan Station, whereby a large area of land in the vicinity of Dalby was given for the land thrown open to selection at Irvingdale (one-third of which is valueless), is not in accordance with the original terms of exchange, which provided that the land to be given in lieu of that resumed at Irvingdale was to be so given from land situated on the West Prairie, represented as waterless.”

The gentleman who moved that resolution said :—

"The chairman had remarked that, if the Irvingdale exchange had been carried out on the plan originally intended, there would not be so much to complain of, although the Jondaryan people had obtained more than acre per acre, because it was represented that Irvingdale possessed water frontages, which made it a more suitable locality for the selector. But, even then, one-third of the whole area was valueless."

The seconder said :—

"Self-preservation was the first law of nature, and, following out that law, we should energetically protest against any attempted infringement of our rights by any Government whatever."

These gentlemen had complained that certain promises to exchange land were made to them, and that the exchanges were not being carried out. The second resolution was :—

"That the exchange already made has exercised a most prejudicial effect on settlement in the neighbourhood of Dalby, by allowing an enormous area of first-class land, within easy distance of water, and in the immediate vicinity of a populous municipality, to pass into the hands of one firm, to the detriment of a large number of intending selectors, and the manifest injury to the revenue of the colony; and that an earnest appeal should be made to the Government to annul the exchange, resume the land, and substitute in place thereof the land at West Prairie, as originally proposed or agreed upon."

And, in speaking to it, the mover said :—

"No doubt whatever could exist that the public had been led to believe the lands situated on West Prairie were to be exchanged for those resumed at Irvingdale for the purposes of selection. Instead of this being done, a splendid lot of first-class land near Dalby was substituted.

* * * * *

"These capitalists and squatters have already possessed themselves of immense tracts of land, but with assistance of Government they will leave nothing undone to secure every available acre, to the entire and hopeless exclusion of the intending selector."

"The land exchanged was absolutely required for the purposes of enabling a population to settle in our vicinity, and the resolution contains but a reasonable request when it asks that the exchange may be annulled, and the land originally intended to be given may be substituted for that so wrongfully disposed of. This electorate had, for some reason or other, been badly treated for years past."

Further down he said :—

"He was afraid their efforts would be discouraged by the Government as at present constituted; because, on the principle of 'one crow does not pick out another crow's eyes,' they might not care to interfere with the actions of the late Ministry in the matter of land exchanges."

As the gentlemen signing the petition thought they had a very good case, they therefore presented the petition through him (Mr. Simpson). It was something new to find these land exchanges so bad as represented, for he had always understood that the mayor of Dalby had been very active and successful in making these exchanges as good as possible for Dalby. Mr. Miles, in a speech at Dalby, in November last, said :—

"He (Mr. Miles) had always been the first to be applied to by anyone who had a grievance respecting the land, and he thought it only right to say, now, that if any man in this community deserved the thanks of the public in connection with the interests of this town and neighbourhood, it was their mayor, who occupied the chair on the present occasion. That gentleman had never ceased advocating and agitating exchanges of land between the neighbouring stations and the Government for the benefit of the town and district of Dalby, and, with such perseverance was this advocacy carried out, that he (the speaker) was almost about to say that he began to consider Mr. Landy's applications rather in the light of a nuisance than otherwise. Mr. Landy managed, however, to get the exchanges effected."

Further on he (Mr. Miles) said :—

"The chairman would give him the credit of having in every way assisted to bring about the exchange of the Irvingdale lands, and he (Mr. Miles) was both annoyed and surprised at those lands not having been thrown open to selection."

That was the opinion expressed by Mr. Miles, who was supposed to know all about the land exchanges at Dalby, on November 6, last year, and he (Mr. Simpson) had no reason to suppose that every word uttered by him was not true. However, they had a public meeting in Dalby, in March last, over other matters, when Mr. Landy was again in the chair, and Mr. Miles was present and spoke, but nothing at all was said about these land exchanges. No complaint of any sort was made, and it seemed to be generally understood that the electorate of Dalby had got, in this respect, all they could possibly want. A few days after that his (Mr. Simpson's) attention was called to a leader in the *Dalby Herald*, bitterly complaining of the exchanges, and urging that they should not be carried out. He was in Brisbane immediately after, and called at the Land Office, and requested to be made acquainted with the exact particulars of the case, on which occasion he was shown the papers, and given all the information which was available; but, as he was not going back to the electorate at that time, he wrote the following letter :—

"To the Editor of the *Dalby Herald*.

"Sir,—My attention has been drawn, by a recent leader in your paper, to the Jondaryan and exchanges. Being in Brisbane I have

made it my business to inquire into the case, and can state positively that these exchanges were approved of by the late Government so far back as September 14th, 1877, and finally completed and passed out of official hands about January 15, 1879, just before the late Government left office. Whatever credit or discredit attaches to these exchanges, the present Government and Parliament have had no share therein. Let the electors of Dalby saddle the credit or discredit on the Ministers who passed these exchanges—their names are easily obtained.

"Yours truly,
"G. MORRIS SIMPSON."

After that, he found that the present Government had been appealed to, and the onus of these exchanges had been saddled on them. He was glad the petition had been presented, for when the papers which he intended to call for were presented, the House would be able to judge of the case. Someone who had attended that last meeting had written to the *Toowoomba Chronicle* on the subject, as follows:—

"And this exchange, mark you, for the benefit of Dalby—one of those benefits, I suppose, which the honourable member for Dalby promised his constituents at his canvass for that electorate, and is now aiding to bring about."

He drew the attention of hon. members to these facts, so that when the papers he desired were on the table of the House, and the Minister for Lands had answered some questions which he intended to ask, the House would be able to judge for itself how far the present Government and he (Mr. Simpson) had any share in carrying out these land exchanges, and how far they affected the late Government; while his constituents would be made acquainted with whom to lay the credit or discredit of these land exchanges.

Mr. BEOR took this opportunity of thanking the hon. member for the Kennedy (Mr. Stubley) for the kind assistance he had rendered him (Mr. Beor) that afternoon, touching the question standing in the hon. member's name upon a matter in his (Mr. Beor's) electorate. Had the hon. member done him the honour of coming to him personally, he could much more easily have obtained from him (Mr. Beor) all the information he had now obtained from the Premier; but, none the less, he took it as an earnest that the hon. member would render every assistance in any matter in which he (Mr. Beor) might move for the good of his electorate. Having taken the responsibility unasked, he was sure the hon. member would not shrink from going further on other occasions.

Mr. STUBLEY said he was obliged for the last speaker's remarks; but, considering the length of time he had been in the House, it would have been more to his credit had he seen to the repairs to the Bowen Jetty some time ago; but, as he

had let it go for so long, he (Mr. Stubley) could not lay claim to much credit, now, the present Government having already called tenders for the necessary repairs. He was at Bowen, some time ago, and saw the jetty going to ruin.

The PREMIER said the hon. member for Kennedy need not attribute want of attention to his district to the hon. member for Bowen, as, to put it right, the hon. member had represented the matter to the Government even since he had been elected. There was a sum of £1,500 voted last year, but that amount was not sufficient to do the work required. It would have been made use of so far as it would go, but Government had a long time ago made their arrangements for the repair of the jetty, and had called for tenders making provision for repairs actually required in the meantime; but it was not, as the hon. member insinuated, on account of action taken by himself.

Mr. BAILEY took advantage of the motion before the House to draw attention to the petition formally presented by him at the previous sitting—though he did so confessing that he had never heard of a motion to adjourn being made to discuss a petition before. He had presented a petition from the residents at Kilkivan, praying that the threat of the Postmaster-General—that the telegraph office, there, should be discontinued—might not be carried out. He trusted the inhabitants of that district, where gold discoveries were taking place, would not be deprived of the telegraph, but would be afforded all reasonable means of communication. He hoped to hear of no telegraphs being closed in that district, but new ones opened, if possible. He deprecated the action of the Postmaster General in this respect that, for a paltry economy of a few hundred pounds, the inhabitants of the colony should be put to much inconvenience. He hoped the petition he had presented, and his own district, would receive due consideration.

Motion for adjournment put and negatived.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. GRIMES asked the Minister for Works—

If it is his intention to increase the Freight for carrying Wool on the Queensland Railways?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) replied—

No; the average rate per ton per mile on wool is about 7½d., and on general goods, all round, about 6d.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH asked the Colonial Secretary—

Are the conditions of the notification of 23rd December, 1876, respecting the issue of

licenses to recruit Polynesian labourers and transfers of such labourers, still observed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) replied—

Yes.

Mr. GARRICK asked the Minister for Works—

Is it the intention of the Government to ask the authority of Parliament, this session, to provide a sufficient sum, by way of loan, to construct a line of railway from Brisbane towards the Pine River or Caboolture, *via* Sandgate, or otherwise?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

The Government are not prepared at present to state their intentions upon this subject, but the House will be advised of their policy in regard thereto when the Loan Estimates are placed upon the table.

FORMAL RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolutions were passed—

By Mr. McLEAN—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copies of all papers and correspondence in connection with the Forfeiture and Re-selection of Portion No. 27, parish of Tabragalba.

By Mr. WALSH—

That there be laid on the table of the House, all correspondence between the Government and the Municipalities of Warwick and Ipswich as to the payment of Interest on Loans.

By Mr. HAMILTON—

That there be laid on the table of the House, copies of all correspondence relative to the intended closing of the Telegraph Office at Elliot.

By Mr. NORTON—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a return showing all moneys expended in deepening the Brisbane River and its approaches up to the present time; also, the amount required for completion of such improvements.

By Mr. GARRICK—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copies of Plans, Specifications, and all other documentary information, if any, in the possession of the Works Department, concerning the Survey of a line of Railway towards the Pine River and Caboolture, *via* Sandgate, and otherwise.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL—SECOND READING.

Mr. MACKAY, in resuming the adjourned debate on the second reading of this Bill, said he agreed with the remarks made by the Premier, last night, as to the necessity for getting on with business, and would do all in his power to help in that direction; indeed, he would not have spoken on this Bill but from a conviction that, if passed, it would cause immense injury to the country districts. It was a most important measure

—one which struck at the very root of settlement as carried on in Queensland. In his speech, last night, the Minister for Works—to whom he always listened with pleasure, and from whom he invariably learned something—used these words about the attitude of the Liberal party on this question—

“He 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 inference to be drawn from that was, that the Government intended to remove some of the taxation which now pressed so heavily on the working man; but they had not yet introduced a measure before the House that would do anything of the kind. The object of this Bill, as he understood it, and as the country seemed to understand it, was, that something like £100,000 was to be raised by taxation from those who had made the improvements in the country. This money was to be raised by an extension of our municipal system. That system, as carried on in Brisbane, had many good points, and some very bad ones, and the bad points had been introduced into the measure now before the House. In Brisbane, which was by no means a badly-governed city, persons owning house property very readily improved the streets by putting down those asphalt side-walks which were so pleasing, while the Corporation could not compel land speculators to make those same improvements. This Bill proposed that in the country districts men who had worked hard for years, and spent large sums in improving their land, should be taxed for the improvements they had made in order to still further improve the property of persons who would not put their hands into their own pockets to make roads for themselves. Something was said, last night, about the Canadian and American systems. There were many things the colony might be thankful for that it had not got from those countries, and there were others which it would be good for it to have. Amongst these was the system of settlement on the land. In the States, hundreds and thousands of men travelled overland far greater distances than in Australia,

through snow and bad weather, to Colorado, Nevada, and California, in order to get good land for settlement. How was this? There were grand stretches of rich land in those States, but they were not richer or larger than the lands of this colony, and men were not more honest there than here. How was it that settlement, in the literal sense of the term, followed up by railways and all the comforts of civilized life, progressed so well in America in spite of difficulties of climate and country? The answer was very simple. Men did not hold huge estates there for speculative purposes as they did in this country. An hon. member had expressed himself horrified at the idea that there should be a tax upon land. That was just what they did in the United States. Directly a man took up an acre of land, he had to pay so much money upon it. On the land fell all the charges, and one could not take up a Californian paper without coming across numbers of sheriffs' sales of land to recover the taxes due thereon. Under such a system, men would not hold land for speculative purposes. Had there been a provision in this Bill to make taxes chargeable on all alienated land, it would have been one of the best measures ever introduced, and he should have been only too glad to support it. Not even in Victoria or South Australia, which in many points called for their warmest admiration, had settlement progressed as in the countries he had mentioned. How to settle people prosperously on the land had been worked out effectively by the Americans. While depression prevailed everywhere else, the agricultural States were the most prosperous in the Union, and people from the old country were going thither in great numbers at a greater expense than would bring them to Australia. The groundwork of their success was that they had begun at the beginning, and that would never be done in Queensland until a tax was put on land directly it was alienated from the Crown. That would prevent dummied and the evils that accompany the grasping of large blocks of land. It was impossible that such a cry as the "bursting up of large estates," so popular amongst certain classes in Victoria, should be heard in America. There were certainly very large estates there—some men cultivating as much as 30,000 or 40,000 acres of wheat, and yet nobody ever suggested that they should be subjected to the "bursting up" process. But those lands were not held for speculative purposes, and the proprietors would not keep a single acre of it longer than it would pay them to do so. It was the fact that land in this colony was held for speculative purposes that pressed so heavily on the settlers, and it would press upon them still more heavily if they were to be taxed for the benefit of those who would never

make any improvements on their lands unless they were compelled. He was in favour of local government being introduced and extended throughout the colony; but that would never be effected by the Divisional Boards Bill. It was said, last night, that the existing Act was a failure; but it needed no prophet to foretell that this would be another failure, for the people could not afford to pay the money which this measure would require from them. Instead of this being a remission of taxation for the benefit of the working man, the working man who had a little property, and improved it like a man, was to be compelled to pay the bulk of the sum which would be demanded, while the land speculator would get off nearly scot-free. It was hard enough, at present, in Queensland for a man to get along, but to press him like that was to bear too hardly upon him. Many of the selectors were in a wretched position, and to put a still heavier pressure upon them could only result in the ruin of numbers. The tendency of the Bill, according to the hon. member for Leichhardt, would be to bring intelligent men together to work out its provisions, and, were that a fact, he (Mr. Mackay) would be very glad to see such a result. But he would take, as an instance, the electorate of Stanley. In that huge district, unless a couple of hundred persons gave their services, some would have to come enormous distances. Such a number would never come together, and, therefore, the management of affairs would drift into the hands of one or two men, and the great bulk of the taxation would go for salaries to a few officials, and less would probably be spent on the roads than was spent at the present time. There were, he admitted, some good points in the scheme, but at present there were too few people in the colony to render its adoption advantageous. The best advance that had yet been made in that direction was the arrangement known as "Mr. Walsh's District Boards." That measure had done good service in several parts of the country; and, had there not been a prejudice against it, more benefit would have resulted from it, and there would have been no necessity for extracting the enormous sum extra from the pockets of people sufficiently taxed already. The danger of centralisation in the colony had been frequently pointed out; but, though that danger was bad enough, there was another which was probably worse—the danger of over-government. There were many countries on the face of the earth literally over-governed—where a large proportion of the people were in one way or another in the service of and living on the public. There was a probability that, if this measure were introduced among a mere handful of people, the number of officials already employed by the

