Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 1879

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 8 *July*, 1879.

Petitions.—Question.—Land Act Amendment Bill—resumption of debate.—Acting Chairman of Committees.—Motion for Adjournment.—Electoral Rolls Bill—committee.

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

PETITIONS.

Mr. BAILEY presented a petition from farmers, selectors, and others, residing on Lagoon Creek, near Gympie, praying that the Divisional Boards Bill be not passed into law.

Petition read and received.

Mr. WALSH presented a petition from residents of the district of Cook, praying that a railway may be constructed from Cooktown towards the Cloncurry.

Petition received.

Mr. BAILEY presented a petition from farmers, selectors, and others, resident on the Upper Mary, protesting against the injustice and inequalities of the Divisional Boards Bill as proposed, and praying that it be not passed into law.

Petition read and received.

Mr. BAILEY presented a petition from farmers, selectors, and others, residing near Tiaro, protesting against the Divisional Boards Bill.

Petition read and received.

QUESTION.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked the Colonial Secretary—

Is it the intention of the Government to introduce, during the present session, any Bill to amend the Law relating to Polynesian Immigration?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer): The reply to the hon. member is, No.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. DICKSON said that, in the absence of the hon. member for Oxley, in whose behalf he had moved the adjournment of the debate at the previous sitting, he would take advantage of the present opportunity to express his views on the measure. Since the session commenced, he had pondered continuously upon an expression in the Opening Speech relating to the assurance that the Government intended to foster and encourage settlement upon the Crown lands of the colony, and he had therefore watched with interest their mode of procedure to give effect to that very proper desire; but he had not heretofore observed that that desire, as expressed, was likely to be carried into effect by any measure the Government had so far submitted to the House. He could not give them credit for fostering and encouraging agriculture by the manner in which they dealt with the sales of pastoral leases, and he could not see that the present Bill was likely to encourage *bonâ fide* settlement in the manner which one would infer the Government desired, inasmuch as the homestead selectors, who he thought it would be admitted had done more as a class to encourage *bonâ fide* agricultural settlement in Queensland than any other class, were excluded entirely from the benefits of the Bill, and denied the ability to settle on the exchanged lands in the Allora district. He therefore failed to see how the Government were giving effect to the desire which they expressed in the Opening Speech, to foster settlement. But this fostering desire was but a means to an end. The argument was, that if settlement was fostered and encouraged, any necessity for increased taxation would be done away with. This furnished a key to the form in which the present Bill was put before the country, and suggested a possibility that it had been altered from its original shape by the Cabinet. In the estimates of revenue for the year now entered upon, the Treasurer expected to receive £70,000 from auction sales of land. In the present depressed condition of the colony he (Mr. Dickson) did not know from what sales the Treasurer was likely to receive that amount; but, from the manner in which the Bill was framed, it seemed clear that it was intended to obtain a large contribution to this head of revenue from these Allora lands.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins): No.

Mr. DICKSON was glad to have that assurance from the hon. gentleman, but he would have been better pleased had he informed the House how these lands were to be administered, for it would have allayed a good deal of anxiety, and have convinced the people of the sincerity of the Government to settle *bonâ fide* agriculturists on

those lands, and not let them pass into the hands of speculators. It would be admitted that those lands were specially noted for, and had been obtained on account of, their agricultural qualities, and in that light it would not be disputed that, if the very class of settlers who were most likely to contribute to the extension of agricultural operations were settled there, it would only be right that special legislation should ensue to give them every encouragement. He had endeavoured to discover from the speech of the Minister for Lands, but he had failed, any reason why the 39th section of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 should not apply to these lands—the elimination of that section prohibiting homestead settlement altogether; and if they looked at what had been done, even in the face of very adverse seasons, by the homestead selectors, and saw how they had contributed to extend the agriculture of the colony, it would certainly be admitted that this class of useful settlers ought not to have been prohibited from forming their homes in these localities. From a report of the Under Secretary for Lands, recently laid on the table of the House, much interesting information on the settlement of the public estate was obtainable; and he (Mr. Dickson) found that, in contrasting the settlement made by conditional and homestead selectors, the homestead selectors were entitled to whatever precedence could legitimately be given when agricultural areas such as the present were opened up for settlement. Up to the end of last year—to which the tables were compiled—there were taken up under conditional selection 5,456 holdings, containing an aggregate of 2,343,230 acres of land, of which 24,029 acres were cultivated, or under 1 per cent. of the aggregate holdings. Under homestead selection up to the same period there were 2,050 holdings taken up with an aggregate area of 313,872 acres, of which 12,306 acres were cultivated, or nearly 4 per cent. of the aggregate holdings. He was strongly in favour, therefore, of cultivation being the essence of settlement on lands such as these with which the Bill proposed to deal, and he also thought that these lands should not be offered to the public under the ordinary conditions. He went with the Government to this extent that they were justified in dealing by specific legislation with these lands; but they ought not to have framed it in such a way as to exclude that very useful class, the homestead selectors. They had seen by the statistics he had introduced that this class had largely contributed to develop the agricultural resources and districts of the country, and therefore if legislation were required it ought to be put forward in such a way as would enable the Minister for Lands to submit these lands to homestead selection, and that at an increased price to be decided by the House and under the strict condition of cultivation and personal residence. If the hon. gentleman had introduced a Bill simply to deal with the lands, increasing their price, but throwing them open to homestead selection, and insisting on cultivation as a *sine qua non* of the condition, together with compulsory residence, then it would have gone far to assist the interests of that class of settlers desirous of settling on them. While, therefore, he could congratulate the Minister for Lands on introducing a measure dealing with this subject, he could not do so on the method of carrying it out. He was informed that there were a large number of selectors waiting to take advantage of legislation on the lands, and while, by the imperfect character of the Bill in its present shape, they would not be able to do so, he hoped that when they went into Committee they would be able to introduce such amendments as would run in the direction he had indicated, and include as settlers on the Allora lands the homestead selectors—at an increased price for their homesteads, and under special conditions as to cultivation area and residence.

The PREMIER: What price do you suggest?

Mr. DICKSON said that was a matter for grave consideration, and on this point he would cite the following paragraph from Mr. Tully's report—

> "The lands near Allora which have been surrendered to the Crown for other lands at Jondaryan have been surveyed, so as to be thrown open to selection as soon as the Government have decided how they shall be dealt with. These lands are most suitable for agricultural farms, and it is to be hoped they will be occupied by a class of selectors capable and able to utilise them to the fullest extent. The cultivation of wheat in the neighbourhood of Allora is now a settled industry, and throwing these farms open to selection will be of material service to the district. The best of these lands are worth at least £4 per acre, and as they adjoin the town of Allora they should provide homes for a large number of people."