Government would be still further increased; and for that reason, amongst others, they would not be justified in passing the Bill at the present time. A great deal had been said during the debate about the exemption of pastoral lessees; but he thought, looking at all the circumstances of Queensland at the present time, that if there could be any justification for making a single exception in favour of any class it should be made in favour of the man who cultivated the land. There was not in Queensland anything like the amount of land cultivated there should be. Not a single acre of land in the colony, taking an averaging of the cultivation, cost less than £10 before it was put into a proper state for farming, and that money came from the pockets of a class who had not much at the back of it. After a man had spent all and, perhaps, borrowed large sums, he was not in a position to bear an additional tax upon the capital invested in his land. If any man in the community deserved to be more lightly taxed, it was the man who had spent his money and toiled to bring land into cultivation. Such an exemption was not a novel idea, as in some countries lands were exempted from taxation to encourage parties to plant certain crops, and trees for shade or other purposes. If this Bill became law it would be directly oppressive to every section of the community, in the neighbourhood of towns especially, who had to make up the sum of money required. The people had expressed that opinion as far as they had an opportunity, and had said as distinctly as possible that they were not in a position to pay additional taxation; and it would not be just to press it upon them. Before concluding, he would refer to a remark of the hon. member for Leichhardt about railways, as the two subjects went together. The hon. member urged, what had often before been stated, that the further railways went out the better they would pay. There were circumstances in which that would be correct, but it would work the other way in this country. The further the railways were taken from their basis of supply—for coals, for instance—the more expensive they would be. If the supplies were all along the route, the length of line would not make so much difference, but in our case it was different. Had there been good roads a mile wide over the plains between Dalby and Toowoomba, he believed the bullock-teams would be competing with the railway there until this day, or the thing would have been closed up, and, as sure as the railways were carried out over good country, the bullock-drays would compete with the railways still. That was a reason why, instead of oppressing the people in the settled districts for railways into the good grass country, they should give them more

facilities and relieve them of taxation, in order to encourage settlement. Another reason was that the climate, in the west especially, was very hard on the fine machinery of locomotives, which would tend to increase the cost of working, as the railways extended westward. As the expenses would become heavier just as they got further to the west, it was well to calculate fairly and squarely what the cost would be as they went on. No man wished more than he did to see the western country opened and the people settled upon it; but our first business was to make good what we had got. The colony was in the position of a man trying to work on a little capital—if he spread out his efforts too far there was no saying whether he would be able to draw them back. The fierce storm of yesterday had driven many people to their wits' end; roads were choked up with fallen timber, and the Minister for Works had not the facilities he should have to clear it away. If the proposed system were in operation, the means would probably be even less. An illustration like this, coming sharply home to the people, showed the necessity of having some strong means of meeting difficulties of this kind. For these reasons he hoped, if the Government were determined to press the measure forward, they would make exemptions in favour of those parties upon whom it would press with undue severity—namely, those who had spent all in improving the lands of the colony. He would submit what had been reiterated again and again, that the country was not now in the position to work out a measure of this kind, however good it might be. Therefore he could not support the Bill as it was at the present time.

Mr. NORTON said, before the Bill went to the vote, he wished to say a few words with regard to what had fallen from hon. members who had spoken. He intended to support the Bill, because, although he did not altogether like some of the provisions, the general principles embodied were calculated to engender a spirit of self-reliance among the people of the colony. And, at the same time, by compelling the people to tax themselves for the improvement of their own roads, and property adjacent to those roads, a decidedly practical teaching of economy not carried out under the present system would be imparted. The present system was not only wasteful, but extremely unsatisfactory. The works carried out by the road parties were not always required, and, when so, were not performed as they should be. Besides, that money was sometimes placed in the hands of private individuals to expend on roads adjacent to their residences. He knew an instance in which a sum of money was placed in the hands of a gentleman connected with a district near which he

(Mr. Norton) resided, and a road was cleared for a distance of twenty miles at the expense of the Government, and when completed was not used for more than a dozen times. The same gentleman then applied for another sum to open up another road to connect the same two places. He obtained the money, and the second road was made within two years after the first one was cleared. On those two roads there was scarcely any traffic, and the money expended could not be less than £200. In another instance, money had been placed in the hands of an individual to improve a road which led to his own property from one of the main roads, and over which there was no traffic except to his own place. The whole system, as now carried out, was wasteful. When the Road Boards, to which the hon. member for South Brisbane had referred, were in existence, a saving of £1 in every £3 expended was made in works carried out under their supervision. He (Mr. Norton) was very sorry when those Boards were dispensed with. If continued, they would have prepared the country for the system now proposed, so that it would not have come in as something entirely new. There were other things in the Bill of which he did not entirely approve of. With regard to voting through the post office, it might be a very good plan in itself, but, being quite new, it was impossible to give anything like a decided opinion as to what the result would be. The 53rd clause, with regard to hospitals, orphanages, and such like places, he would like to see omitted, because those institutions would be far better managed under trustees appointed for that particular purpose. The 54th clause might also be omitted, as it would be better to leave the power of deciding what public-houses should be opened to a Licensing Board having nothing whatever to do with Boards appointed under the present Bill. The 57th clause was vaguely worded, and there seemed to be some misunderstanding about it. The meaning would be more clear if the words "no rateable property," in the twelfth line, were made to read, "No freehold rateable property." This clause appeared to refer to the three different classes of land:—The first proviso, to freehold property; the second, selected property; and the third, pastoral leaseholds. The hon. member for Wide Bay, in his speech, last night, said it was proposed to impose a tax upon agriculturists of 10 per cent., and upon pastoral lessees not to exceed 8 per cent. He (Mr. Norton) did not know where the hon. member got his figures from, as the provisos relating to home-steads and conditional selections said the rate should be not more than 8 per cent.—the same as upon leaseholds. The hon. member for Enoggera also seemed in some

doubt about the clause when he said what the different effect would be in the case of a selector and a leaseholder. Having gone into the matter since then, he (Mr. Norton) had come to a different conclusion from that of the hon. member. In the case of a man taking up 100 acres at 10s. per acre, the capital value would be £50. The clause provided that every valuation of property rateable should be computed at the net annual value—that was to say, at the rate the same might reasonably be expected to let at from year to year. The second proviso of the 57th clause was, that no home-stead or conditional selection should be computed as of greater annual value than 8 per cent. on the capital value of the fee-simple thereof. Eight per cent. on the capital value of a selection of 100 acres, as he had instanced, would be £4. Then, clause 60 provided that the general rate should not exceed 1s. in the £ on the annual value. Therefore, the selector would have to pay 1s. in the £, not on the capital value of his selection (£50), but on the annual value (£4);—so that the maximum rate would only amount to 4s. Supposing the selector had laid out £400 on improvements, he would be taxed, under the 57th clause, on the annual value. It would be rather difficult to decide what the annual value would be; but he imagined that in no instance would it exceed 5 per cent. Taking that as the basis, the annual value would be £20; and, under the 60th clause, the selector would have to pay one shilling in the £ on that amount, namely, £1:—so that on the whole selection, land and improvements, he would have to pay only £1 4s. He did not think it was possible to dispute those figures; and that, certainly, could not be called heavy taxation. The hon. member for Logan said he would be glad if the Government would introduce an equitable land tax in the place of this Bill. What difference could it make to a selector or freeholder whether he paid a land tax, or a tax as provided for under this Bill? If he had to pay the money, it made not the slightest difference in what shape he paid it. Most of the objections that had been raised, so far, had been raised because the intention of the Bill was not understood. As several other members were desirous of speaking, he would not take up the time of the House further. That particular clause had been, he thought, misunderstood; and he hoped hon. members who spoke after him would be prepared to give the Bill fair play.

Mr. WELD-BRUNDELL said that, when moving the Address in Reply, he expressed himself strongly in favour of the principle embodied in this Bill. There might be parts of the measure requiring alteration, but, as embodying a broad principle, it would be of advantage to the country that it should pass. It would induce the people

to take a decided interest not only in regard to local affairs, but to general matters of government also, and would enable them to see thoroughly into the *pros* and *cons* of every question; and they would be less liable to be carried away by such clap-trap as was constantly being thrust down their throats. He believed the measure would also do away with the great amount of patronage now existing, and which it was disadvantageous to the country that any Government should possess; and he further believed that it would remove the curse of log-rolling, striking from under the feet of hon. members all inducements to "log-roll." The hon. member (Mr. Mackay) had asked why it was that America, of all countries, had been so successful in inducing settlement, but he did not answer the question altogether. It was that, because, of all countries in the world, America had most thoroughly adopted the principle of local government. In the management of every institution there, the basis was representative government;—whether as regarded roads or the larger questions the people were appealed to to look after their own affairs, and it was for that reason that the country was ruled in the most intelligent manner. The hon. member had also made some allusions to the "bursting up" of large estates;—he had understood him to allude to squattages, but if he meant purchased land, the difference between America and Australia was very great, for almost all over America land had been got at a mere song: the greater part of the immense purchased tracts in California had been obtained for little more than a dollar an acre. With reference to the Bill, he must say, as regarded the nomination of the first Board, that there was the greatest objection to the absolute appointment of a Board which should have a majority of nominee members for a considerable time; but the Bill required little alteration to make it acceptable. A provisional Board might be appointed to have power to make up the list of the people who should have votes. These could then be called upon to select for themselves the committee or Board who were to carry out the provisions of the Act. As to the mode of election, he thought there were also objections to some of the provisions of the Bill, in consequence of the possibility, or almost probability, that in many of the Boards only four of five men would come forward for election. The result might be that, although three or four might be eligible for the position of councillor, one or two might be unfit, and if they had gone to a poll would not have got a vote; in consequence, however, of only four or five standing, all would be returned without going to the poll. Such a contingency might be obviated by allowing every individual who had a vote to make up a list of

say, ten or twelve men whom he might consider would make desirable councillors, putting them in the order that he wished to see them elected. He would thus be enabled to select not only those who came forward, but to include the names of gentlemen who did not present themselves for election but whom he might yet consider fitted to fill the position of councillor; and this plan would have this good effect—that eligible men who, owing to the large amount of work that they had to do, or from other causes, might be unwilling to come forward for election, would yet accept office on its being thrust upon them. These ballot-papers would be sent to the returning officer, who would make up the result and select the six men who had received the largest amount of votes. The duty of the returning officer would be to indicate to these gentlemen the result of the poll, and find out whether they were agreeable to act. This scheme would do away with the proposed plan of voting by post, and it would have this effect also, that, on extraordinary vacancies occurring, they could be filled by the returning officer taking the next highest candidate on the poll. This scheme was simply a modification of Hare's system, minus the principle of representation of minorities. As to the question of rating, dealt with by clause 57, he could not see the objections hon. gentlemen opposite seemed to observe. Every individual who owned freehold land was liable to have his land rated at a computation of not less than 8 per cent. upon the capital value. Although the selector or conditional owner was to be rated at not more than 8 per cent., the owner of other purchased land might be rated at 20 per cent. With regard to leaseholders, hon. members opposite seemed to conceal the fact that the position was altogether different. The leaseholder held only a grass interest in the land, practically on a six months' tenure, and it was therefore unjust that he should be compelled to pay large sums of money for the improvement of property which possibly might be taken from him within six, nine, or twelve months. It had been stated that under the provisions of the Bill, the western landowners might only place a small tax upon their properties, but, if they did, the only effect would be that, instead of having their roads improved by their own taxes and the Government subsidy, they would be confined to their present improvements, and no injustice would be inflicted upon any other portion of the community. And whilst upon this question, he might remark that possibly the country was unwise in not devoting larger sums of money to the improvement of its property. Private companies, owning land which was almost valueless in its original state, made it attractive in order to improve its value and to enable them to

sell it. In the old country there were many instances where men had spent large sums, from £10,000 to £15,000, in enhancing the value of their properties, and had been enabled by such expenditure to raise the ground rent to £8, £10, and £20 per acre. There was an instance where a landowner had spent a million in improving the Cardiff wharves and jetties, to enable him to increase the value of his coal possessions inland enormously. These cases were identical with the position of this colony. They had land in the West belonging to the Crown, and by constructing main central lines towards it they were merely improving the communication of the country; and, if they gave more subsidy than was proposed by the Bill, they should be repaid thoroughly in the improved communication that they should have to this land. It had been stated that the central railways were not in keeping with the general policy of the Government; but they were, chiefly because they were the main roads of Queensland, enabling the produce of every part of the country, and of the far West especially, to come to port;—by such railways they raised ten fold the price of the unbought land which belonged to the Crown. Before leaving the subject, he would refer to the tone assumed by hon. members opposite in professing to believe that these central railways were for the benefit of the squatters of the West. There was no greater fallacy. Hon. members opposite laughed, but they did not choose to look into the matter in a fair manner. Did they conceive that the land in the West would necessarily remain in the possession of the present occupants? Were not an immense majority of the western runholders opposed to the further extension of railways? He was pretty nearly confident that a large petition could be procured from the western squatters, asking the House not to extend the railways. They were not the men who would be benefited by the works. They would have to put their hands in their pockets to secure their improvements; and the probable consequence would be, if the legislation was anything like the past, that they would shift further west; but although the western squatters would not benefit directly, it did not follow that the colony would not. He said it would and therefore should strongly support the extension of the railways west, because every pound spent on the work would be improving the property of the Crown. Since the present session had opened hon. members opposite had shown by their conduct that they ignored whatever liberal professions they might have made previously. The principle involved in this Bill was the imposition of a land tax for the improvement of land. The meaning of the Bill was, that hon. members on

the Ministerial benches were really passing a law which was usually passed by out-and-out democrats. What had caused the disturbance in Victoria?—simply that Mr. Berry had succeeded in imposing a land tax. The principle of this Bill was to impose what was virtually a land tax, removing the burden of maintaining roads from the labouring classes who were in no way benefited, and placing it upon the people who were. It made those who had their properties improved by the construction of roads pay for the improvement. The principle involved in the Mines Regulation Bill was also the protection of the working man. He was to be saved from losses that might result from the parsimony and carelessness of his employers, the mine-owners. The principle of both these Bills was out-and-out liberalism—almost a democratic feeling ran through them; yet hon. members opposite, because it did not suit their views—because they thought they would attain possibly the sweets of office—opposed them and threw on one side their principles. He believed, however, there were followers of the Opposition who would not be hoodwinked, but who would feel that in supporting the measures they were upholding the very principles of liberalism.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said he was quite sure the last speaker came to the House with the most conscientious desire to legislate for the benefit of the country. He had, however, been very much amused at the views that he had taken of the duties of a democratic majority who were determined to give effect to liberal principles. It was a little amusing for the Opposition to imagine that the hon. member was correct when he wished them to suppose that he and others acting with him were only too desirous of giving effect to the principles which Mr. Berry was labouring so hard to engraft upon the Victorian statute book. He had no doubt, however, that a short experience in the House would enable the hon. gentleman to assure himself that the direction of his party's policy was not exactly between the lines which Mr. Berry had chalked out for himself.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL: I did not say so.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. member had, at any rate, indicated that they were merely asking the House to do what Mr. Berry and his party had already accomplished—that the principle of local government as adopted in Victoria was the result of the extreme democratic party's tactics; and he only hoped that the Opposition here would do their best to give effect to the same principles, by supporting measures such as the one before the House and others to which he referred. The hon. gentleman must excuse him from following him in that direction. While desirous of giving effect to some liberal principles, he

did not feel called upon to give expression to them in the form indicated by him. With respect to the measure before the House, he regretted that they were called upon to discuss it in this form. The Premier had altogether miscalculated his duty in this respect, which was to have endeavoured to give effect to the Local Government Act of last session. The hon. gentleman had assumed, on what he believed to be false premises, that that measure was inapplicable, and that it had failed. He (Mr. Douglas) contended that the Act of last year was legislation in the right direction: it was founded upon the principle of municipal government, which they had already experienced; and he submitted that that system, slow as it had been in its development, had yet been sure, and that they had no reason to regret having conferred the advantage of local government as represented in their municipal institutions. When they considered how small were the beginnings, and how gradual had been the growth of the system, he thought they must admit that, on the whole, the result had been satisfactory. All their principal towns had adopted that system, with one or two exceptions, and these exceptions showed that in applying the principle of the Local Government Act they could very soon have increased the number of municipalities. The hon. gentleman had said that they had had an illustration within the last few months how the Local Government Act could not be made to work; but he (Mr. Douglas) affirmed that, on the contrary, they had an illustration of how it could be made to work. They had had, it was true, only few applications; the residents of Gympie, Bundaberg, and Drayton were the only people who indicated in any way that they were desirous to come under the operation of the Local Government Act. It was true there were counter-petitions, but if the Executive had firmly indicated that in those places no public money would be expended—that no assistance would be given to them unless they came under the operation of the Local Government Act—was it not certain that a majority of the people would soon have come round, and expressed a desire to come under this Act? Take Gympie as a crucial illustration—a place that ought, long ago, to have been incorporated as a municipality. There were local reasons, no doubt, which rendered it somewhat difficult to secure a majority of the ratepayers in favour of that course; but the hon. gentleman would not tell him that that could last for any length of time. At present, opinion was pretty well divided; and by firm and determined action—when it came to be known that no public money would be available until they were incorporated—it was certain that in a short time they would have incorporated themselves.