That was a paragraph which would commend itself to the approbation of hon. members on both sides of the House, for it was desirable that the lands should furnish homes for a large number of agricultural settlers. He was not prepared to say that the amount named by Mr. Tully was their fair price, but it was generally understood throughout the country that when these lands were obtained from the original Crown grantees, for agicultural settlement, they should be submitted at a price considerably in excess of the ordinary rates for homestead and conditional selections. He approved of the

action taken by the Minister for Lands in increasing the area of homestead selections to 160 acres, but he should have been better pleased if that alteration had been intended to be applied to the lands under consideration, which it could not possibly do inasmuch as homestead selections were especially excluded from the Allora lands. He did not agree with the hon. member for Maryborough in thinking it desirable to see at present, in the colony, peasant proprietors holding ten or twenty acres of land, and expecting to derive a living from so limited an area. That hon. member referred to France and other continental countries, and, although the system of a peasant proprietary had been advocated by such eminent writers on land tenure as Cliffe Leslie, De Laveleye, and others, as being of the greatest advantage to the State, yet such were the differencies of condition between the continental countries of Europe and the Australian colonies, that an attempt to settle a similar peasant proprietary here could only result in failure. Those conditions were very marked, and he need not occupy the time of the House by enumerating them. Even in homestead selections, where cultivation was desirable, a man ought to be permitted to take up to the extent mentioned in this Bill, 160 acres, and if the Minister would extend that provision to the Allora lands he would have his (Mr. Dickson's) heartiest support, because it would tend to the advantage of the men of small means. Special legislation, he admitted, was necessary for these lands, and he should have liked to see the new conditions of homestead selection applied to them, at an augmented price, and with stringent provisions as to cultivation. The Bill in that shape would have been acceptable to the country. He regretted that a Minister, in speaking on the Bill, had stated that the Government would be prepared to accept a large number of amendments, for it could only result in protracting the work of the session.

The PREMIER: No Minister made any such suggestion.

Mr. DICKSON said he understood the Premier to say, on that occasion, that he was prepared to receive suitable amendments to the Bill—or words to that effect; and he was strengthened in that opinion by the remarks of the hon. member for Stanley.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member was labouring under a mistake. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) argued that the Bill should be confined to the Allora lands; but that, if it went into the general land administration of the colony, he had, himself, a pocket half-full of amendments to propose.

Mr. DICKSON said that the Bill, so far as it related to homestead selections, went entirely outside these exchanged lands; and it was the remark of the hon. member for Maryborough that the Bill opened up the whole question of land tenure, which elicited the comments of the two hon. gentleman to whom he had referred, and which led him to believe that the Government were prepared to accept amendments. He hoped, at the same time, that the Government did not intend to reject amendments, for, if they did, the chances of the Bill coming out of committee would be remarkably small; whereas, if they accepted amendments, the Bill might be made into a really good one. He was pleased with the remarks of the hon. member for Stanley about exchanged lands. That was a matter which he (Mr. Dickson) had carefully studied, and he went with the hon. member so far as to say that the operation of exchanging lands might well lay any Government open to grave suspicion. He did not see how those exchanges could be dispensed with—they must crop up from time to time, but he was of opinion that, after the details had been investigated by the Executive Government, the exchanges themselves should not be finally ratified without the consent of Parliament. If this were done all cause of suspicion would vanish.

The PREMIER: No; it would make it worse.

Mr. DICKSON said, on the other hand, it would enable the question to be ventilated by both sides of the House; the Press would take it up, and its merits would be fully discussed. Without wishing to limit the power of the Executive, when they were dealing with such a large matter as the exchange of lands to the extent represented in this Bill, the Parliament of the colony might very fairly be invited to express an opinion upon it before it was finally ratified.

Mr. GRIMES said the Minister for Lands, in introducing the Bill, said it was the desire of the Government that these lands should be put to the best use, and that that best use was agriculture. He agreed with the hon. gentleman in that remark, and should be glad to see him follow out his convictions by his actions; for, in that case, the hon. gentleman must either come over to this side of the House or he (Mr. Grimes) must back him on this question. If the hon. gentleman persisted in carrying out his expressed intention with regard to these lands, he would no doubt be reminded by hon. members sitting behind him that these were not the low-lying lands they were willing to concede to the "lower orders." The Ministry could do nothing better than put the best lands of the colony to the best use, and Queensland would never attain to any solidity as a colony until that was done—until they settled upon the land a larger proportion of the population. The colony could not withstand the power of those financial and commercial panics which periodically crushed us into the dust.

Allusion had been made to France, with her numerous peasantry settled on her lands; and it had been the astonishment of the world to see how quickly she had recovered herself after the dreadful ravages of the Franco-Prussian war. On inquiry, this rapid recovery was found to have arisen mainly from the fact that a large portion of the population was settled on the land, and engaged in the operations of agriculture or horticulture. It was also a noticeable fact that France was invariably less affected by financial and commercial panics than other countries. If she had had to depend mainly on manufactures she could not so soon have recovered from the effects of that war. Without wishing to depreciate manufactures, he might venture the remark that had a similar disaster happened to England she would have been crippled for a far greater length of time. It was happy for a land when agriculture and manufactures went hand in hand, and kept pace with one another; and for that reason he was glad the Minister for Lands intended to settle on the Allora lands a population of agriculturists; but he thought the Bill to carry out that object was defective; the provision doing away with personal residence and allowing clause 6 to stand as it appeared would quite defeat the object in view. The Minister for Lands, in explaining clause 6, drew a very nice fancy picture of the intention of the Government to settle on these lands the squatter from the Barcoo, the Brisbane merchant, the Queen street tradesman, the Palmer and Gympie miner, and the disappointed selector from Dalby. No doubt it would be pleasing to see all those classes settling down comfortably on the Allora lands; but if it was intended that those lands should be devoted solely to agriculture that object would never be accomplished. He had had much experience in land cultivation, and had observed that people engaged in mercantile pursuits in the city, who took up land in the country with the idea of cultivating it, very often came to grief. To cultivate land profitably, personal supervision was necessary, unless a thoroughly competent overseer was obtained; but such men were rarely met with in the colony, for if they were thoroughly competent to work land profitably they would find it an advantage to take up selections for themselves and be their own masters. Another objection to the Bill was, that it was monstrous to allow persons who had taken up their full quantity of land under the various Land Acts in force to come in again and take up further selections in these exchanged lands. Many would, no doubt, avail themselves of that provision unless stringent cultivation clauses were inserted. Here he might express regret that the cultivation clauses had been allowed to be repealed in the former Acts, for those clauses he looked upon as the greatest safeguard they could possibly have that the land would be put to a good use. It might be said they could drive a coach and horses through those clauses; still, with a little amendment, a large amount of good agricultural land might have been put to some more profitable use to the colony than feeding sheep. Had the clause been amended and allowed to remain in force they would not have been called upon now to legislate for the Allora lands. Clause 5 increased the amount to be expended in improvements from 10s. to 20s. per acre, and it might well have been fixed at a much higher rate. To put a three-rail fence round an eighty acre selection would cost at least 30s. per acre; and when the selector's house and necessary outbuildings were erected the amount would be fully £3 or £4 per acre. If the Government really desired the land to be devoted to agriculture, they ought to substitute either of those figures for the 20s. mentioned in this clause. He quite agreed with the provisions of clause 7. Volunteers seldom settled on land and made permanent improvements on it; indeed, out of all the selections taken up by Volunteers he did not suppose that 2 per cent. were now cultivating them. With regard to increasing the area of homestead selections from 80 to 160 acres, he noticed that the hon. member for Wide Bay said it was almost ridiculous to expect a man to live on less than from 320 to 640 acres, and make a home for himself and his family; and the hon. member for Dalby said it was simply a farce to expect a man to prosper on a farm of eighty acres. He (Mr. Grimes) had been a cultivator of the soil for twenty-eight years in Queensland, and had grown and tested almost every crop grown here at the present time, and was therefore qualified to express an opinion on this matter. From that experience he could say that those who had taken up small portions of land had succeeded the best. Many of the selectors in the Rosewood Scrub, had they been restricted to forty acres, would have been in a much better position than they were now; because, in taking up large areas, they had been forced to spend all their capital in fencing it in, and, as a matter of course, had nothing left for the purposes of clearing and cultivation. Instead of clearing their land in continuous blocks, the settlers in many instances had cultivated only a small portion, leaving the remainder to harbour marsupials and become an annoyance to their neighbours. Others, to work those large areas, had been obliged to place themselves in the hands of capitalists, and pay in some cases

12, 14, and as much as 15 and 16 per cent. interest for money borrowed. In the case of homestead selectors, especially those who took up land in the neighbourhood of scrubs, it would be much better for them to take up a smaller area and thoroughly cultivate it. Those who had taken up large areas had generally found that farming carried on in that way was not a very good business. The small selector who, with the help of his family, managed the whole farm himself, not only got the profits but saved the money which would otherwise have been paid in expenses; whereas the capitalist who employed labour only got the profits arising from the sale of produce, which at the present time were very small indeed. The Premier, he noticed, had said that the great object was to reduce to farming lands the Allora pastoral lands, and that provided that object were attained the Government did not care what amendments were introduced. Emboldened by that statement, he (Mr. Grimes) would make a suggestion. It was well known that many men who had £30, £40, or £50, would sooner take up a long lease or a clearing lease than buy a freehold, so that they might have the money which would otherwise be spent in the first purchase to carry out improvements. Many capitalists, especially in his electorate, had bought land to let it out in that way, and after five, six, or seven years they received as much per acre per annum for rent as they had paid to the Government in the first instance. He did not see any reason why these Allora lands need be alienated at all, and he would suggest that the lands be surveyed in from 40 to 120 acre allotments, to be let for, say, twenty-one years, on the following terms:—For the first four years on a mere fencing lease, for nothing; for the next five years at 5s. per acre; the following five years at 7s. 6d; and for the remainder of the term, at 10s. per acre. A large number of agriculturists would be found willing to take up farms on these terms. Last week the House had been told that certain lands in that locality fetched 10s. to 20s. per acre rent, so that those terms would be very easy when compared with the price now charged. It would pay the farmers themselves better to pay that rental than to go further away from the railway line and occupy the lands now being taken up there as homestead selections; and the rents would come in very well as an endowment for the education system, or for the district boards which were in anticipation, or for any other purposes. Not only would the Government derive that advantage from the rents, but through the lands being cultivated they would receive fully 5s. per acre through the Customs more than they would receive from them as a sheep walk. That suggestion might be worthy of the attention of the House, and would ensure a large population and the cultivation of the land. Clause 13 of the Bill seemed to him to be very vague. He understood from it that any person, unless claiming under any lease, who should be found occupying lands reserved or set apart for pasturage purposes, or depasturing thereon horses or cattle, should be liable on conviction to a fine of £5 for the first, £10 for the second, and £20 for the third offence. It seemed to him there had been a mixing up in this Bill, and that such a provision would more correctly appear in the Impounding Act recently before the House. This was not the only Bill in which such strange mixtures appeared. For instance, there was a clause in the Licensing Boards Bill which was evidently intended for the Sale of Food and Drugs Bill;—and clause 53 of the Divisional Boards Bill—relating to the burial of paupers—seemed to be a stray clause from a Bill for the better Management of Hospitals, or the Bill with reference to Orphanages. The penalty of £5, £10, or £20 was certainly too heavy upon an unfortunate person travelling in the bush, and found by the commissioner occupying a piece of Crown land for a short time. £5 for a few head of cattle depastured upon a common or place set apart for travelling sheep would be a rather heavy poundage fee, and he hoped the Ministry would not press that clause, or allow it to pass into law in its present form.

Mr. McLEAN had no doubt that the present Government, when they took office, had a sort of policy which they considered themselves able to carry during the present session; but the policy enunciated by them to the House was not found in this Bill. In the Opening Speech they said—

> "Within the last two years several exchanges have taken place between the Government and certain landowners, chiefly in the Darling Downs district. The lands thus acquired for the public, my Ministers consider, should be alienated on conditions differing from those imposed in the case of other Crown lands. To secure the *bonâ fide* settlement upon, and the actual farming of, all the areas so acquired, a Bill will be shortly submitted for your approval."

He wondered whether, by this Bill, it was the intention of the Government to procure *bonâ fide* settlement upon, and the actual farming of, these 20,000 acres acquired by exchange? He was afraid that the legislation was not of that wise nature required at the present time, but rather a retrograde movement. The principle which was most likely to secure *bonâ fide* settlement and actual farming had been entirely ignored and dispensed with. In order to secure the settlement of an industrial farming population upon the land the home-

stead clauses had been inserted in the different Land Bills; but, by this Bill, the very individuals who should have been benefited by the change, and who would have made those land a *bonâ fide* settlement by really farming them, were entirely excluded. The clause which stated that the 39th section of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 should not apply to exchanged lands, simply meant that no homesteads would be permitted upon the lands the Bill proposed to deal with. The Minister for Lands had stated that those lands were acquired at a cost of something like £3 per acre; but he (Mr. McLean) failed to discover how he arrived at such a conclusion. They had been acquired simply by exchange, and had not cost the Government one single farthing. They had not, therefore, to consider that, the land having cost so much, they were under the necessity of getting so much more in dealing with it. His opinion, in connection with these lands was, not that they should bleed, as it were, those who wished to get hold of them, but that they should remove every obstacle out of the way of those who intended to settle upon and farm the land. If the Government, instead of trying to get as much as they possibly could, would make the terms as easy as possible to those who would really put the land to its proper purpose, and if they would extend the payments over fifteen or twenty years, they would confer a blessing upon a large number of settlers in the colony. It was almost impossible to deal with the Bill, because it really said nothing except that no homestead selector was to be allowed to settle. The Minister for Lands had told them that the object in dealing with the lands in that way was to allow the merchants of Brisbane, the squatter from the Barcoo, and the miner from Charters Towers to take them up. That brought to his recollection a statement made to him by a member of the House, that if the Bill passed in its present shape he would have a slice. Many others would, no doubt, also have a slice, and some half-dozen persons would be prepared to take the whole of it. The Premier said "they cannot do it," but from the Bill in its present shape it was impossible to tell what could be done. By the Bill the Governor in Council had power to proclaim exchanged lands, or such parts as might be deemed expedient, open to selection by way of conditional purchase. So far as anything was provided in the Bill against it, a few individuals might get the whole of those lands into their hands. He congratulated the hon. gentleman on the extension of the homestead area; and he must enter his solemn protest against the theory—for it was nothing more—of his hon. friends the members for Maryborough, Enoggera, and Oxley. The agricultural experience of the latter had, no doubt, been confined to the Brisbane River; and it was all very well for him to talk about a man living on a small quantity of land. A man might live on a few acres of scrub land in the vicinity of a large town, with a market to rush his crops into as soon as ready; but the hon. member for Oxley should try living on forty to eighty acres in the country. Under such circumstances, the same success would not attend him as had attended his agricultural pursuits on the Brisbane River. Eighty acres were not sufficient for a man to make a living from. If it were scrub land he might earn a miserable subsistence, feeding his family on maize-meal, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes, but he could not make a respectable living. The best lands would soon become exhausted, and it was therefore necessary that a farmer should have 300 or 400 acres, so that he could cultivate 50 or 100, and run stock upon the rest, thereby providing manure for the cultivated portions. Settlement would never be successful until agricultural and pastoral pursuits were combined together; and the time had come for putting their foot down on the theory that forty or eighty acres was sufficient to enable a man to rear a family in this colony. Two or three years ago he had been much struck by an account of a meeting held on one of the rivers in New South Wales, to which the settlers came with saddles patched with green hide and green-hide stirrup leathers and bridles, showing that the people there were so poorly off that when their saddlery was out of repair they could not renew it. That was what might be expected from the eighty-acres system advocated by the hon. member for Maryborough and some other hon. members. In places where there was not a market easily accessible 320 acres was little enough for any man to be asked to live upon in this colony. In connection with the small-area question reference had been made to France and other European nations; but he would point out that they had now to deal with Queensland, where the conditions were widely different. In the mother country there was a large consuming population, and if a small area could be cultivated a market was readily found; but here, if a vessel arrived from the Clarence with maize, or if a farmer came into town with a few sides of bacon, the market for those articles was glutted. They were not now dealing with France or European countries with large consuming populations, but with Queensland with a very sparse population. Another point was, that in Queensland there was plenty of land for all. The House had heard so much about the Darling Downs that persons out of the colony who read the debates might think that Darling Downs was nearly the whole of Queensland. The new newspaper lately