That would have been an example, and that example would have grown. Take, then, Drayton and Bundaberg. In the latter place, the hon. gentleman had pointed out to his constituents the advantages of local government and exhorted them to come under the Act, and the result was that a considerable number of freeholders petitioned in favour of a country municipality being established. The action now taken had, to some extent, delayed the bringing of the Local Government Act into operation. He maintained that it would have been much better for the country to come under the provisions of that Act than under this Bill. It was more particular, more defined—it had the test of experience in the neighbouring colony of Victoria; and it would have been better if they had shown proper resistance to the undue impatience of the people in these localities than to bring in this Bill. But because the Act had been six months in operation, and had not succeeded in obtaining any new municipalities, it was condemned as a failure. He never thought that it would come into operation for at least a year, and that it could never come into anything like widespread operation for two or three years. He said that gradual process was much better than the Bill now proposed to be passed. This Bill proposed to provide for local government outside existing municipalities, and he was under the impression, before he read the Bill, that it proposed that the whole colony should be divided into municipalities. He also understood the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to say, last night, and he was so reported, that the whole colony was to become a municipality. He contemplated, he (Mr. Douglas) presumed, dividing the whole colony into municipalities; but there was nothing whatever in the Bill to show that, and he thought it very desirable that they should have some definite information on that point from the Government. It was the most important feature of the Bill. The second clause proposed that the Governor in Council should, by proclamation, constitute any portion of the colony, not included in any municipality, a division for the purposes of the Act, with such boundaries and under such name as should be specified. These were powers which no Legislature was justified in trusting to the Executive. They did not know under that clause whether it was proposed to divide the colony into twenty municipalities or 200; and there should, at any rate, be some indication of the principle which was to govern the Government in arriving at a conclusion upon this point. His opinion of the Government was that they were not to be trusted—that they had not indicated such discreet judgment in the conduct of public affairs as would justify the Legislature in en-

trusting to them this very serious responsibility—a responsibility which he doubted very much should be entrusted to any Government—of dividing the whole colony into municipalities, without the slightest knowledge of the extent they were to be, or any information whatever on the subject. Was the principle of the establishment of these municipalities to be one of population or area? These principles must necessarily have effect in all new municipalities. Local government must proceed at first from some very small centre, and he doubted very much whether they could give effect to local government, unless they had an adequate population collected together within something like a limited area. He defied anyone to apply that principle to one vast pastoral district in the interior. Imagine such a principle being applied to such districts as the Burke, the Warrego, or the Gregory;—and yet there was nothing in the Bill to lead them to suppose that it was not the intention of the Government to apply it to those districts. They had not been informed what their intention was in that respect. Compare the working of such a municipality as the Gregory with the working of such a municipality as might be formed on the Logan, or in the vicinity of Ipswich or Toowoomba, the principle and mode of administration applicable to the one case would be thoroughly inapplicable to the other. If the Bill was intended to apply to such districts as the Logan, Ipswich, Wide Bay, or the Darling Downs, where local government was really required, then he submitted that it could not be applied to the outside districts, and was inapplicable to them. It seemed to him, therefore, that there was an almost insurmountable difficulty in the way. This Bill was as pregnant with importance to the people as any Bill that had ever been passed, and yet they had no information as to the details that must govern the whole administration of it. They had set aside that system and that law, of which they had had some experience, and in place of that the Government brought in this measure, which was not applicable to the country districts. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government had frequently expressed himself as entirely favourable to a Local Government Bill, and yet he intended to substitute this Bill for the Local Government Act, which, he said, was cumbrous, and not applicable to the circumstances of the country.

The PREMIER: A large portion of it.

Mr. DOUGLAS said a municipal system must be necessarily cumbrous; it could not be applied, except in districts where population was to some extent concentrated, and he did not think this Bill was at all applicable to those districts. It

might possibly be made applicable to the outside districts, but they were not told by the Government that they were going to proclaim the outside districts as municipalities at all. There were very serious and grave objections to a Bill of this kind, and his great objection was, that here they were proposing to lay down the outline of a most important system of Government—not less important even than the law by which they sat there to legislate—and yet the Government failed to define the data upon which they were to proceed to administer affairs. The question was far too important to be slurred over by a mere generality of a Bill such as this. They must say what they were going to do, where the municipalities were going to be, and what was to be their extent. Supposing they were to hand over this power to the Government, from a party point of view that would be the best thing they could possibly do, for inevitably the result of attempting to administer such a Bill as this would be to call down universal condemnation upon the men who attempted it, simply for the reason that the public mind was not prepared for it. He submitted, on behalf of the hon. gentlemen themselves, that if they were not anxious to pull down their own house about their ears, they had far better let the House and the country know what they proposed to do under this Bill. That was his chief objection. There had, no doubt, been grave objections pointed out by the hon. member (Mr. Griffith). The system of voting proposed was certainly a novel one. The fact of its novelty, however, would not alarm him, nor would he hesitate to adopt it if he were satisfied that it could be worked; but, as far as he could understand the system embodied in the brief clauses of the Bill, he had some hesitation in adopting it in preference to the method now in use. It was quite true that, in every district where the population was very much scattered, it was almost impossible to bring men together; but there was another idea that recommended itself to their reason. Even in these districts there was very great difficulty in securing regular postal communication; and applying this postal arrangement to the Gregory or Burke district, it would be interesting to see how the problem would work out. It would be impossible to predicate how it would work out—it would be a leap in the dark. So far as their knowledge of the postal system of the Gregory was concerned, it would lead to the conclusion that it would be a total failure; still, under any circumstances, he admitted that voting at all in the Gregory or Burke districts must be a dead failure because people could not be got together; and for that reason a municipal system in such large districts must necessarily be a failure at the present time.

He would much rather have seen an attempt made to make the present municipal system applicable to districts where it could be applied. There were portions of the country where it could be and ought to be applied, even if the people would not accept it. It would, of course, be a last resource to compel them to associate themselves into municipalities, and on this point the Local Government Act was superior to this Bill. Under that Act it was left to the people to define the areas in which they wished to incorporate themselves;—it proposed that, at any rate, the initiatory steps should be taken, by petition and counter-petition, which would necessarily bring out contrary opinions and lead to the discussion of the merits of the case, and finally the Executive would have to decide; and, in the meantime, if they persistently resisted every attempt to vote money for those districts which they believed should incorporate themselves, there was no doubt that the people would soon come round and petition to come under the provisions of that Act—when they found they would receive nothing from the Central Government. He therefore deplored the delay in the application of that system, which he believed had been brought about by the introduction of this Bill. The hon. gentleman might very well have taken advantage of this period of economy and retrenchment to say to the country districts, “We have been very liberal with you during the last five or six years; we have done a great deal in the way of making roads and bridges; a great deal has been well spent; but at the present time it is impossible to go on spending the large sums of money that the Central Government have been spending on roads and bridges in the settled districts, and now is the time for you to take advantage of the Local Government Act passed last year;—it has all the prestige of experience to justify the action we have taken: incorporate yourselves under this, and then you will get your proportion of the endowment.” But instead of taking that manifestly practical action, they had adopted a mode which was speculative and experimental, whatever good there might be in it. With regard to the details of the Bill, to which exception had been taken, such as the mode of assessment and valuation of property, they could no doubt be amended and altered in committee, but it was impossible to make such alterations as would justify them in passing it into law. He did not feel disposed to hand over to the Executive at present existing the right to say how the whole country was to be parcelled out into municipalities, without further information on their part. These municipalities ought to be detailed, if not actually defined in schedule. He rested his primary objection

to the Bill on the second clause—on the immense power it handed over to the Executive; and on behalf of the Executive themselves, he implored them to consider the position in which they were placed. It must give rise to great disappointment, probably to great misconception. Let them be as anxious as they possibly could be to do their duty in this respect, they must fail to do it because the mind of the country was not prepared for it. They had not prepared the country by showing what they intended to do, and without the preparation which they must impart to the people in this respect the very best legislation must fail, because the public mind had not been prepared for it. However conscientious they might be, or however desirous of applying a sound principle of local Government, they would fail inevitably unless they showed the people where they were going and what they were going to do.

Mr. STEVENSON said he believed in the principle of this Bill, and intended to vote for the second reading, because he believed it would have the effect of preventing the system of log-rolling which had been most pernicious in its effect, and which was so largely practiced by the late Government. He denied that the Bill would give any undue benefit to the outside districts, as had been contended by hon. members opposite. He did not know that the outside members were very anxious to have the Bill at all, and he did not see how it could be of any special advantage to the districts they represented. There were one or two things which fell from the leader of the Opposition, last night, that he intended to take notice of. That hon. gentleman, when speaking in reply to the Premier, said that the interests of the whole colony were the same. That was rather a new doctrine for him to lay down; it was a new *rolé* he had assumed. If the effects of this Bill were to be equal all over the colony, and if the interests of the whole colony were the same, he failed to see how the hon. member could accuse the Government of raising class against class by bringing in a Bill of this sort. It was most amusing to hear the leader of the Opposition accusing the Government of trying to set class against class, especially as that hon. member never got up in that House, or anywhere else, except when the sole object and purport of his speech was to set class against class, interest against interest, and, not only that, but religion against religion. The reason why he had risen to speak on the present question was principally in reply to the remarks made in regard to the trunk railways. He did not see why the railway question should have been dragged into the debate at all; but the leader of the Opposition was the first to do so, and had done so evidently

with a desire to foster the wish of setting class against class. On behalf of the squatters outside of the House, and as a squatter himself, he must repudiate altogether the idea that outside squatters wanted trunk railways; and he would take that opportunity of asking the members for Rockhampton if they were game to stand up in their places and say that it was the outside squatters that wanted trunk railways? The last time the leader of the Opposition was at Rockhampton he had something to say about trunk railways, although when the hon. member for Clermont, that evening, said that squatters did not want trunk lines, there was a general laugh on the Opposition benches. He would read what the leader of the Opposition said at Rockhampton:—

“The first question in railway construction was its direction. The colony of Queensland was singular, inasmuch as in the other colonies there was a natural centre to which all the lines were directed; whereas, here, there were three, at the least three, natural points from which communication with the interior should be established; and although it was natural that the capital should be the largest town, still there should be three trunk lines—one from Brisbane, one from Rockhampton, and one from Townsville: each port had its own functions to fulfil. They ought not to be regarded as antagonistic to one another, but should be all regarded as assisting in the development of the colony as a whole, and not any special portion of it. (Cheers.) The opinions he thus advocated were his own opinions, and he believed they were also held by his colleagues generally. He thought it all very well to fix upon the direction a railway should take at the outset, but there were many other things to be considered first;—as a man, in building his own house, often prepared the plans long before they were made use of, so with the subject he was then considering. In the construction of railways, as well as other things, it was necessary to cut our coat according to our cloth;—length rather than strength was needed in our railways.”

It would be seen that the leader of the Opposition then argued that what was wanted was length in our railways, and that they ought to be carried out West. But why should the squatters want them out West? The only security they had consisted in the inaccessibility of their runs; and, as far as the improving of their property was concerned, trunk lines would not have that effect, the property being that of the Crown. It was the townspeople who wanted trunk railways and not the squatters, and he was quite certain that what the member for Clermont said, that night, was perfectly true; in fact, he could guarantee to get most of the squatters out West to sign a petition that the railway should be stopped at Emerald Downs. It was most absurd to say that the squatters out West wanted railways;—such a thing would destroy the value of the improve-

ments they had already made. They now had no encouragement to make dams or other improvements, for they had no security of tenure. The argument of the leader of the Opposition would hold good if the squatters had a different tenure, and he himself believed that a better tenure would do more to bring capital into the country than anything else; and that the capital introduced in that manner would be more for the benefit of the working man than any loan for the construction of trunk railways. That had been his principal reason for getting up to speak. It might have been, perhaps, a better subject to speak upon during the Financial Statement, but he had alluded to it because it had been mentioned by the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. KINGSFORD said it seemed a most extraordinary thing for the hon. member, who was a squatter, to try and stuff members on the Opposition benches with the notion that squatters did not want railways. One thing was quite certain—that if they did not want trunk railways, less would have been heard of them than the country had heard during the present session. He could not understand what railways had to do with the question before the House, or what the leader of the Opposition might have said at Rockhampton had to do with it. They had to deal with the *Divisional Boards Bill*; and in regard to that, whilst he thoroughly agreed with the principle of the Bill, he should not vote for the second reading, as he believed the *Local Government Act* of last year met the case almost fully. There were some few differences between the *Act* of last year and the Bill before the House; but they were so unimportant that it was almost a waste of time to introduce a new measure at the present time, to say nothing of the depressed state of the colony, which rather reprobated the act of the Government in introducing a *Divisional Boards Bill* at present. There was another reason, although a secondary one, why he should vote against the Bill. He remembered a speech made by the leader of the present Government when the *Local Government Bill* was before the House, a portion of which he (Mr. Kingsford) entirely agreed with—viz., that that Bill put into the hands of the Government a power that no Government should possess. For that reason he should vote against the present Bill; for, whilst there was something right in the principle of it, in detail there was a great deal very bad. He was sorry he must come to this conclusion; but, there being already a measure on the statute book that met the requirements of the case, a fresh Bill was altogether uncalled for.