started in Blackall told them, however, that away out west there were dozens of Darling Downs superior in every respect to the Darling Downs they heard so much about at the present time. It was time this country and the people out of it were taught that there were other portions of Queensland besides the Darling Downs. He was very sorry that the residence clause had been dispensed with in dealing with these lands, for the result would be that the lands would fall into the hands of a few individuals ultimately, however the Government might act at first. He really did not know how to treat the Bill, in default of any information as to how the Government meant to deal with the lands. There were to be no homesteads. There was a clause that there should be improvements to the value of 20s. per acre—to which he had no objection, but beyond that the House knew nothing as to the intention of the Government. If the Government would tell them how they meant to deal with the lands, the House could tell them whether they were right or wrong. It brought out what he had said before, that the Government were working up their policy as they picked their way; and he had no doubt they would find, if this measure became law, it would not attain the objects intended to be secured by the exchanges—it would not secure *bonâ fide* settlement and agriculture, however the Government might deal with the lands under the 4th clause. It would be absolutely necessary to insist upon residence. He had no objection to the Barcoo squatter, the Palmer miner, or the Brisbane merchant selecting these lands, but let them live upon them and carry on *bonâ fide* agriculture: the law should not be passed in such a way as to enable them to secure the lands for summer resorts.

Mr. KELLETT said that when the subject of these exchanges was brought up, they were agreed to on the understanding that the land was intended for *bonâ fide* homesteads. To deal with this matter a short Bill only was necessary, and he was therefore sorry that it was proposed to mix up other matters with it. The people at the present time considered that there should be a Bill introduced to deal with all the lands of the colony, but if the House were to introduce amendments into the Bill now before it to meet the requirements of the people he did not know when they should get finished. In dealing with these exchange lands, he would suggest how the difficulty as to the best way of procuring settlement could be got over. He would say—Let the land be thrown open for twelve months, in blocks of 5,000 acres, to *bonâ fide* homestead selectors, personal residence being a condition, and if at the end of twelve months there should be any land left let it be open to conditional purchase, residence by bailiff to be one of the conditions. If the Government dealt with it in this way they could get a fair price for the land, and attain the object in view when the exchanges were sanctioned. He would, further, give the selectors plenty of time to pay for the land. If any man found that, owing to the bad seasons or any other cause, he was not in a position to pay, he should be allowed a year's grace by paying 10 per cent. upon the annual rent; he would give the selector every consideration in the payment of the purchase money, but, at the same time, he did not think anyone should be allowed to fall in arrear more than two years in succession. If the lands were thrown open on these terms *bonâ fide* settlement would be induced, and they should see them producing wheat. He should like to see gentlemen coming from the Barcoo, the Palmer, and Brisbane for these exchanges; but, if they were thrown open on the terms he had suggested, these gentlemen would find that to utilise their land they would have to make model farms, the expense of which would be too great. To secure the object of the exchanges personal residence must be insisted upon; and he hoped the Minister for Lands would, on seeing the feeling of both sides of the House, agree to have that condition inserted. He should have to vote against the second reading if the Bill was to be carried as drafted.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that his colleague (Mr. Kellett) had given utterance to his opinions on this Bill. He had given a great deal of study to the question of land legislation, and thought it would alter matters completely and be opposed to the interests for which the exchanges were made if the measure became law as drafted. The land was intended for *bonâ fide* settlement, and his colleague had thrown out a very good suggestion how it could be secured. He also agreed that it would be better not to introduce anything else into the Bill except the exchanges—that the measure should be specially devoted to them. Were its scope wider than that a great many alterations would be attempted; a large Act might be the result, but to deal with the lands properly would be good work for one session alone. If the whole question of land legislation was brought forward in this paltry measure, there would be scarcely a member in the House who would not have one or more amendments to bring forward. It was often said that there was hardly a man in the colony who had not a land Bill of his own. He was not likely to agree with the views that had been expressed by the honourable agriculturist, the member for Oxley, on the question of area, but he agreed with the member for Logan that for many years to come farming would not pay unless it was combined with grazing. He had always been in favour of