Mr. KELLETT said he had only a few remarks to make on the matter before them, and that was because he believed not so much in the principles of the Bill as in the

intention of it, which was good. He believed from the intentions, when the Bill was originally drawn up, that it would be of advantage to the country; but there were several things in it to which he objected. First of all, he considered there was too much power left in the hands of the Government of the day, and that it should be mentioned what districts were to be brought under the Bill. He considered that outside of the settled districts it would work unfairly, inasmuch as, if he understood the Bill rightly, it was intended that the main roads of the country should be made, as formerly, out of the general revenue; but in all the outside districts there were none but main roads, and they were made out of the general revenue, whilst the inside districts, which were taxed for those roads, and were paying their share to the general revenue, would, under the Bill, be doubly taxed, as they would have to contribute towards the roads in their own districts and also to the outside districts. He thought that, with some modification, the Bill might be made a valuable Bill, but the present was not an opportune time to bring it forward, as the selectors were in such a depressed state that they would feel it press upon them most severely. In clause 51, which related to the duties of Boards, it was stated that the duties of every Board should be to construct, maintain, and control all public highways, &c., within their division, and expend moneys raised by votes or otherwise placed to the credit of the divisional funds. But then it went on to upset all that by saying—provided the Board of any division should not be charged with the construction, maintenance, and control of any highway, &c., which the Governor in Council might except from the jurisdiction of such Board: so that, in point of fact, the Governor in Council might except any districts he chose which were recommended by the Government of the day. Every district should be put on the same footing; otherwise it would be very unfair. As far as the other parts of the Bill were concerned, such as that with respect to valuations, they were not very clear to him; but his disagreement with the Bill was, that it did not apply fairly to the inside districts, where people were already taxed, and where they would be paying twice over for the outside roads.

Mr. MORRHEAD would preface the few remarks he intended to make by saying that although he did not like the Bill in all respects, he should vote for its second reading, thinking it might be made a good measure in committee. They were going too much into the municipality business: it was a mistake to cut up the colony too much. He would point out to the great champion of federation and local government—he alluded to the hon. member (Mr.

Douglas)—that if they cut up the colony into small portions, federated those subsections, and afterwards federated with the other colonies, it would cause a great deal of trouble. The Bill was an improvement on the Local Government Bill, but they were going too far, and, if left in its present form, the Bill would be unworkable. It dealt in a very unjust way with pastoral occupiers of land—although his remarks in that respect might be looked upon as being dictated by self-interest. He would take, for instance, the provision in clause 57, that every occupier of Crown lands for pastoral purposes should be rated in an amount not exceeding 8 per cent. upon the annual rent. The member for Toowoomba had been good enough, by his action in regard to the Western Railway Bill, to compel certain individuals to invest a large amount of money in land in the neighbourhood of Roma. He would take the case of a man who had invested in 100,000 acres of land, compelled to do so by the action of the hon. member;—that man was to be taxed at the rate of £400 a year; and then, by the present Bill, he was to be taxed at 8 per cent. on his annual rental in the outside districts. He would further take, for the sake of example, the two districts of the Gregory and the Mitchell. Something like £35,000 was directly received into the revenue from them, and yet they were to be taxed to the extent of £2,000 a year, under the existing Bill, for their local improvements. He had been told that some of the roads through those districts were main roads. He admitted that to be the case, but there were a number of by-roads, also, and surely those districts ought to have justice done to them as regarded those by-roads; instead of which they were to be taxed to the extent of £2,000 a-year. That seemed an absurdity; but still he should vote for the second reading, although that might seem an anomaly. He could quite understand the Gregory and Mitchell districts combining, and saying, "We will have nothing to do with the Warrego; we will not have our by-roads communicating with those of the Warrego, but we will put a toll on them, and not allow the Warrego people to come this way unless they pay that toll." Such a thing might be done, but he did not see where it would end. There would be just the same quarrelling as there was between the petty States of Germany. He had heard a story of a prince, who ruled over a certain State, who quarrelled with the neighbouring prince. The quarrel originated in one prince accusing the other of stealing an orange-tree; the owner of the orange-tree, feeling very much aggrieved, said, "I will not allow this stealer to go through my State;" and the consequence was that the person accused had to go

some seven or eight miles round to get to the town he wanted to visit. Something of the same kind might occur here, and if they went on as was proposed they would soon have an *imperium in imperio*. Let them fancy for one moment, with a population of 200,000, having all these petty Parliaments or Boards quarrelling amongst themselves. It was a mistake from the beginning, and, in order to make it a *reductio ad absurdum*, the best thing they could all do was to vote for the Bill.

Mr. Groom said that if there were anything which could induce him to vote for the second reading of the Bill, he should certainly do so on behalf of his constituents. They were all comprised within a municipality and were fully taxed already, and if he consulted their individual wishes it was very possible they would declare in favour of having their outside neighbours taxed equally with themselves. He, however, took much higher grounds for his objection to the Bill. When the Local Government Bill was before the House, last session, he was not particularly in love with it, although he endeavoured as far as he could to mould it into the shape in which it appeared now. With a great many of its provisions, notwithstanding this, he did not agree, and, having had some little knowledge and experience of the practical working of the Act while he was a member of the municipal council of Toowoomba, he could bear testimony to the accuracy of the remarks made by the hon. member for Leichhardt (Mr. Macfarlane), on the previous night. A considerable portion of its provisions were entirely misunderstood, and, besides that, were interpreted in various ways. For instance, nothing could be plainer than the 185th section of the Local Government Act, which at the very heading of it said, "Appeals against valuation." Would the House believe it possible that there was a municipality within the colony which had contended that under that section there was no appeal against the valuation of the valuer—that he could assess lands at any price he pleased, according to his caprice or judgment;—in fact, do just as he liked, while the ratepayer could have no opportunity of appealing at all, unless he himself fixed the day for appeal? Taking an illustration from Toowoomba, he was justified in stating that there were 2,500 ratepayers there, or at any rate 2,500 properties, on which assessments were made. Supposing each individual ratepayer were to fix his own day for appealing, as, under the interpretation he had given they could, the whole bench would be occupied all the year round in hearing appeals. Under the old Act of 1864, the parties had a certain number of days set down in which to make the necessary appeals, and, after they had been received by the corporation, a day was fixed

for the hearing before the magistrates. The same rule which would apply in the Local Government Act would apply in this case, as to appeals, and therefore it might be anticipated that every shire clerk would interpret the Bill entirely as he pleased. He was not putting any supposititious case, but one which had actually occurred in a municipality which he would not name. He had seen a notice issued by the town clerk of the municipality, where the words "Appeal Court" had been struck out, and the ratepayers had been given to understand that the valuer's valuation was accepted, and that there was no appeal. Even in places where it might not have been expected, the Local Government Act was entirely misunderstood. There was another matter referred to by the hon. member (Mr. Macfarlane), last night, to which he directed attention. He (Mr. Groom) had already stated that there were 2,500 assessments; and he might add that in three wards, in November last, when the ratepayers were called upon to make up their electoral rolls, there were not 200 qualified electors; and this roll would continue in force for the next twelve months. It was therefore quite within the province, as had actually happened, of half-a-dozen persons to attend at the Town Hall, and return any three aldermen they liked. The old system was infinitely better, for the rates were paid even up to the hour of nomination. He had known £100 paid into the Toowoomba exchequer on the day of nomination, so anxious were the people to exercise the franchise. But under the existing Act they had to pay their rates on the 1st of November; so that there was not the least opportunity of complying with the Act, and many people were, in consequence, disfranchised. He was sorry to think this part of the Act was proposed to be perpetuated in the present Bill, because he had seen its mischievous working. As far as the Act was concerned, he would much rather have seen the Government come down with a Bill to impose a tax upon land than attempt to make up the deficiency of the revenue by such a Bill as this. He was a believer in giving the people the administration of their own affairs; but he would not go so far as to say, as the Minister for Lands said, last night, that a local body would make £1 go as far as £5 expended by the Government; but everybody knew there was such a thing as the "Government stroke," and there could be no doubt local bodies would make money go further than the Government. This, however, was not the time to ask the residents of the settled districts to undertake the management of their affairs with the view of making up the deficiency in the revenue—for that, no doubt, was the essence of the Bill. It was possible the

object might be sought to be obtained; and he would give the Government credit for being anxious to throw upon the residents of outside districts the burden of managing their own affairs without perpetually knocking at the Treasury doors. He must repeat again, emphatically—this was not, however, the proper time to make the change. He could state, from his own personal knowledge, that the difficulties of the selectors after three years' drought were very great, and this was not the time to apply a Bill of this description. If an amendment had been moved from either side of the House to impose a tax upon land generally throughout the colony, he would have given it his hearty support. What were the facts as detailed by a return laid before the House? That return was made on the motion of the then hon. member for Kennedy, Mr. Macrossan, and its preparation was estimated by the late Premier to cost over £500. Surely a return which had cost so much ought to be turned to some practical account, and no doubt the hon. member, when he moved for it, intended to turn it to some good purpose. This was a return of the number of landowners who possessed in fee simple an aggregate area amounting to or exceeding 1,280 acres, and the total quantity held by each class; from 1,280 acres to 5,000 acres; from 5,000 acres to 10,000 acres, and over 10,000 acres. The return showed that forty-three persons owned more than 10,000 acres, the total quantity being 1,390,158 acres. Between 5,000 acres and 10,000 acres there were thirty-six owners who held 253,264 acres; and between 1,280 acres and 5,000 acres there were eighty-seven owners who held over 225,000 acres. The return was valuable in this respect, that it showed where these enormous areas of land were held. The person who headed the poll, as he might term it, was the possessor of 93,764 acres, and the next to him owned 90,101 acres. The greater part of this land was on the Darling Downs, and the greater part of the owners were absentees who contributed next to nothing to the general revenue of the country. That 1,390,158 acres was a fair and legitimate area for taxation, and not the small holdings of the men who, as remarked by the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Mackay)—though he was far below the cost in many cases—had spent £10 an acre on them. He could point out instances where the clearing alone cost more than that sum. If the Premier had brought in a Bill to tax those large areas he could have raised £100,000 without the slightest difficulty, and it would not have affected the men who were diligently cultivating their small holdings and laying the foundation of what would ultimately become the great nation of Queensland.

The money would be exacted from the pockets of those well able to spare it—those large landed proprietors who spent out of the country the income they derived from it. He was by no means an advocate for the bursting up of big estates, and he thought they ought to look at what was being done in New Zealand just now, where the Government had been compelled to adopt a tax of this kind; and in the Speech with which the South Australian Parliament was opened, recently, it was intimated that the Government were going to introduce a property tax. In New Zealand the whole of the land was valued at a certain uniform price, and the improvements were struck off; and that is the proper course to take with regard to the Darling Downs. £10 an acre was a mere bagatelle to what some of the men, there, had expended in improvements. Supposing a man had laid down a lucerne paddock, what would be the value put upon it by the assessors under this Bill compared with the grassland outside his wire fence? The Minister for Lands said the selectors would not be called upon to pay a farthing an acre. He should like to know how that could be proved. Having been a municipal councillor, he had some knowledge as to how land was assessed in existing municipalities, and that might be taken as a fair test. He would instance the municipality of Toowoomba, where a banking institution was the owner of two acres of land situated in the most central part of the town, and which, if sold tomorrow, would bring an exceedingly high price. Being unoccupied land the assessment was comparatively insignificant, some 10s. or 15s.; while next to it was a large store, which had cost some £2,000 or £3,000 to erect, and for which the owner was called to pay £16 or £18 yearly in taxes. This was a mistake; it was a tax upon industry and the outlay of capital. The land itself ought to be taxed. The streets of the different municipalities should be divided into first, second, and third-class, and then all would be taxed alike, whether they improved their lands or not. At present, if a man built a house upon his unoccupied allotment, down came the corporation upon him and taxed him because he had improved his property. That was a system which would not commend itself to anyone who gave it the least consideration. The same remark would apply to the Divisional Boards Bill. Property which had been improved would be valued by the assessors at a much higher rate than the unimproved grass land in the neighbourhood, and the result would be that the man who had improved his property would have to pay considerably more towards the roads and bridges of his district than the man who kept his land in grass or for the purpose of speculation. That was a serious objection to the Bill. He believed that

local government was necessary to relieve the Central Government from the importunities of hon. members. Something of this kind was necessary, especially after the humiliating confession of the Premier, in his speech at Bundaberg, that he had prepared motions and allotted them to other members on his side, and had succeeded in extracting £40,000 from the late Government. The Colonial Treasurer proposed to balance the revenue with the expenditure by taking £120,000 from the Railway Reserves Fund and placing it to the credit of the General Revenue, and then by striking off £72,000 from last year's vote for roads and bridges, leaving the rest to be made good by means of this Bill. But this taxing of industry would injuriously affect the entire colony, and on that ground he should not vote for the second reading of it. He had recently been amongst a large section of the community who were at present unrepresented here, and those people, while approving of the principle of local government, thought that this was not the proper time to introduce it—that they ought to be allowed time to recover from the serious effects of the three years' drought, and wipe off the mortgages on their property;—when that was done they would hail a measure of this kind as a boon. That was the opinion of men on the Darling Downs whom this Bill would affect. Still, he could not conceal from himself that it would have been better if the Colonial Treasurer had come down manfully and imposed a tax upon those large estates. He believed the hon. gentleman had often previously enunciated sentiments of that kind, and had he brought in a measure of that kind he would have secured the support of both sides of the House. He, as a thorough believer in the principle, would have given him his heartiest support. That tax, as he said before, would have yielded a revenue of £100,000—a revenue which would have been a constantly increasing one, and which might have resulted in the removal of the taxes on some of the necessities of life. At present those estates yielded nothing but the wool on the sheep's backs; whereas, if they were taxed, they would soon be put to much better purposes;—settlement would take place along the lines of railway running through them, and in every possible way the country would be benefited. He was very sorry to notice that, last night, the hon. member for Cook (Mr. Walsh) spoke disparagingly of the right of petition to this House. The right of petition was one of the chief points laid down in Magna Charta, and had been observed most religiously from that day to this. An appeal was open to everyone, if necessary—from the Parliament itself to the Sovereign of the land; and whether a petition contained sense or nonsense, the right

of petition should never be denied. The humblest man might approach the House as well as the most wealthy. He would go with the hon. member so far as to admit that signatures were sometimes got on frivolous and unnecessary occasions.

Mr. WALSH said the hon. member was mistaken. He referred to a senseless petition like that from Charters Towers, and not to petitions generally. He said the people not interested had no right to dictate as to where the terminus should be.