a homestead selector being given more than eighty acres; but not long ago even this small area was offered to the farmer under false pretences. It was clearly understood when the Act was passed that the eighty acres were to be the best agricultural land; but some of the eighty-acre blocks were offered in places where a man could not find as much agricultural land as would hatch a clutch of chickens. If any alteration were made in the size of homesteads, it should be to increase them to at least 320 acres. That was the area proposed under Mr. Thompson's Act of 1872, and he did not see why they should not get back to that idea again. He would even give as much as 640 acres, so long as the conditions were complied with. Speaking of conditions, he might say that his opinion was that they were too strict. He knew one case in West Moreton where a man had to expend £150 for the special purpose of building a house so as to comply with the conditions, and when he had done so he had to pull it down to turn it to some use. Common-sense should come to their aid in these matters, and tell them that farmers were the best judges when to build their houses, and when to plough, reap, or fence. He supposed the object of having such stringent conditions was to prevent dummying; but there was little danger of dummying with the farmer, and even if he did get an extra bit of ground on the sly, there was not a great deal of harm done. The farmer had always children who would use it in course of time; in fact, the idea was gaining ground that a farmer should be able to take up land for his children to settle upon when they grew up. With reference to a point that had been alluded to by the hon. member (Mr. Kellett), he might say that he remembered hearing, at a public dinner at Highfields, that, in consequence of the severe seasons some selectors had found they could not pay their rents, and had been compelled to mortgage their ground to the storekeeper, paying from 20 to 30 per cent. for the accommodation given. The idea suggested itself to him that, in a case of that sort, the farmer should be able to go to the Colonial Treasurer and say, "I have not got my rent for you; it comes to £100. Here is the interest upon that amount for another year's time." If that were the law farmers would not be crushed by the hard times. Why, the cost of the mortgage often came to the percentage that a man would have to pay. The country would not suffer under his proposal, for the land would be there as security, and when better times came the farmer would be able to recover himself. It was better, perhaps, that a selector should not be allowed to run more than a year or two in arrear; but, in a case of emergency, where he might be crushed by an accident or some other cause, he should always be able to come to the Colonial Treasurer and get breathing time on payment of a reasonable interest. He thought, himself, that 10 per cent. was too high, seeing that the colony only paid 5 per cent. for its loans. The Government would act wisely to reject all amendments on the general question of land legislation, and not to go in for a large, comprehensive Bill. Let them be prepared with a Bill next year, and, no doubt, both sides would agree to deal with it on its merits;—a comprehensive land Bill should never be made a party question. The best Land Bill that was ever brought before the country was the one introduced by the hon. member (Mr. Archer) in 1868, and on that occasion both sides did not treat it as a party question, and the result was an Act which lasted without amendment until three years ago. It was the Bill for the country now, and was better than the Land Act of 1876. During its long working some little imperfections were found in it, and if they had been amended the Act would be far better than the one passed in 1876. This showed very clearly that when they went fairly into a matter of that sort a far better Act would be produced than when it was dealt with as a party measure. Of late years they had been divided into parties, but for the first few years of parliamentary Government they never knew anything about parties, and the consequence was they carried very fair measures, considering that they were inexperienced. There was no use prolonging the debate, but he hoped that the Minister for Lands would adopt the suggestion to make this small Bill deal with one subject only, and insist upon the condition of residence. It would be a great mistake to deal with the general land legislation of the colony in it. He had his pocket half full of amendments, himself, and no doubt other members had also amendments. There were other important matters to be dealt with. He should like to see the Loan Estimates come on, and to give an opinion as to how the loans should be divided on main and branch railways, and other things. He might take the opportunity of saying that he had never taken, and did not intend to take, the dictum of any man or set of men as to how he should vote. He would take care that his constituents got a fair share of loan votes, and when the time came he should be able to prove that they were as well entitled to their share as any other. He might also say that he did not in any way hold himself bound to the Financial Statement made in the House, nor to anything except what he approved. He was entirely free in the House. If the Bill were confined to the 22,000 acres of exchange lands, they would get it through during the present week.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) thought that, after the expression of opinion heard from both sides, the best thing the Minister for Lands could do would be to withdraw the Bill. It appeared that the measure would meet with determined opposition in its present shape, and there was no wonder a great number of suggestions had been given by hon. members as to the best way of dealing with the exchanged lands. The lands being of good quality the Government had a perfect right to demand a good price for it, but all that was wanted was a Bill of a few clauses. If the present Bill went into committee a great deal of valuable time would be taken up with amendments.

Mr. MILES said he was glad to see that public opinion was beginning to work upon some hon. members on the other side of the House. The hon. member, Mr. O'Sullivan, had just told them that he would not be bound in any way by the Financial Statement made by the Colonial Treasurer. "Coming events cast their shadows before;" and he was glad to find that public opinion was bringing the hon. member to his senses; at all events, he was glad to hear the expressions of the hon. member, whether public opinion had caused them or not. Before going further he must express his astonishment that the hon. member for Logan, who so strongly denounced the Land Act of 1876, should have accepted the office of Minister for Lands in the late Ministry. That was one reason why he (Mr. Miles) would not go into the Lands Office—because he never believed in that Act; and he would like to know how a man could possibly administer a law that he disapproved of? The hon. member had always condemned that Act, and said no man could live on eighty acres of land; and he (Mr. Miles) agreed that, unless the land was very superior, no man could make a living on that area; and for that reason he would have nothing whatever to do with the administration of the Act. He was very much disappointed with the Bill now before the House, which was called "a Bill to amend the Laws relating to the Alienation of Crown lands." That, again, brought him to the question how the present Minister for Lands could occupy that position, and administer the present law, because no member of the House had denounced the Act of 1876 more strongly than that gentleman before he became Minister for Lands? He could not understand how any man could accept office to administer a law he did not believe in. However, with regard to this Bill, if a measure had been introduced dealing in a comprehensive way with the land laws of the colony he (Mr. Miles) would have been delighted, because there was not the slightest doubt that at the present time the conditions imposed on selectors were not complied with—and the Minister for Lands knew it. It was therefore a misfortune that a comprehensive measure had not been brought in, so that they might deal with that. The Minister for Lands, on one occasion, brought before the House the case of certain selectors on East Prairie, who had taken up selections on dry, timberless, waterless country at a very high price—30s. per acre, and he was very indignant that the then Government did not make some provision to reduce the amount of rent to be paid by these men. But here was a splendid opportunity for the Minister for Lands to make some provision in this Bill for these selectors; but he seemed to have forgotten all his generosity since he had become Minister for Lands, and they did not hear a word about these selectors, although he believed some of them had spent large sums of money in endeavouring to procure water—in fact, he believed that one of them had sunk 200 feet and had not succeeded in getting water. With regard to these Allora lands, as hon. members well knew, an exchange was made to obtain them for the purpose of throwing them open for agriculture. But this Bill failed, in his opinion, in meeting that object. He believed, himself, as far as conditions were concerned, that the best and surest condition they could have was cultivation. He knew a number of selectors who had taken up land under the present Act, and who professed to comply with the condition of residence, who never went on their selections at all except to make an occasional visit, and they then carefully made a memorandum as to the date, and also took a friend with them as a witness in the event of having to prove that they were there at that particular time. He thought it was quite time to get rid of those parties, and that the best way of dealing with these Allora lands —every acre of which he believed was suitable for agriculture—was to get a fair price for it over and above what people could afford to pay for it for grazing purposes, and compel cultivation. Then they could dispense with the condition of residence which was continually being evaded; and not only was that condition evaded, but everything connected with conditions was evaded, and he believed the Minister for Lands had in his possession papers in connection with the making of declarations by children which would astonish the House when the matter was made public. No restrictions of that kind they could impose would prevent dummying, and, as he said before, he believed the best way to deal with this land was to ask a fair price for it and compel cultivation. He believed some of this land was well worth from £2 10s. to £3 an acre, but of course they should give a long time to pay for it. He quite agreed with the hon. member, Mr. O'Sullivan, that when through bad

seasons selectors were not able to pay their rent they should be allowed to pay six or twelve months' interest, so as to enable them to retain their land and pull through till better times came. He believed the people in the neighbourhood of Allora were extremely anxious that this land should be thrown open for settlement as soon as possible, and if this Bill were thrown out there would be a delay of another year, which would result in serious injury both to those people and the country generally. With reference to the Barcoo squatters, he did not think there was a single one who would trouble about those lands—they were too well off where they were; and as to the remark of the hon. member, Mr. Walsh, who asked why he should not be able to take up a farm there, he (Mr. Miles) had not the slightest objection to his doing so and living at Cooktown, so long as he complied with the condition of cultivation. That was all the country required, and he had no objection to Brisbane merchants or storekeepers, or anyone else, taking up land there if they cultivated it. He had listened attentively to the debate, and hardly two members could be found to agree as to the form the Bill should take. One thought the maximum area allowed to be selected should be 320 acres; another, 160; and he thought, from the peculiar character of this land, 120 acres should be the extent; but he should not allow one acre of it to be devoted to grazing purposes—the whole of it should be cultivated. It was no use talking about homestead areas and half-a-crown an acre, because he would oppose that through thick and thin; it would be robbing the country to let that land go at that price under the homestead law. He did not intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill, and in committee he had one or two amendments to propose, but it would depend entirely on what shape the Bill was when it came out of committee whether he would vote for the third reading. He trusted, for the hon. member for Stanley's sake, that the Government would be prepared to accept any reasonable amendment in the Bill, so as to make it a useful measure.