Mr. GROOM said he did not wish to misquote the hon. member, whose reported words did not apply to any petition in particular. It was interfering with the right to petition, of which no man should be deprived because it was the sacred right of every Briton to be able to approach the House, or even the representative of the Sovereign, if he had anything to complain of. He, however, would again admit that signatures to petitions were sometimes got too easily. The Colonial Secretary might remember the remark of Sir Charles Cowper, then Mr. Charles Cowper, that he could stand at the corner of a street in Sydney, and get signatures at 2s. 6d. per thousand. But supposing he could do so and that people would sign because there was nothing to pay, there were times of strong national crises, when the right of petition occupied a much broader position. At the time of the agitation in England for the repeal of the corn laws, would anyone say that the right to petition should have been denied to the millions who then petitioned Parliament? Those who were acquainted with the history of England would remember how, in 1832, when the first Reform Bill was introduced, petitions were presented by myriads of people to obtain the justice which was subsequently conceded. Regarding the right of petition as one of the most sacred of privileges, he would not like such remarks to go forth without some member of Parliament rising to defend it. With regard to the Bill, hon. members had criticised it very fully, and it was useless for him to travel over the same ground. As he had before observed, this was not the time to introduce it. The deficit in the Treasury might have been met in a different way; and even now it was not too late to take another course, for, if the measure did not become law, it would be within the province of the Treasurer to meet the deficit by a judicious tax upon land. If he did so, he would get from him (Mr. Groom) the strongest possible support both here and elsewhere.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, on rising to speak at this time he laboured under considerable difficulty, as the subject had been almost worn threadbare. Those who spoke late in the debate were often placed in the position of having to go over ground traversed by nearly every previous speaker;

He should endeavour to avoid this as far as possible; but, in order to notice some of the objections that had been made, it was unavoidable that he should traverse the remarks of some previous speakers. The opposition to the Bill had been led off by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith), and he must say that the hon. gentleman did not apply the ability they all knew he possessed, and the powers of speech with which he was gifted, in any attempt to elucidate the principles of the Bill. The speech was just that of a special pleader picking out small faults and technical objections, but avoiding as much as possible any attack upon general principles. In fact, he did not see how it was possible for a gentleman who was the author of, and had he believed drafted, the Local Government Bill, to object to the principles of the Bill. The hon. gentleman had not appeared to attempt to do so, but if he did he had lamentably failed to point out the weak points in the Bill. He had confined himself altogether to details which could have been much better argued in committee, and the time of the House would have been saved had the hon. gentleman confined himself to arguments on the general principles. In bringing in the Bill, the Government did not profess that it was perfect, but they attempted to provide a Bill not so cumbrous as the Local Government Act of last session, not requiring so much red-tape to carry out its provisions, and one that could be made suitable to the less populous parts of the country. All the members of the Ministry were thoroughly agreed that the Local Government Bill was much more applicable to the more populous parts, and they would sooner see it in force than this Bill, if possible. But the object of the Government was to provide a Bill that could be worked in the remote districts where the population was sparse; and, with amendments, they might succeed in making it a very good Bill for that purpose. The first objection taken to the Bill by the hon. gentleman was, that too large powers were given to the Government of the day. He was followed by other hon. members, one at least of whom made the most terrific discovery that the Governor in Council meant the Government of the day. As every child almost knew this, it was hardly necessary that it should be repeated again and again. The Governor never interfered with the local politics of the colony, and on that subject they did not require to be enlightened. But, in order to start the machinery of a Bill of this kind, it was necessary that very large powers should be given to the Governor in Council. Under the Local Government Bill, the Governor in Council had exactly the same powers as it was proposed to give him under this Bill. It was only intended that those powers should be given to the Governor in

Council to start the machinery of the Bill, and after the working part had been well started the measure would Act by itself without much assistance from the powers that be. The leader of the Opposition made an objection to the clause of the Bill which gave the Boards power to assume the management of hospitals, orphanages, and similar institutions. That was one of the small objections that he blamed the leader of the Opposition for taking, because it had nothing to do with the principle of the Bill. He (Mr. Palmer) did not believe in the Boards taking charge of orphanages and benevolent institutions, but he was not going to object to the Bill on that account. That could be easily attended to in committee, and the clause could be obliterated if the majority desired it. The hon. gentleman had only wasted the time of the House in pointing out such objections in a speech on the second reading. The next objection was that the Governor in Council had power to levy a special rate in the division or portion of the division specially benefited by any work, the proceeds to be devoted solely to the payment of interest. But if they gave a Local Board power to make a rate, and they neglected to do it, it was absolutely necessary that there should be power to compel them to do it. Another objection was to the manner of the election of auditors, but that was fully provided in the Bill; and with regard to scrutineers, their duties were very light indeed. If the provision, however, was not sufficient, another clause could easily be put in in committee. Another objection was to the mode of election of members for subdivisions, but the hon. member must have forgotten that the provision was the same as the 76th clause of the present Act. It was evident that the hon. gentleman only looked through particular spectacles, and saw in the clause what he wanted to see. He took objection to the method of taxing pastoral runs; but, if anything, the Bill was unfair to the pastoral tenants in the manner of levying rates, because it put an additional 3 per cent. on their rate, as compared with that of the selector. Pastoral lessees were, as a matter of fact, hardly dealt with; and the rate should be 5 per cent., not 8 per cent., to put them on a level with the others. The hon. member also objected to the rating on rented properties;—it was to be on the rent, free of all deductions; and, as a general rule, that would be only rating on 75 per cent. of the rent. Then the hon. gentleman objected to the provision for audits; but he (Mr. Palmer) said that the Bill was far superior to the Local Government Act in this respect, for there it was not compulsory upon the Auditor-General to audit the accounts; but here it was made so—the

Auditor-General had to examine the accounts once every year; and a power was also given the Treasurer which was not conferred by any other statute—viz., to withhold any endowment if the accounts were not properly or were falsely kept. He should not go through all the objections of the leader of the Opposition in detail;—they had been pretty well answered already; and, as far as the question of valuation and rating was concerned, the hon. member for Port Curtis had plainly shown that the hon. member who had spoken upon the subject had thoroughly misunderstood the meaning of the clause; and after the clear exposition that he had given of the provision—an exposition with which he (Mr. Palmer) agreed, and which was quite correct—it would not be necessary to follow in his footsteps. As to the objection that a Bill of this sort was not wanted in sparsely-populated districts, it was in those districts that it was principally required. As he had said before, he believed that for thickly-populated portions of the country the present Act would be the better one for all practical purposes; it was, however, for the sparsely-populated districts that this Bill was needed. The Government had been asked why they had not put the Local Government Act into force—why, in short, they did not use the power reserved in the Bill to put it in force when the people themselves would not move in the matter? His reply was, that they did not think it fair to put the Act in force in particular parts of the country when they could not make it applicable to the whole. They had also been asked whether they were prepared to put the Bill in action, if it became law? They were prepared to put it in force over the whole of the colony, so far as they could—not perhaps in the particular locality, in the district of Cook, pointed out by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas), where there were only black-fellows and kangaroos to form councillors; but wherever there was population and there was a probability of working the Bill they intended to bring it into action. Its great principle was to make persons who wanted roads and bridges tax themselves to pay for them. They had also been questioned more than once as to how the Boards were to commence proceedings before the rates were assessed and the machinery was at work. If the hon. members who put these questions had looked at the provisions of the Bill, they would find that in the sixty-eighth clause it was contemplated that special appropriations should be made by the Treasurer, in order to put the Bill into working condition before the people were called upon to tax themselves. If the measure became law, the intention of the Government, of course, was to put a sufficient amount on the Loan Fund to support these different District

Boards; so that the objection taken by several members—that the present time of depression was not the proper time to bring in a Bill of this kind—fell to the ground. If the Bill became law next month, before the machinery could be got into proper order, and before the people could be called upon to tax themselves, some twelve, sixteen, or eighteen months must elapse, and the contention that owing to the depressed times this was not the proper moment to enforce the measure would not hold water. There would be ample time, he hoped, before the Bill got into working order for the colony to have retrieved itself, and be in a much more fortunate position than it now was. Some hon. members had asked how did the Government propose to insist upon local government coming into force; and had said that it would be impossible to enforce it. The Government had simply to say, in reply, that when an application came in from any district for money, the answer would be, "Gentlemen, if you don't choose to tax yourselves you don't get any money, and you will have to go without roads and bridges. If you choose to tax yourselves you will get a heavy endowment from the Government; but if you don't you will have to do without roads and bridges." And he was quite certain that if people would not tax themselves for this purpose they did not deserve to have roads and bridges. It had also been objected that the measure dealt unfairly with the people inside as compared with the people outside; but he could not see that, for there was a vast difference between inside and outside country. The country in the far interior was all Government property, the property of the people, and they were improving it for their own purpose and not for the pastoral tenant, who simply had the use of the grass. If they had to wait for the proper time to put a measure of this kind in force they might wait for ever. He had never yet known the time when the people preferred of their own free will to tax themselves for any purpose, and if the country was to have this Bill in force at all they should begin while they could. Now was the proper time to begin. The provision made in the Estimates for roads and bridges showed by the decrease that the Government were perfectly in earnest in endeavouring to carry out the principles of the Bill, and he had no doubt when the measure was fully understood—at present it was understood by but few members, and by very few people outside—that its provisions would be appreciated, and that they should meet very little of the difficulties foretold in bringing it into use. Then, they had been told that any Government attempting to bring this Bill into operation would be unpopular, and that

they were unpopular. Any Government of retrenchment was sure to be unpopular, and they were quite prepared for unpopularity when they had made up their minds that, through the mismanagement of their predecessors, they were bound to go in for retrenchment. It might be temporary, and he hoped it would, but he was quite sure that the more the matter was considered, and the more people saw the necessity for retrenchment, the greater credit would the Ministry ultimately receive for having braved the dangers of unpopularity which the previous Government carefully invited for them. The whole of the arguments by Opposition members had a tendency to make the real working man pay for what the man of property required, and not what he wanted. They had been told that it was unfair to tax men, who had paid for their land and improved it, to make roads. What did the real working man, who paid a great deal of the taxation of the colony by the use of dutiable goods, care about roads and bridges? So far as he was concerned, the worse the roads and bridges were the more work there would be for him; and yet they were told all the taxation for general revenue should go to make roads and bridges for the colony. The colony had had enough of that, and it was high time some other means were tried of having these things done without going to the tariff to carry them out, as had been the rule. They had also been told that if the Treasurer would bring in a Bill for a land tax he would be supported. What was this measure but a Bill to impose a land tax? It was, with this difference—that it was a land tax for a purely local purpose, which he maintained was the only purpose for which a land tax should be established. Land should be taxed to improve land, which was precisely what this measure proposed to do, and would do. There was nothing more unpopular than a land tax that could be introduced by any Ministry; and he was perfectly certain that, if the Government introduced it, it would never pass the House. He looked upon a land tax as fair if it was to be used for local purposes, but if it was to be put to general revenue it was the most unfair tax in the world. The arguments used by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) against the Bill told really very much in its favour;—they were almost, every one, fair criticisms upon the measure, and told in its favour instead of tending against it; but the hon. gentleman was very unfair to the hon. member for Clermont, and certainly misrepresented his argument with respect to the Berry policy in Victoria. The hon. member's argument was that the tendency of the Bill was exceedingly liberal, and should be supported by liberal members; and he instanced the land tax as having been carried by Mr. Berry, and sup-

ported by the democratic element in Victoria. But he did not at all understand the hon. member to say that they should follow the policy adopted by Mr. Berry. A great part of the hon. member's speech had been previously spoken by the Treasurer in making his Financial Statement, and he (the Colonial Secretary) need not go further into that. The hon. member told them one thing that did not astonish him very much—he said he could not trust the Government. He (the Colonial Secretary) never knew an Opposition that could trust the Government, and he would be very much astonished when he found an Opposition that did. The Government certainly did not expect to be supported by the hon. member, or any Opposition they were likely to meet with; but he thought he might have given them credit for a little more common-sense than he seemed to do, to-night. He assumed that they brought in a Bill of this sort without the slightest intention of carrying it out in the outside districts; but he (the Colonial Secretary) could tell him that, if the Bill became law, they were determined to press it quite as much in the outside districts as in the inside. On the subject of railways which the hon. member diverged into, and which was alluded to, also, by the hon. member for Clermont, a laugh was raised on the Opposition side of the House because that hon. member said that the outside western squatters did not want railways in the outside districts; but he could assure those hon. members that there never was a truer statement made. The squatters on good country in the western districts did not want railways to go into that country. They liked railways to go over bad country to where they could send their drays comfortably for supplies, but they did not want them to go a mile further, because, as soon as a railway went through good country, they knew perfectly well that their squattages would cease. It would be ruin to them as squatters, and they would have to become property-owners. Squatting would cease to a great extent, and he was certain the hon. member for Clermont was perfectly correct when he said that, if the outside western districts were polled, nine squatters out of ten would vote against a railway going beyond Emerald Downs. They would gain nothing by it—in fact, as he said before, they would lose everything, because when a railway went through good country they knew perfectly well that it must be given up for sale; and the policy and object of the Government in running trunk lines to the extreme west was to get good land to recoup the expenditure on that railway by sale of that land. That was not a squatting policy. The squatters out there did not want a single acre sold: they wanted it continued as squattage. He felt

that he had not been able to do justice to this Bill, but he had not been very well lately, and he did not feel at all up to the mark, to-night; but he certainly believed that if the Bill were carried, with such amendments as might be made in committee, and passed into law, it would be for the good of the whole community, and serve to relieve the general revenue in a way that would materially advance the interests of the colony generally.