Mr. BEOR said he quite agreed with the hon. member who had just sat down, that the proper way of dealing with these lands was to get the highest price for them. He believed it was becoming more and more recognised throughout the country, and in that House, that the best way to secure the lands being put to the best use was to take care that the best price should be obtained for them. He agreed with the hon. member in getting the best price for these lands.

Mr. MILES said he did not say "best price;"—he said "a fair price."

Mr. BEOR said so far he agreed with the hon. member; but he went further. His opinion was that the way to secure the best use being made of land, and to prevent dummying, was to get the best price for it, because he did not believe it would ever pay a man to take up land at the high price this land must be bought at, if the full value was to be obtained for it, unless to put it to the very best use. He admitted that it was a strong measure to do away with personal residence, but there was this to be said about personal residence—that by charging a high price for this land they would very probably obtain personal residence. Persons taking it up at a high price would put it to the best use—that was cultivation; and, in order to do that, in nine cases out of ten they would personally reside, and if they did not do so it would actually be a gain to the country, because there would be two persons making a living out of the land and paying Customs duties—the owner of the land and his bailiff who resided on the land. No doubt the main object of personal residence was that the land should be cultivated, and he submitted that that could be secured by providing that the land should not be devoted to pasturage or any other use but cultivation. He should certainly like to see some provision to the effect that the land should be cultivated—that the certificates of fulfilment of conditions should not be issued until a certain area of the land had been under cultivation for some considerable time. That would positively secure cultivation. It had been objected that it was useless to bring in a Bill dealing with these lands until the title to them had been obtained. This seemed a most extraordinary objection, because if they had to wait until the title was obtained it might be one or two sessions before they could deal with the land; and certainly the most reasonable course was to bring in the Bill first, so that when they got the title they would be at once in a position to deal with the lands in the best way possible for the country. He was sorry that some hon. members did not seem inclined to permit the Government to introduce an amendment into the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876, respecting which they were nearly all agreed that it would be beneficial—he referred to the extension of the homestead areas, which was provided for by clause 8 of the Bill. It was generally agreed that that clause was a good one, and it was not a difficult or intricate matter to deal with—not as if they were enacting a clause opening up the whole question of the alienation of Crown lands in the colony. It seemed to him to be exacting to a degree to require that, if that matter were admitted, the whole question of the alienation of the public lands should be gone into. He was not going to say that a man could not live upon eighty acres—he freely admitted that he did not know enough about the question to say whether

he could or not; but it appeared to him that in some parts of the colony a man could do so, and in others he certainly could not. But that was not the question for the House to consider. Surely, they were not going to bind down selectors to the very smallest areas on which they could make a living. They did not want such a class of peasantry as the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) pointed out that they had in France, where the unfortunate people did make a living out of such small areas as twenty acres;—they did not want to see people here in that position. They did not want to see men and their wives and families spending all their days toiling hard in the fields, day after day all the year round, for a bare living. They wanted a very different class of men, more like the statemen of Cumberland or the yeomen of Kent, who could hold up their heads with any men in the world, and who could live in comfort and make provision for their children, either by putting them into business, or trades, or teaching them to follow their own occupation. These were the class of men they wanted—substantial yeomen, and not men like the French and Bavarian peasantry, who dragged a poor existence out of the ground by the highest degree of toil that any human being could be subjected to. He presumed that they wanted a class of independent men, earning a good substantial living out of the land—men who would be a strength to the country, instead of a weakness to it. Objection had been made to clause 13 by the leader of the Opposition, who pointed out that the provision in that clause already existed in the Act of 1876. The hon. member, he presumed, referred to section 91 of the Act, and, while clause 13 was similar to that section there was still a material difference between the two clauses. He thought, himself, that it would have been better to have repealed the 91st clause of the Act, and re-enacted clause 13 of this Bill, which had this difference in its favour. It provided—

"That no information shall be laid for any second or subsequent offence until thirty clear days shall have elapsed from the date of the previous conviction And provided further that all informations under this section shall be laid by a land commissioner or other person duly authorised in that behalf."

The 91st section of the Act contained no such provision, and the consequence was, that it was left to anybody to prosecute any person trespassing upon these lands. Well, "what was anybody's business was nobody's business," and he expected that people would be permitted to trespass with impunity, and that if anybody did prosecute it would not be for the good of the country but from some motive of spite or malice. It appeared to him that this provision told in both directions, as it not only provided for authority to prosecute offenders against the law, but it provided that nobody should be prosecuted through private spite. It also stated whose business it should be to see that the provisions of the Bill were not transgressed; whereas, in the clause in the old Act there was no such provision, and that was a considerable advantage in the Bill. The Bill had been very fairly discussed, and he entirely differed from those who found fault with the Government for not dealing with the whole question of the land laws in a comprehensive way, as the occasion of a meeting of a new Parliament was not the proper time to do that. One benefit, however, had been derived from the discussion which had taken place on the Bill, and that was, that it had drawn out expressions of opinion from hon. members on both sides of the House in reference to the land question generally.

Mr. KINGSFORD said that it appeared to him that the difference of opinion mainly lay between the provisions compelling residence and those compelling cultivation; but he could not conceal from himself that it would be impossible to comply with either without complying with both conditions. He thought the greatest advantage to the public would arise by insisting on the conditions of cultivation. At present, the two matters of cultivation and residence seemed to him to be rather a mixed-up affair. He was certainly not much acquainted with land matters; but he thought it would be better if the Bill had dealt solely with the Allora estate. The main question appeared a very simple one, and it was only the number of speeches and differences of opinion of hon. members that had infused difficulty into it. He considered that the Minister for Lands should have defined what conditions should apply to these lands, whether those of residence or cultivation, or any others; so that people might at once know what they would have to do. For his own part, if he was disposed to select any of these lands, he should scarcely know what he was doing, as there was nothing but mystery, and certainly confusion, about the affair—possibly that might arise from his own obtuseness; but still they appeared to be somewhat mixed. Whilst there was a great deal said about the principle being good, and either of these conditions of residence or cultivation being for the advantage of the colony, he thought something more clear should have been stated. It was not his intention to vote for the second reading of the Bill for the reasons he had given.