MR. RUTLEDGE said the Colonial Secretary had told them that it was not advisable to enter into a lengthy discussion on the details of the Bill at this stage, but that they should confine themselves to the general principles, and leave the details to be dealt with in committee; but he took it that, while this was perfectly true with regard to most Bills, the object of the discussion on the second reading was to ascertain whether it was desirable that such a Bill should go into committee, and in order to ascertain that it was absolutely incumbent to go a little into detail to see what the component parts of the Bill were, and how its provisions were likely to affect those who would be brought to feel the operation of these details if it passed into law. The Bill supplied nothing of practical utility that was not in the Local Government Act of last year;—whatever was excellent in the Bill he found in that Act, and whatever new provisions it contained would be found upon examination to be such as should not be permitted to pass into law by a deliberate vote of that House. One of the strongest arguments used in favour of the Bill was, that the Local Government Act had been found to be inoperative, because, as yet, country populations had not sent in petitions to be brought under its provisions, except counter petitions were sent in by a larger number of persons to prevent it from being brought into operation in any particular district. But, in the case of an important measure like this, nine months' trial was not sufficient. If six months' trial of the existence of a Government was not sufficiently long to enable the constituencies generally to judge of the capacity of that Government to keep the helm of affairs, he thought nine months was not sufficiently long to enable the country to ascertain the possible utility of a Bill of so comparatively intricate a character as the Local Government Act of 1878; and the mere fact that the Colonial Secretary had not been immediately inundated by petitions to be brought under the Act during the last nine months was no reason why they should pronounce that Act a rank failure, and attempt to substitute it by an inferior one. There were many objections of a serious character that appeared on the face of the Bill; and, while it might not be desirable to go over ground

that had been trodden by previous speakers, there were some leading points that required to be particularly and distinctly brought before the public mind; because he took it that this Bill would not be rushed through hastily, even if it got into committee, but that the constituencies would have an opportunity of forming their opinions upon it, and giving an expression to them through their representatives in the House. One new principle introduced in this Bill was that of voting by post, which was tantamount to voting by proxy. Clause 25 provided for doing away with the sacred system of the ballot, and that the voting papers should be sent through the post to a certain number of individuals in a district within the boundaries of these divisions. This placed a very dangerous power, not only in the hands of the individuals through whose hands the papers would pass, but also in the hands of those who would have the manipulation of these voting papers. Clause 26 provided that ratepayers whose rates were not paid on a certain date should not have voting papers sent to them, and what followed from that? That if there was a clique—and the object of this was said to be to destroy cliques and wire-pullers, and people who had a dominating influence in a division—who desire to secure the election of some friend, all they would have to do would be to indicate to the collectors of rates that they should call on certain persons in the district for their rates, and that they should pass by those who would not be likely to vote as they desired. The result would be that while those who paid their rates would be entitled to vote, those who had not done so would be precluded from voting, and they would have cliqueism and wire-pulling with a vengeance. Then, he wanted to know whether the colony was ripe for the universal application of local government, when upon the very face of it the colony was so sparsely populated throughout the greater portion of its area that, in order to enable people to vote, it was absolutely necessary that they should resort to the post office? If such was the case—if the colony was in such a state of infancy as regarded settlement and development, it at once condemned the principle of the universal application of local government. They might as well say that because a boy eight or ten years old was merely able to go messages, and do other little things by which he might earn a little money to assist his parents, that before he arrived at maturity he should be sent out to work; and not only that, but also that he should set up housekeeping for himself and find ways and means to enable him to get through the world;—that, because he was able to do a little to assist in providing his own maintenance, therefore he should be cut off from all parental

assistance and cast adrift to do the best he could for himself. Such a proceeding as that would be absurd on the part of any parent; and yet that was practically what they were doing under this Bill. In the infantile condition of many portions of this great country they were just doing that—cutting them off from parental assistance, and saying, “You must do the best you can for yourselves; you will get nothing from us except a little parental supervision, and for a short time you shall have certain endowment, and after that it will be at a still more limited rate.” To adopt a policy like that was over-doing the thing altogether. Local government was a very good thing, but like many other things it was possible to have too much of it. He believed that local government should be introduced gradually, as pointed out by the hon. member for Maryborough, but it should not be done by this wholesale system of legislation, and the universal application of the principle throughout the colony. The Premier, in his speech on the previous evening, laid great emphasis on one particular feature of the Bill which was peculiar to itself, and that was that a local Board would have the power to limit the number of public-houses that might exist within its jurisdiction. He regarded that as a very specious clause but a very deceptive one. No doubt the hon. gentleman thought it would be palatable to a certain section on the Opposition side of the House. “Here is the panacea,” said the hon. gentleman, “that you have been looking for so long, to stop the widespread evil of intemperance;—we will give this matter into the hands of the Divisional Boards.” They were told, in clause 54, that the Board *may* limit the number of public-houses and so forth; but what was the case?—that the power to authorise the existence of so many public-houses was to be transferred from a licensing bench to a Divisional Board. It did not say that the Board *shall* limit a certain number of public-houses to a certain population. It did not make it compulsory on the local Board, and the consequence would be that the divisional or local Board, if it saw fit, could multiply the number of public-houses indefinitely, just the same as licensing benches now could. So that the clause might just as well be struck out, for, whilst it might be availed of, the probability was that it would not be. He now came to what he considered the cardinal feature of the Bill, and which had been referred to by many hon. members, and by the Colonial Secretary in his speech, just now—that was the mode of rating properties in any particular division. In section 57 they had introduced to them a method of rating properties that, to say the least of it, would operate exclusively for the benefit of one particular

class. He should be the last to say one word to inflame the feeling out of doors, as regarded favour exhibited to one particular class of the community. He did not like class-cries, or to see one class arrayed as against another, and he had no sympathy with the working-man cry, or the poor-man cry; but he must say that there was a feeling of favouritism exhibited in the Bill towards one class that ought not to be tolerated by the House. They had been told that all property was to be rated on the capital value of the fee-simple, and that in the case of a homestead selection the rate should be upon the value of the fee-simple at the time of selection. Let hon. members see how that would work. Taking the case of a selection of 1,280 acres of good pastoral land, the price put upon it by the Government of the day would be 10s. an acre: but there had to be taken in connection with that 10s. an acre a second 10s. an acre for improvements, which were required by the Act, for he would venture to say that, if the question was brought before the Supreme Court, the value of a selection under this clause of the Bill would not be the 10s. an acre upset price, but the 10s. an acre with another 10s. for compulsory improvements; thus the value of the fee-simple of 1,280 acres would be £1,280. Then there was a proviso excepting improvements erected thereon; but what did it mean? Why, the improvements erected thereon by the pastoral tenant, or the selector for his own comfort or convenience, or to afford greater facilities for developing what might otherwise lie dormant. That proviso had no reference to the completion of improvements required by the Act of 1876. And it came to this—that the selector of 1,280 acres would be rated at £100 a year. Supposing, however, there was, adjoining that selector—who was a man of, say, moderate means—a very wealthy squatter who had fifty square miles of country which he leased from the Crown, but, being in close contiguity to the selector, it was more than probable that he was in a settled district, and had purchased it at the upset price of £2 a square mile. The top rent paid by that squatter would be £100 a year, and when the assessor came round and asked him how much rent he was paying a year he would say £100, and he would accordingly be put down at £8. So that the selector would be put down in the rate-books at £100 a year, whilst his rich neighbour, the squatter, who derived considerably more value from his land, would be put down at £8. That was to say, that, in the case of the selector, the rate to be levied would be struck upon £100 as a basis, and in the case of the squatter upon £8. Was that fair? Was it right that men already sufficiently burdened to provide homes for themselves and their

families, and who expended all their capital in making the improvements required by law, should be so heavily handicapped, whilst the squatter, who was a wealthy man and well able to pay, should be allowed to go almost scot-free? And about these improvements. He had travelled too much among stations in this colony, and also in New South Wales, not to know what improvements were worth, as a rule. There were very few squattages in the interior of Queensland that had any improvements worthy of the name. The greater proportion of improvements, so called, on stations in the interior which were to be included in the taxation, consisted of humpies of slabs roofed with bark, and so forth. He ventured to say that if the improvements on a 1,280-acre selection were compared with those on a station in the interior, it would be found, as a rule, that the former far exceeded those made by the squatter. He was not speaking of what some hon. members called the poor selector, but of members of a class which ought to be encouraged to come to the colony; and anybody who inflicted an injury on that class inflicted a fatal blow on the prosperity of the colony. The hon. Colonial Secretary told them that the Ministry were quite willing to put up with all the unpopularity of attempting to pass such a measure as the present—in fact, the hon. member gloried in the idea of being unpopular. There were some people who liked to make martyrs of themselves; there were some who would, in fact, make great sacrifices if they thought by so doing they would secure from the public a large amount of sympathy, and he had no doubt that the Government were reckoning upon the certain re-action that would result in their favour when the time for severe retrenchment had passed away. They all knew that there was a kind of oscillation in these things; and, now, when the pendulum had gone as far as it could in one direction, they were reckoning when it would swing round the other way. He had no doubt the Government thought they had made themselves out heroes—that they had shown that they braved public opinion and carried unpopular measures believing them to be for the good of the country. It was, however, quite possible for them to make a mistake in this matter, and to miscalculate the extent to which the public would endure these tyrannical measures, and the forcing upon the people another system of local government. There was already one on the statute book, but the Government were not content with that, and wanted a dual statute answering to the South Sea Islands canoe, which was a double arrangement consisting of a vessel for goods and passengers and a mimic boat to balance it. This Bill was a sort of outrigger to the

Local Government Act, and a very feeble imitation of it at that. The Colonial Secretary said that he and his colleagues would incur no end of reproach if they were to come down to the House and propose a land tax that would be universal in its application. They would incur odium; and serve them right, if they attempted to propose any such idiotic measure. Did anybody suppose that a land tax of universal application would be acceptable to all classes of the community? It would not be acceptable. But if they were to allow their courage—and he gave them credit for having courage—to so far go in the face of the darling prejudices of some of their strongest supporters as to impose a tax upon some of those lands that had been made valuable at the public cost, they would do an act that would entitle them to the everlasting gratitude of every man in the colony. He hoped this measure would not find a place upon the statute book, and believed there were gentlemen on the other side who would take an independent stand and not lend themselves to the sending of a Bill like this into committee. He rejoiced at the exhibition, already, of determination to take an independent stand. He was delighted to hear the manly observations of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. Kellett), and was anticipating that his colleague, with that manliness which always characterised his speeches and votes, would side with his colleague, and say, with them on the Opposition side, that the attempt to burden the colony with this Divisional Boards Bill was one that must be frustrated; and, if frustrated at its inception, so much the better for all concerned.

Mr. STUBLEY said that there had been a great deal of one-sidedness in the remarks made as to the squatters and their losses and gains. The Colonial Secretary had said that the squatters did not want the railways to go out to the West; and the hon. members for Clermont, Normanby, and Leichhardt had said much the same thing. He (Mr. Stubley) agreed that the squatters did not want the railways to the fertile portions of the country. What they did want was to have them run through the bad, waste country which intervened between the present lines and the West, so that they might get the facilities of bringing their wool and produce to market at the cheapest rate. It would be an injury to the people in the western country rather than otherwise to penetrate the West. At present it cost the squatter 3d. or 4d. per lb. to cart his wool to market; but having a line of railway through the bad country, which might be said to extend 200 miles from the coast, they would save 1d. or 2d. per lb., and if that was not a consideration he did not know what was. He was satisfied that they should have that

consideration, but they must pay for it. The Colonial Secretary had also stated that they meant to enforce the Bill, but they did not say they would enforce it wherever it could be applied. The very fact of the squatters saying that they did not want the railways in the West seemed to show that it would be to their disadvantage to have the Bill applied out there, though were they once made there could be no doubt they would encourage settlement. Were there a clause in the Bill making all districts pay, not only for their local wants, such as cross-roads, but for the main roads, and even railways, there would be some justice in the measure; but there could not be at present, from the fact that all the settled districts would have to pay a double tax. The people in the West had no intention of taxing themselves—they had nothing they were to be taxed for. All they required was a good road for their bullock-drays which led to the terminal railway station. They did not want proper roads, or streets, or townships; and therefore they would never attempt to establish local government. So long as they could get railways at the expense of the settled districts to convey their material through country they could make no use of—and through which they now had to take it by bullock teams, though they could not very well do that on account of the impoverished state of the district they had to cross—they would be satisfied. Were the railway lines to extend 250 miles inland, they would just reach the borders of the best western country, roughly speaking, in the three divisions in which it was proposed to run them westward; that would be quite as much as was wanted for the next fifteen or twenty years, and the squatters would be perfectly satisfied. This was his principal objection to the Bill, and the reason why he should vote against it; but there were other reasons, and, chiefly, that the existing Local Government Act had worked satisfactorily considering the short time it had been in operation.

MR. ARCHER had listened with considerable attention to all the remarks of hon. members on the other side of the House, in the hope of hearing something which might enable them to improve the Bill when it got into committee; but when the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) had spoken as he did, a strong impression was left on him (Mr. Archer) that the other side of the House had no great desire to have local government in any shape or way. But they could not do that because local government was the crowning principle of the professors of liberalism; and, as representing the Liberal party, they could not now get up in antagonism to the principle, though they made all the objections they could against it. For instance, the member

for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) distinctly stated that the country was not fit for it. In saying that he had probably expressed the meaning of the other side of the House a little too clearly, as he (Mr. Archer) had not heard any cheers when he made the statement. At any rate, the hon. member had the courage of his opinions, and was not afraid to say they were not fit for local government. Neither did he (Mr. Archer) think they were fit, but if they were not now they never would be until compelled to it. He was certain that the objections raised were not so much against the form of the Bill as against the real principle of local government, and he gathered this from the very unfair criticisms the members of the Opposition had passed on it. He would comment on a few. The junior member for South Brisbane (Mr. Mackay) had said that Government had tried to relieve the deficit by knocking off £100,000 from the roads votes to lay it on in loan. That was not the case. In the first place, the sum of £100,000 was only £72,000 or £73,000, and that in reality only represented £24,000 which they had to raise, because Government gave the rest at £2 for £1. The actual amount knocked off would be only £24,000. Of course, whether they get that money by rating themselves, or whether it came out of the Consolidated Revenue, they would have to tax themselves to make roads over the colony as it was; but suppose that the Bill were carried out, the squatters and selectors, instead of having to tax themselves for £72,000, would have to do it for £24,000. They could not enforce the measure fully for some years—not until they were in a better position to raise the whole sum themselves; but when that time arrived it would relieve the revenue to a great extent, and, not only that, but would relieve the House of a good deal of trouble as well. There had been some curious arguments used against the Bill. The hon. member (Mr. Mackay) had asked why it was that America got so thickly settled? Did he not recollect that the distance across the Atlantic was comparatively short, and that a passage could be obtained for £4 or £5, and, in the steerage of the sailing ships, for even less? He (Mr. Archer) supposed that the working men who went to America were not afraid to work to get to any part of that continent they wanted to. The very fact of ease of access induced numbers of immigrants to go there who would not come here—not such people, either, as we had sometimes to take here, but who really had earned as much money as would take them to America at their own cost, and did not require the free passages which were granted here. They were a more valuable class of settlers than we could possibly get.

They at all events showed they had saved something for the purpose, and that very fact showed them to be above the ordinary run of men. He had intended to say something with reference to what had fallen from the leader of the Opposition about railways, but that had already been done by the hon. member for Normanby, who got sat upon by the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford) for his pains. That question was introduced by the leader of the Opposition. He was present when that hon. gentleman made a speech at Rockhampton, and remembered the enthusiastic cheers which greeted his remarks about sending railways to the far West. But a change seemed now to have come over the spirit of his dream.

MR. GRIFFITH: No change at all.

MR. ARCHER said he was very glad to hear it, but, if there was no change, he had got a different way of expressing his mind. He would not, however, allude to the matter further. Circumstances proved clearly that the set of the Opposition was not against this poor Bill, but against local government. The hon. member for Wide Bay pointed out all the places in the Bill where the Governor in Council was mentioned; and the hon. member for Leichhardt showed that similar powers were given to the Governor in Council under the Local Government Act. The former hon. member found no fault with the Local Government Act because he knew it would not apply to the country. The then Ministry passed that Act in order to take credit for having introduced local government into the colony, and yet they took care that their measure should not apply to the country. The hon. member for Maryborough said that he only thought it necessary to apply the system in the more thickly-populated districts. That was the very reason why this smaller and easier Bill should be passed, so that the whole colony should be brought under it. Some might say that in outside districts like the Cook it would not apply because there would be nobody there to work it. If such were the case, he hoped the Government would not grant them any money to make roads with. As soon as people discovered the conditions under which alone they could get assistance from the Government, they would rate themselves. He was rather astonished at the calculation made by the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge), that the possessor of 1,280 acres would be rated £100 for roads and bridges. He would be rated on that sum if the valuation was assessed only on the fee-simple.

MR. RUTLEDGE explained that that was precisely his contention.