Mr. PERSSE said there were a great many things in the Bill that it would have been as well to have left alone; but, in order to facilitate matters, and prevent them from standing over for twelve months as they would otherwise do if not dealt with at the present time, he should not offer any opposition to the second reading. There was

one thing in the 8th clause of the Bill which pleased him—namely, the extension of the homestead areas to 160 acres. He had always advocated an extension, as he considered that eighty acres were not sufficient. He had given a great deal of consideration to the matter, and he believed that cultivation should be made absolutely compulsory. £3 an acre would not be too high a price for the land, as more would be got out of it by cultivation than out of land in any other part of the colony. With regard to the condition of residence, it had been so much abused that he did not consider it was necessary to compel any man to reside on the land. If he had to cultivate, he would not only have to live upon it but also keep his family upon it; and, therefore, if cultivation was insisted upon that would be all that was necessary.

Mr. PATERSON said that the speeches of the hon. members for Stanley showed very clearly the worst features of the Bill. After what those hon. members had said, there should be no difficulty in arriving at the course hon. members should take in regard to this measure, and he trusted there would be a division, as it was of the highest importance that they should register on the records of the House, in the most emphatic manner, their opinions on the Bill, as there were points in it which the whole country looked to them to give an opinion upon. One of the greatest omissions from the Bill was the absence of the principle of residence. That was a point on which the Government had exhibited considerable courage in omitting from the Bill. He hoped, from the expressions of opinion that had taken place in regard to that matter, the Minister for Lands would withdraw the measure to-night, and introduce a fresh measure to morrow, dealing with the Allora lands alone. If the hon. gentleman did that he would have his (Mr. Paterson's) support. There was no doubt that if the Bill went into committee in its present form the Government would be flooded with amendments—from five hundred to a thousand, it is said; and he was prepared to co-operate with any hon. member on either side to bring forward amendments in order to purge the Bill of those things which were so objectionable to the country generally. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) that the homestead areas might have been dealt with in a more liberal spirit. It was well known that in many parts of the colony there were areas of land excellent for cultivation, and he believed it would be a good plan to adopt an homestead area of 640 acres, reserving to Government the power, in cases of rich land, to reduce the area even to 120 acres. That would be very useful to the Ministry of the day in promoting settlement of the right sort. At the same time, it should be understood all over the colony that in ordinary country an homestead area should be 640 acres. There was another point which the House was in a good humour to deal with—namely, the question whether there should be any more exchanges of land in the colony. He was strongly of opinion that a clause should be introduced into the Bill to abolish all right whatever of any Government to exchange any land without the consent of that House. The more he had spoken to hon. members about the bad features of the Bill, the more he had reason to believe that it had a very poor chance of coming out of committee, except in such a form that the Government would not know it; and he would suggest, with great respect to the hon. introducer of the Bill, that it would be to the good of the country and of the Government if he would withdraw the measure and bring it forward in a limited form, excluding all matters that did not relate to the Allora lands.

Mr. HENDREN said he thoroughly concurred with the remarks of the hon. member who had just spoken, that there should be no more exchanges of land except with the consent of that House, and that question would no doubt come before the House sooner or later. He also concurred with the suggestion that the Government should in this Bill deal solely with the question of the Allora lands by residence conditions. In future, the public should not be led to believe that there would be any more land exchanges without the consent of the House.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided:—

AYES, 26.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Macrossan, Perkins, Weld-Blundell, Norton, Lumley-Hill, Low, Amhurst, Stevenson, Morehead, Sheaffe, Stevens, Walsh, Beor, H. W. Palmer, Lalor, Hamilton, Archer, Cooper, O'Sullivan, Kellett, Persse, Swanwick, Davenport, and Baynes.

NOES, 15.

Messrs. Garrick, Griffith, Dickson, McLean, Rea, Paterson, Beattie, Stubley, Grimes, Groom, Hendren, Macfarlane (Ipswich), Kingsford, Kates, and Horwitz.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACTING CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith), Mr. Cooper was appointed Acting Chairman of Committees for the sitting.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. AMHURST moved the adjournment of the House to direct attention to some painful remarks which had been made by the leader of the Opposition on Thursday last. That hon. and learned gentleman

was not at this moment in the Chamber, though he had been when he (Mr. Amhurst) first rose. The words to which he called attention came with all the greater force when they came from the leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman accused, as many members understood, members on the Ministerial side with plying Opposition members with drink. Although the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) was a personal friend of his, he believed it his duty to bring the matter forward. He (Mr. Amhurst) thought he must have made the accusation without due consideration, and on the spur of the moment. Such a charge was an insult to the whole of the House, to the Speaker, and to the colony, and unless it was retracted or refuted would have a bad effect outside. The leader of the Opposition had probably done it unadvisedly and must have been misled, and therefore the least he could do would be to give the names of the persons he implicated, or, if he could not do that, to retract and own he was misled by listening to tittle-tattle. The matter had got into the papers, and in the course of a few days would be known in Sydney and Melbourne, with the consequence that the Assembly would be stigmatised not only with having one or two members who misbehaved themselves, but that people would believe that they all did so. He felt certain his hon. friend would either give up the names of the hon. members whom he accused, or acknowledge he was misled by statements which were not true, and afford the House a satisfactory explanation.

After a pause,

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL said that, as the leader of the Opposition was, unfortunately, absent from the Chamber during the last hon. speaker's remarks, and had not the advantage of hearing the charge brought against him by the member for Mackay, and as he did not seem anxious to take advantage of the opportunity of replying to the concluding remarks which he had heard, he (Mr. Lumley-Hill) would give him the chance, and trusted they might now hear something from the leader of the Opposition. He hoped he would not adopt the usual tactics of the Opposition, of lying down and not attempting to make any reply when they were worsted. The leader of the Opposition made a deliberate statement from his seat in the House, alluding pointedly to certain hon. members on the Government side, that they were in the habit of plying with intoxicating liquors some of his own followers who were weak enough to be beguiled in that way. It was a disgusting charge to make, but it reflected worse on the members of his (Mr. Griffith's) side that they were not only so weak but so foolish as to be led away by members of the other side; and he could not understand how the hon. member could have made such a mistake as to bring a charge of that kind. When a man had made a mistake, the least thing he could do was gracefully to acknowledge it and retract and withdraw his statement. He had, also, to include the hon. member for Moreton (Mr. Garrick), who backed up the leader of the Opposition in this charge. If the Opposition must resort to such tactics to defame his (Mr. Lumley-Hill's) side of the House, it would be better for them to leave such work to be done by some of the lower joints of their tail. They had one member, at all events, who would be a fit tool for any dirty work they might have; but when two of the leading members of the party sullied themselves with charges of this kind, which they could not substantiate and would not deny—when they had not even the courage to give the names—the case was more serious. What were they afraid of? Why would they not give the names? If charges were made by hon. members of his (Mr. Lumley-Hill's) side—whether by a private member or the Ministry — they would give the names, and he expected as much, therefore, from the other side. He (Mr. Lumley-Hill) would do it himself; but the hon. member for Moreton not only shrank from that, but he made a most virulent attack on the Minister for Works, when he said—

"He was always rampant when on his feet, and ready to jump across the table to vent his spleen and rage. His whole career in and out of office had been to attack the leader of the Opposition, but he was glad to say that his hon. friend was ten times too much for him—because he was honest. His hon. friend was no Jesuit."