MR. ARCHER accepted the hon. gentleman's explanation, and believed the arrangement was quite fair, because the

squatter was only a tenant for five years, while the selector was a fixture to soil that was properly improved. But frequently the squatter was a selector at the same time, and would have to pay on his selection quite independently of his leasehold. He questioned whether there were ten squatters in the settled districts who were not also selectors. He himself owned no land in the settled districts as a squatter, but only what he had selected, and many others were in a similar position. Believing that the colony was peopled by a race of men who were not children, and that whenever half-a-dozen Englishmen met together in a strange land the first thing they did was to form some kind of Government, he contended that this Bill ought to pass. Of course, it would not work so well in the western districts as in the thickly-settled districts of the South; and on account of the enormous size of the former, difficulties would be always arising as to the direction the roads should take. It was a mistake to suppose that main roads crossed all stations. The main roads were very good, without much being done to them; but there were long periods when it would be impossible to carry on traffic on account of a flooded river, and if the squatters did not tax themselves to put bridges across rivers they would have to pay it in extra carriage. Exception had been taken that the main roads were not to be included in the Bill, and that that was an unfair advantage the squatter would have. He (Mr. Archer) would be prepared to accept the Bill even if every main road came under its provisions. He looked upon local government as being attended with such enormous benefits, not only to the country but to this House, that he would willingly undertake the maintenance of the main roads as well as of the by-roads under this Bill. While speaking on this Bill during the debate on the Financial Statement, he gave several reasons why he thought it ought to be passed, at the same time stating that this was an inopportune time for putting it into operation. The Colonial Secretary had, to-night, completely answered the objections he then offered, by showing that it was impossible to put the Bill into operation for the next eighteen months, and that in the 68th clause provision was made that money would be supplied for the carrying on of work until the rating was completed. By the end of that time the country would be in a much better position than it was now, and, even if it was not, they were not rating themselves very heavily in raising the amount he had mentioned, which would be spent by themselves on their own roads. Almost his only objection having been thus removed, he should certainly support the Bill. The hon. member for South Brisbane said the

best thing ever done here was the Board Bill instituted by Mr. Walsh when at the head of the Works Department. He differed from the hon. member *in toto* on that point, for never was money more completely wasted in his district than it was under that Bill. When they entrusted Government money to Government officers it might sometimes not be employed to the greatest advantage; but most of them were moderately honest men. Under the Government officers the work done was substantial, and lasted for years; but the money spent in the districts under the superintendence of those who had the spending of the Board money was, in most cases, simply wasted. A gentleman on the committee, one of the three who signed cheques, had to refuse to sign cheques again and again; but they were taken to the other two, who signed them. People had a wonderful way of thinking that money from Government might be spent as though it had no value; but if they had to rate themselves for it they would not spend it in that loose way. Therefore, if it were now proposed to revert to that plan without making the people contribute anything, he would oppose the motion, because it would have a demoralising effect upon the country. Under the proposed Bill the people would be rated for a third of the amount, and that would be sufficient to keep them straight, as they would not be inclined to waste money they had to tax themselves for; and instead of making worse work they would turn it out better and cheaper than it had been before.

Mr. REA said it was a pity for the hon. member for Blackall that he did not sit down ten minutes ago, as his last sentence but one had answered and contradicted the previous part of his speech. He had been urging the great advantage of placing works in the hands of the people themselves, and now he said, "Don't trust the men at your own doors; trust the Government officers." When he (Mr. Rea) saw an hon. member of experience coming to such a lame conclusion that he answered himself in a quarter of an hour, he got more and more confused as to how they were to legislate upon this extraordinary Bill. The hon. the Minister for Mines ought to go down on his knees to the hon. member for Blackall for having relieved him from a great amount of anxiety. The latter hon. member said there was going to be no deficiency, and that the saving to the exchequer by this Bill, over the whole colony, would be a mere £24,000. Therefore, while the Minister for Mines appealed to the Opposition side of the House, and told them there was a deficiency to be made up, the hon. member for Blackall answered that there was to be none, whether the Bill was passed or not, but a

paltry £24,000. The man to be taxed, however, would think differently. The real title of the Bill should be—"A Bill to throw Agricultural Lands out of Cultivation," because, if passed, men would put their property on four legs and not on wheels, as there would be no roads. He was, perhaps, the only man in this House who remembered the first Local Government Bill passed in Australia. It was introduced by Sir George Gipps, immediately after the cessation of the convict system in New South Wales. He carried the Bill with a despotism almost equal to that of the other (Ministerial) side of the House, and made it the law of the land;—but what was the result? Not one single district ever put it in force, and Sir George Gipps, although he had under the Act the power of enforcing it, said—"You cannot go to law with a whole county." And that was what the Premier would find if he attempted to send his tax-gatherers round to men's doors. He (Mr. Rea) would not like to be one of them;—they would meet with a similar experience to that of tax-gatherers in Ireland in times past. There would probably be lots of men seeking for the billets the first season, but there would be very few found ready to accept them for the second. When he came to look at the Bill it appeared to him that it was purposely designed to influence elections, as the hon. member for Moreton had previously pointed out. Whenever an election was at hand, the road district would be promised a lump loan to be spent at the doors of those who would return the member. In each district the men who pulled the wires at a general election would be nominated to the council and have the spending of the money at their own door: that was the sort of local government they would have under this Bill. Hon. members opposite, in speaking to the subject, answered themselves. The hon. member for Cook asked why the hon. member for Logan referred to Canada instead of looking at home; while the Minister for Lands went to Russia and Turkey for his illustrations, where, he said, they were fighting for local government to the death. He would tell hon. members why local government had answered so well in Victoria—it was because, before attempting its introduction, the highways were like Queen street throughout the colony. The Minister for Lands said, "No," but he could assure hon. members that the roads to every main goldfield were better than Queen street, and he had seen good roads alongside the railways. He was surprised that the hon. member for Blackall and other members representing outside districts could say that no injury would be done to their districts by this Bill. He had written out a notice, for the purpose of ascertaining the amount of money spent on roads and bridges in the Brisbane and

Ipswich districts as compared with that spent for the same purpose in the North. To do fair justice to all parts of the colony, it was necessary to have an equation for the last ten or fifteen years, as of the expenditure in the older district and that due to the North upon the same footing. Had a statesman drawn the Bill, he would have made an equation in a schedule to show what amount would be allocated to the various parts when this Bill first came into operation. With regard to the rating, the way different classes were considered together was a most extraordinary feature of the Bill, the varying of terms was so significant. He was perfectly amazed that the members of the Ministry should not see what the people of the country detected at once. In the case of selectors, it said they should not be taxed below a certain amount, but the squatter was not to be taxed higher than a certain amount. Did not that show favouritism? Then the clause appeared in such a questionable shape that the squatter could not be rated on his own pre-emptive. If the Bill passed as at present worded, it might be held in some cases that the squatter was merely occupying as a Crown tenant, and that he should be rated for nothing else but the rent he paid to the Government. But it would be too bare-faced to allow the Bill to go through committee without alteration, and the pre-emptives would no doubt be regarded as rateable property. Hon. members left out of sight the fact that the pre-emptives on those runs would be benefited by those ratings, and the owners would pay rate on nothing that was not paid for; yet that while they had got their claws on those lands nothing could touch them. Therefore, they would profit by all the money spent by the Government, and the pre-emptives would not be rated until they paid for them at the end of their leases. That was why they wanted to see a squatting Government continue, because they knew that until land was thrown open they would not have to buy, and would save the interest. Those underlying interests showed why hon. members voted for this Bill. Hon. members had made the bare-faced assertion that they did not want railways; but, surely, they must think they were talking to children. What was the whole drift of the Bill? He remembered reading the disclosure of a system burglars had of opening the most perfect safes—they inserted a number of chisels beginning with a mere thin slice of steel. The Bill was the thin slice edge to make way for other Bills for getting the lands of the colony. When passed, they would go on gradually until they got to the one and a-half millions for railways. He would agree with those hon. members who said they did not want railways, and would

vote for the measure, bad as he considered it, on condition that they would promise to come over and vote on the Opposition side when the vote for the million and a-half came on. The loan provision was most dangerous, because the money would be voted in a lump, and voted by the Board to their favourites—it would, in fact, be so much public plunder to be spent where they liked. The hon. member for Blackall said that wherever half-a-dozen Englishmen met they would form a local government; but since the Act to which he had referred was passed in New South Wales it had not been touched. The settlers in the inside districts knew better than to allow themselves to be taxed for the benefit of the squatters outside. The idea of hon. members opposite attempting to bamboozle the House with the theory that they only held their runs on a six months' tenure, when they knew very well that their tenure was for twenty-one years, with right of renewal, such as no other colony had dreamt of giving! The drift of the whole of these Bills was the projects that were to come after: there were men opposite who were determined "to make a spoon or spoil a horn"—to make a fortune or go into the Insolvent Court. The professions of these squatting gentlemen in the outside districts, that they did not want railways, would certainly not be found to hold water, if hon. members were to ask the bank managers whether the railways would not double the value of the securities they held in the banks. This was in reality one of the dangers that they had to face—the pressure by the banks upon the Crown tenants sitting in the House. It would not be fair to refer to the affairs of hon. members in this manner under ordinary circumstances; but when the House had to deal with the question of taxation, hon. members had to see who would vote for throwing the burden of taxation upon the settled districts. In the course of his speech, last night, the Minister for Lands questioned whether there were any farming lands, except in the immediate vicinity of Brisbane, worth £50 per acre; but he would inform the House that a gentleman living in Warwick had declared that he would not sell his land at £100 per acre. He had told him that he could not afford to take less, as he had been manuring it for ten years to convert it into excellent wheat-growing soil. That land would not be rated at one pound per acre, the price probably paid for it originally, but upon the accumulated value it had derived from the labour and capital bestowed upon it. There was where the hardship would be inflicted by this Bill. It would be impossible to avoid gross injustice unless something like classification were adopted showing that the value of the

labour should not be included in the assessment; but there was not a word in the Bill that the value of labour put upon land should be exempted. The Minister for Lands was also sublime in his contention that it was the men of property who wished to be exempted from taxation, at the expense of the men of no property. He happened some years ago, when on a visit to Brisbane, to meet Mr. Hemmant, who at the time had no thought of entering Parliament, and, in answer to his question as to how the extension of railways into the country was benefiting him, that gentleman said it was not the squatters who supported the shopkeepers of Brisbane, but the farmers;—yet the Minister for Works said the squatters were the men who should be considered before the farmers. He felt sure that if the Bill was put into operation, and the farmers were compelled to tax themselves to the extent proposed, the result would be that they would throw their lands out of cultivation, and put the whole of them under sheep and cattle. He was sorry that the Minister for Works, who had spoken a great deal about the “poor working man,” yesterday, was not present to hear him read certain opinions that he had expressed when criticising the Local Government Bill passed last year. The hon. gentleman said on that occasion, with regard to the constituents he then represented, that—

“If this Bill became law in its present form, no greater blow could be given to the mining industry.”

He (Mr. Rea) had it from the highest authority that the wording of the Bill before them was exactly the same as that of the measure passed last year. On that occasion the Minister for Works also said—

“The miners would never stay a day longer on the goldfields; and the Bill would be the means of closing up the goldfields of the colony.”

The House did not hear the same sentiments from the hon. gentleman when he spoke last night;—not one word was said about the miner and the goldfields. The hon. gentleman had shown little pluck by speaking in this strain, and bolting from the House not to hear his sentiments recalled to his memory; but he (Mr. Rea) had often found that bouncible characters were generally cowards. He was so charmed with the sentiments expressed by the Minister for Works, last night, on behalf of the labouring man that, as the hon. gentleman was now present, he would read over again the opinions expressed by him when criticising the Local Government Bill last year, but first of all he would quote for his edification what his

views then were as to the effect the measure would have upon labouring men. He said :—

“It would be a direct tax upon labour—a thing not yet attempted in the colony.”

He hoped that when the Bill got into committee the Minister for Works would repeat his words of last year and vote against it. The member for Normanby had said that he did not own an acre of land, which was the very reason why he was voting for the Bill. Some of the Ministry had made a similar boast. They did not care what taxation was imposed so long as their property was not made taxable. With regard to what the coming Attorney-General had said, that it was impossible to gauge the fair value of a squattage, he would show him how it could be done. Let five valuers testify what the run and stock would fetch at auction, then deduct the market price of the stock upon it, and the balance would be the value that should be taxed. He trusted that, when the Bill got into committee, hon. members would remember, in discussing it, that it was but subsidiary to other projects contemplated by hon. members opposite;—this Bill and others were to be the means by which their majority hoped to coerce the passing of the million-and-a-half loan. Returning to the Bill, he never knew of a provision where such an enormous power was given to the returning officer with such inadequate safeguards as were provided in this instance. As to the rating clause, it was in reality a tax upon the labour of small landowners. The fencing of squatters might come in as improvements under this provision, but so would the fencing on the smaller areas. Unimproved land should be valued on the same scale as the improved land of the small holder. If the Ministry would agree to place all land upon the same footing—that it should be rated at its original value—then the question would deserve favourable consideration.

Mr. GARRICK said they should be very thankful for the remarks made by some hon. gentlemen opposite, who were usually—almost invariably—very strong supporters of the present Government. He referred more particularly to the hon. member for Mitchell, who, he was sorry to see, was not in his place. Now, it showed how very strong indeed were party ties when that hon. member, after he, as he said, according to his own lights, would be able to demolish this Bill—after saying that he was going to reduce it to an absurdity, and after proceeding in his own way to reduce it to an absurdity—in the very next breath he said he intended to vote for the second reading of it. Party ties must be very strong, indeed when, after reducing a Bill to an absurdity, the hon. member declared his intention to vote

for the second reading of that Bill. The hon. member for Stanley (Mr. Kellett) was not very much better in this respect than the hon. member for the Mitchell. The hon. member for Stanley declared that he did not approve of the principles of the Bill, but he said he had no doubt that the Ministry that introduced it had very good intentions. Now, he would ask hon. members if such reasoning as that justified a member in voting for the second reading of a Bill? He took it that men generally meant what they said, and if they had good intentions they were generally well able to express them—and the Government had ample opportunity of doing so in such a Bill as this; and how the hon. member could say he would vote for a Bill, the principles of which he disapproved, on the ground that the Ministry introducing it had good intentions, he did not know. They were entitled, at any rate, to claim the votes of the hon. members for Mitchell and Stanley; but it only showed how very strong party feeling was when, after such speeches, those hon. members declared that they would vote for the second reading of the Bill. Now, they need not go outside the Treasury benches for great contradiction as to this Bill. The Premier, in introducing it, told them that he intended to make the divisions under the Bill, as far as practicable—and he said it would to a great extent be practicable—coincide with the electorates. He also told them that one great reason why he could not rest satisfied with the passing of the Local Government Bill of last session was, because it was very partial in its application; that except in the more settled districts he was unable to apply it; and that it was unfair that such a Bill should be only partial in its application, and the present Bill was introduced so as to make the principle applicable to the outside districts. In this Bill they had no words stating that main roads were to be excluded from local taxation; but there was the broader power given to the Executive that certain works might be excluded from local taxation;—they had taken ample powers to do it, and, in the course of the Premier's speech, he indicated that one of the works that would be excluded from local taxation was the making of main roads. The Minister for Lands said that this Bill was not applicable to the western districts, because the only works, there, that need be carried out were main roads, and all the work that could be done would be the making of a few culverts and bridges. The Premier said the making of these roads, and of culverts and bridges on these roads, was not to be subject to local taxation, but should be paid for, as at present, out of the Consolidated

Revenue. Where, then, was the use of this Bill? He also said the reason why the Bill was introduced was, because the Local Government Act was not applicable to the outside districts—and this was broader and would apply; but the Minister for Lands said it was not applicable to those districts because there were no works, there, that could be done under it. How did that agree with the Premier? These two speeches were certainly inconsistent; and they should not allow a Bill to pass to enable the Executive of the day—which simply meant the Minister in charge of that particular department—to divide the colony into districts just as he pleased or might not please. The hon. member for Blackall endeavoured to answer the objections taken on that side of the House, that the Bill should not be forced at the present time upon the agricultural settlers. That objection was a very reasonable one. He knew, from his knowledge of his own district and others, that, during the last two years the settlers there had undergone very severe trials indeed, and were not able to bear the increased taxation proposed to be put upon them by the Government. Members on the Opposition side of the House said to the Government, "Why not postpone the measure?"—and they replied that, practically, it would be postponed, and the Colonial Secretary pointed to clause 68. The hon. member for Blackall appeared to be satisfied that this clause afforded provision for starting and continuing those divisions for some time, but that was not the case. There must be a special appropriation by Parliament "for the construction of public works within such division," and how could there be a special appropriation until the division was established, and until that work was known, and rates were levied? One of his principal objections to the Bill was, that it could not be really considered by itself. He had been unable to consider it without reference to the whole Financial Statement of the Treasurer. He looked at it in this way:—At the present time, or at any rate before 1879-80, they had £77,000 knocked off the Estimates at one swoop, which sum had hitherto been devoted to the making of roads and bridges, and no provision was made for the future construction of such works. The Treasurer said, "In future, you must make them yourself." The hon. member for Rockhampton said that the general revenue would supply two-thirds, but he (Mr. Garrick) would point out that there was no provision in the Estimates for any such thing—the Treasurer had made no provision of the kind. If the principle of the Bill was that during the first five years of the existence of municipalities they should receive £2 for every £1 contributed by rates, then he would point out

that there was no provision in the Estimates or anywhere else for that. The Treasurer had put down for endowments the same sum that was set down for 1878-9—£24,000; and no provision was made for paying £2 for every £1 contributed by the ratepayers. The fact was there had been retrenchment, the result of which had been the knocking off of £77,000, hitherto appropriated for the making of roads and bridges, and the people had either to find the money for those works themselves or go without them. The Treasurer told them that he intended to expend about £1,800,000 for the extension of the western railway; and what did he give the settled districts in lieu?—he gave them nothing. The money hitherto voted for roads and bridges was reduced by £77,000, and they did not receive a single equivalent. The settled districts would get no more for their roads and bridges than they now did, and yet the Government were going to make a railway to the west to cost £1,500,000 over and above the roads, so that they would give the squatters in the west a new advantage and would ask them nothing for it; whilst the settled districts were to be knocked off £77,000. No actual provision had been made for paying the interest on the loan of £3,000,000, and they would most probably have to come upon the taxpayers of the colony for it; instead of which care should have been taken to have saddled the people out west for the payment of the interest on that part of the loan required for their railway, as it would go to improve their properties. It had been said that those railways would not improve the value of property, as they would go through Crown lands; but he wished hon. members to understand this—that, under the Act of 1869, the squatters in those districts were potential freeholders. It might be said that they merely leased the grass; but that was a fallacy, as they were entitled to purchase any portion of their lease at the price, under the Act, of 10s. an acre, during a lease extending over a whole term of 21 years. Could anyone say what the unearned increment of that 21 years was?—and yet railways were to be carried out to those stations, and not an attempt had been made to fix any interest on the cost of construction on them. He had pointed out, a few evenings ago, and it was just as applicable at the present time, an instance with reference to the Roma Railway Reserve. There were in August last pre-empted, in accordance with the Railway Reserves Act, 90,000 acres of land, for which the lessees paid 10s. an acre, or £45,000, whilst land of the same quality—if anything, not so good as that pre-empted, the lessees having the first choice, of course, taking the best—was sold by auction about the same time, and realised about 23s. an acre, so that the

1879—2 o

lessees put into their pockets the difference between 10s. and 23s., or, in round numbers, £60,000, which was clear and absolute profit to them. He would ask them whether they were not as much freeholders in those districts as selectors were in the settled districts?—and yet, on the latter a tax of £77,000 was to be inflicted. It had been said that the proposed trunk line would be an advantage only to the Crown lands; but that was another fallacy, as one-sixth of them were leasehold, and as the railway went out the leaseholder pre-empted. Therefore, he said that, for the benefits they received, they were as much entitled to be taxed as those in the settled districts were to be taxed for their roads. Then, again, it was said that the selectors were benefited by improvements on roads; but was not the country as much benefited by the produce brought into the towns by selectors as by the wool sent down, if not more so, as the money for produce was spent in the towns, whilst that for wool was not spent here? The Colonial Treasurer had had a fair opportunity of taxing the people in some equitable way, but he would not avail himself of it. At present, the whole taxation of £600,000 fell equally upon the poor as upon the rich, and the hon. gentleman had not attempted to alter such a state of things, but had even put on the settled districts an additional tax of £77,000. That was the principal reason why he should oppose the second reading of the Bill. With regard to voting by post, it was, no doubt, a novel matter, but it ought not to be reprobated on that account if it presented on the face of it evidence that it was likely to work satisfactorily. He believed it did not, because, in the first place, a man might not be able to read or write, whereas under the Bill he would be required to sign a voting paper. Then, again, the whole system of voting was made to depend on the regularity of the post, whilst it was well known in large districts that it frequently happened that a post was a week or two over its time. Then again, clause 30 provided that the returning officers should not receive any voting paper except through the post; but supposing some accident occurred over which he had no control, and the post was delayed, the whole election might go wrong. It was also provided that if a voter lost his voting paper he might on the day of election go to the returning officer and procure another, yet although he was allowed to do that he would even on the very day of the election have to post that voting paper to the returning officer; the second paper could, however, only be issued on proof being made that the first had not been received. In respect to the valuation, there appeared to be some confusion in the mode of arriving at it. The first proviso of the fifty-

seventh clause contained a universal proposition applied to all property, which was that the annual value should be 8 per cent. upon the capital value. The next proviso applied to homestead and conditional selection, and the next to pastoral properties, and he would point out an ambiguity in the proviso which might be cleared up in committee. He did not think it at all conclusive that the capital value of the fee-simple of a homestead or conditional selection was necessarily the price fixed on it by the Crown at the time it had been taken up. That was clear; the capital value of the fee-simple meant the market value. They had endeavoured to settle the lands by a certain process; they enforced personal residence for five years besides improvements; in other words, they said to the selector that, on condition of his settling on the land for five years, they gave it to him at a very much less cost than the capital value of the fee-simple. Under the Bill the capital value of the fee-simple was—for homestead lands 2s. 6d. an acre; and for conditional selections the price at which it was proclaimed in the first instance: but that would have to be remedied in committee. The proviso in clause 57 would require considerable modification. What, no doubt, was intended was that the annual value of pastoral property should be the annual rent; but it was not clearly put. It was here clearly a gain to the pastoral tenants upon the provisions of the Act of 1868, which said they should pay according to the annual value, not according to the annual rent; and hon. members on the other side knew that in six cases out of ten in which this Bill would apply the annual rent was not the annual value. From administering the Lands Office, he knew that much country which passed as unavailable was really "available" for the purposes of the pastoral lessee, and it was almost impossible for the officers of the department not to take notice of the influence which was brought to bear on them to pass these matters in silence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When did you make that discovery?

Mr. GARRICK said the hon. member had discovered it too, but would not say so. There was also the provision to be considered that the pastoral lessee should not pay a sum exceeding 8 per cent. Why not, when the rate for the conditional selector was fixed at a minimum of 6d. and a maximum of 1s. for general purposes? It came to this, that the pastoral lessee would not be rated at all. It followed out what the Minister for Lands had said, that there were no roads wanted in the West, except main roads, which were to be made out of the general revenue, and therefore they did not want taxation. What was the object, then, of distinguishing between

the settled and unsettled districts, was in perfect accordance with what the Minister for Lands had said, that they did not want roads in the West.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said no such thing.

Mr. GARRICK begged the hon. gentleman's pardon;—he did say so, distinctly. That was why, for one thing, he wished to criticise the Bill, and also because it was part of the financial scheme of the Colonial Treasurer. The pastoral tenants, who were to be largely benefited by these railways, were not to bear any part whatever of the taxation which would necessarily have to be borne by the increase in the number of roads. He also opposed the Bill because it was not the time to force it on the country. None of them disputed that they were going through an educating process, and that under local government the money spent would be better spent; but there was also this to be considered, that for three years the boards to be constituted now would be in force; and instead of pressing that on the settled districts, why did they not say that for the next year or two we will make your roads out of general revenue, and then in the course of two or three years the country would be ripe for bearing further burdens; and until they had made some fair adjustment by placing on the shoulders of those in the outside districts the burdens they ought to bear. He should vote against the second reading.

Mr. HENDREN moved the adjournment of the debate, with a view to further discussion of the Bill.

Mr. GROOM said he had spoken to the leader of the Opposition in reference to an adjournment, and he, himself, was anxious it should be adjourned, because the members for the Darling Downs were not present. That was not their fault; but as a bargain was a bargain in political as in other arrangements, he did not wish to set a bad example and disturb any arrangements made. It was the wish of the electors of Darling Downs that their representatives should have been present to oppose the second reading, but, as they would have an opportunity of expressing their opinions on another occasion, he fell in with the course agreed on the previous night.

Mr. GRIMES, though preferring to see the debate adjourned, was willing to forego his intention to speak in view of the agreement come to.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that on the previous evening he made no distinct agreement. He had said he could not exactly say 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. He at the same time said he 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. He had no idea the debate would be protracted beyond to-night, and he had suggested to hon. members on his side of the House, as far as he could, that the debate should be closed that evening. It was not of any practical consequence, because hon. members who were absent would certainly express their opinions in committee. Two nights, he thought, was a fair thing for the discussion of the principles of a Bill.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that on so important a question as this he could not allow the motion to go to a division without stating some reasons for the vote he intended to give. On the whole, he candidly acknowledged that he did not like the Bill, although he agreed with the principle of Local Government. The hon. member for Maryborough had asserted that the people were not properly educated for self-government, and yet he had given great reasons why a Bill of this kind should be introduced. The Act of last year had certainly not worked well, and it had increased instead of lowering the rates. The Colonial Secretary said that this Bill would only impose a land tax for the purpose of local improvements. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) would assert that it was more—it was a tax on industry. The more a man improved his property, the heavier he would be taxed for it. He was still, as he had always been, in favour of a land tax, but he would ask the House not to tax industry. Were it only in order to reach the absentee proprietors, he should vote for a land tax, the advantages and the justice of which were well pointed out in a speech by Sir Gavan Duffy, which he had quoted on a previous occasion. It was impossible for anyone on either side of the House to show why a land tax should not be levied, and with such a tax they ought to commence, and increased revenue would thus be obtained without favouring one class at the expense of another. He did not at all agree with the remarks of the hon. member for Moreton, because even that hon. member himself must have known that he was not in earnest. The hon. member said that an expenditure of £72,000 had been swept away, and that it ought to be continued. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) failed to see why such an expenditure should always be continued. While travelling from Brisbane to Beenleigh he counted forty bridges and culverts on the road. There were two roads from Brisbane to Beenleigh, and upon one of them there was a bridge which cost between £2,000 and £3,000. Those works were well constructed, and would last for ages; so there would be no necessity for a further expen-

diture upon them. But if the Bill passed, and money was required, a loan could be procured; so that the objections of the hon. member for Moreton fell to the ground. He knew for a fact that his constituents were not in favour of this Bill at the present time, and if it went into committee he should be inclined to alter some of the clauses. But on the same principle as that adopted by his colleague in the representation of Stanley (Mr. Kellett), he should vote for the second reading. In doing so he positively stated that the Bill as it now stood would not suit his constituents, but when in committee it would be the property of the House, and the committee could make it good or bad or kick it out. What inconsistency was there in that? He wished to impress upon the House that his idea of making up the deficiency would be by taxation on land, believing in his heart that the colony would be more inclined to that plan, because it would press equally on all. He believed the Bill, as it stood, would be very oppressive to small settlers, as no regulation the Ministry could make would prevent the local Board from taxing them as they liked. If a man made a fence or erected an out-building he might be taxed for it;—in fact, the more he did the more he would have to pay. For that reason he objected to the working of municipalities, and thought some plan should be adopted which would lean equally on all according to the science of political economy.

Mr. HORWITZ said he wished to answer some remarks of the hon. member for the Mitchell. If the hon. member went to Germany, he would find that the roads were made by the State. The people of the district he (Mr. Horwitz) represented wished him to oppose this Bill. There were a great many farm roads about Warwick, and the farmers were not in a position to make them all. He should have been inclined to vote for the Bill, but he thought the Government should make the roads good first, and then ask the people to form themselves into a municipality. He would ask the Colonial Treasurer how it was proposed to tax farms? In one farm the land was ploughed and was worth £5 an acre, whereas next to it the land was not ploughed and was only worth £2. If they were going to tax farms, they should tax them at per acre. As it was rather late in the evening he would reserve his remarks till the Bill was in committee.

Mr. PATERSON concurred with those hon. members who thought it desirable that the debate should close this evening, although he had intended to make some observations to lead the House to understand why he opposed the second reading of the Bill. He should not now attempt to do so, but should the Bill reach committee he would then, with other members who had not yet spoken, have an opportunity of qualifying

the position he took up, to-night, in voting against the Bill.

Question—That the Bill be read a second time—put, and the House divided :—

AYES, 26.

Messrs. Palmer, Kellett, Perkins, Walsh, Macrossan, McIlwraith, Cooper, O'Sullivan, Archer, Macfarlane (Leichhardt), Simpson, Beor, H. W. Palmer, Lalor, Lumley-Hill, Morehead, Weld-Blundell, Hamilton, Stevens, Amhurst, Stevenson, Low, Norton, Baynes, Swanwick, and Scott.

NOES, 20.

Messrs. Garrick, Griffith, Dickson, Douglas, McLean, Rea, Rutledge, Paterson, Meston, Beattie, Stubley, Grimes, Price, Macfarlane (Ipswich), Hendren, Groom, Mackay, Horwitz, Kingsford, and Bailey.

Question, therefore, resolved in the affirmative.

The Bill was read a second time, and the committal fixed for Tuesday next.

WIDOW OF THE LATE SIR MAURICE O'CONNELL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, a Bill to make provision for the widow of the late Sir Maurice O'Connell, President of the Legislative Council, received by message from the Legislative Council, was read a first time, and the second reading fixed for Tuesday next.

MINERAL OILS BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, a Bill to place certain restrictions on the importation, storage, and sale of refined Mineral Oils, received by message from the Legislative Council, was read a first time, and the second reading fixed for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes to 11 o'clock.