Was that proper language for the hon. member for Moreton to use, with the air of a Boanerges or *Bombastes Furioso?* Then the hon. member went on to say—

"The Minister for Works should shrink with very shame from his position for permitting himself to be induced by the men around him—from whom they expected no better, for they had been styled by the Press the 'larrikins' of the House—to espouse a cause which he would reject this evening."

But how did the hon. member for Moreton like what the Press said about himself, the following morning? If the hon. member paid so much attention to what the Press said as to introduce their words in the House, how did he like what the *Courier* said about him, next morning?—

"The intemperate language used in another portion of the debate, notably by the hon. member for Moreton, discredited the whole Assembly. We are rather surprised that the Speaker did not regard it as a part of his duty to interfere when insulting exclamations and charges of untruth couched in decidedly unparliamentary language were being hurled across the Chamber."

How did the hon. member like that kind of comment? And now that he (Mr. Lumley-

Hill) had alluded to what the hon. member did say, and which had been reported in *Hansard*, he would allude to what he also said, but which, conveniently for the hon. member himself, had been left out; but as he (Mr. Hill) was determined that what was said should go forth to the country, he would repeat the words which the hon. member used. They were these—"The leader of the Government is now coming out in his true colours, when he offers the vacant judgeship to the leader of the Opposition as a bribe." Those were the words.

Mr. GARRICK: I said nothing of the kind.

HON. MEMBERS on the Government side: You did.

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL had heard the hon. member before deny point blank the statement which was made by the hon. member for the Mitchell, when he stated he saw the hon. member (Mr. Garrick) engaged in a "rough-and-tumble," outside the Library, endeavouring to bring in an hon. member to vote upon their side. The member for Moreton denied the statement, but that there was such an occurrence he (Mr. Lumley-Hill) knew, because he would admit he was engaged in it himself.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must not repeat an accusation charging another hon. member, after that hon. member has denied it.

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL: I only say what I saw.

Mr. GARRICK: I assure you, you are mistaken.

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL would leave the matter to the hon. member for Rosewood to say whether the hon. member (Mr. Garrick) had not said, "I leave him in your hands, Meston; bring him in to vote." Not that it much mattered if the hon. member did come in, for he was as likely to vote one side as the other; and, therefore, the hon. member for Rosewood quietly left him alone. Reverting to the charge made by the hon. member, he would say that the first thing he looked for in *Hansard*, the following morning, were the remarks of the hon. member that the judgeship had been offered as a bribe to the leader of the Opposition. Not seeing it there he almost hoped his ears had deceived him; but he had been assured by numbers of his friends that the hon. member did use those very words, and that, therefore, his impression was correct. He could hardly select a word strong enough to characterise such conduct—it was perfectly outrageous. Everyone knew that the judgeship was offered to the leader of the Opposition in a worthy manner, and that it was gracefully declined by him. It was offered to him as a compliment to his high abilities and stainless character. To say that the office had been offered as a bribe was an outrage on the sense of decency of the House. If he were to trust to idle rumours outside the House, he might believe that the hon. member for Moreton had good cause for his violence, for it was even said that that hon. member had himself applied, through a friend, for the vacant judgeship, and that the application was "declined with thanks."

Mr. GARRICK: Is that as true as the rest?

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL said he could only vouch for the accuracy of what he saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. He had stated what he had seen and heard, and he thought the hon. member could not do less than withdraw his statements and apologise to the House for having made them.

Mr. KINGSFORD asked if anyone had ever heard such a storm in a teapot before? Talk about guns, blunderbusses, thunder, trumpets, and drums!—they were nothing to it. The language used was strong and dangerous, but he feared it was far more likely to injure those who used it than the hon. gentlemen at whom it was levelled. What he wished to say was that, according to his impression, and others', the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) did not, in his accusation, refer to hon. members on the other side only, but to members of the House generally—in fact, he made no distinction.

Mr. PALMER: That is rather worse, I think.

Mr. KINGSFORD said that might be so, but it broke the force of the remarks, because the hon. gentleman's words applied as much to one side of the House as to the other.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he could have wished the hon. member for Moreton had got up and explained away the statement he made the other night. He was rather struck with the fact that the Speaker had objected to certain remarks of the hon. member for Gregory, while he had allowed the hon. member for Moreton to hurl charges of falsehood against himself and other hon. members.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member for Gregory was making a charge against the hon. member for Moreton of having been engaged in a "rough-and-tumble," and that charge has already been denied by the hon. member. It was a ridiculous charge in itself, and the words used—"rough-and-tumble"—might be explained very differently by myself and the hon. member who used them.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the statement made by the hon. member for Moreton was, "It is not true; and you know it," and he was not checked on that occasion. There could be no wit or amusement in a statement of that kind, and he (Mr. Morehead) said he thought the hon. member was going outside the ordinary usages of the House. What he had stated was absolutely true, and the truth would prevail in spite of the

contradictions of the hon. member for Moreton. The facts were now as they were then; the hon. member for Moreton was engaged in what he termed a "rough-and-tumble." Perhaps he might not have used the correct term, but it was a struggle for supremacy which might have led to one of the two competitors tumbling on to the floor. He was astonished at the action of the leader of the Opposition, for he must either have authorised the hon. member for Moreton to make the assertion he did the other night, that the judgeship had been offered to him as a bribe, or else he must have made it without his leader's consent and approval. The assertion did not appear in *Hansard*, but it was said all the same, and more than a dozen hon. members who heard it said could verify it. If members on his side had been described by the Press as the "larrikins of the House," the hon. and learned member for Moreton had been described by the same authority as a man who had brought discredit upon the House. That was the opinion of the *Courier*. Had there ever been anything in the House more disgraceful than the way in which the hon. member spoke of the Minister for Works, when he described him by imputation, if not directly, as a Jesuit? The hon. member made the charge as a lawyer would do it, and not as a layman would, and he said, "My friend is not a Jesuit, but the Minister for Works is."

Mr. GARRICK: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member even went further, and said the leader of the Opposition was a ten times better man than the Minister for Works, because he was honest. Was not that imputing dishonesty to the Minister for Works? The whole thing was perfectly disgraceful. If the hon. member wanted to attack the Minister for Works for dishonesty, why did he not do it openly? It was a cowardly attack from beginning to end, for he had not a single fact to bear out his allegations. It would be well for the hon. member to withdraw what he had said, to admit he was wrong, and that he had done the Minister for Works great injustice, and likewise that he had done a great injustice to this side, and, indeed, to the whole House. Having insulted the whole House, he trusted the hon. member would have the good sense to make a sufficient apology.

Mr. HENDREN said he supposed he had been the innocent cause of all this vituperation from the Government benches, and he might say that those who had spoken ought to be ashamed to refer to what had taken place. He was quite willing to be saddled with his own faults, but it was some of the hon. gentlemen on the other side who had led him into temptation, and when they could not get him to drink more they asked him to treat them. He appealed to those gentlemen to say whether that was the truth or not. He might go further, and say he had seen an hon. member on the other side, holding a responsible position, lying on the floor of a railway carriage coming through Ipswich station. He would name no names, but, if the cap fitted, that hon. member might wear it. He was not a new chum, and could tell many a queer story. He was glad hon. gentlemen on this side had taken his part, and he hoped to return the compliment at some future day—not with the view of exculpating them from a similar fault, but to give them his warm support whenever it might be necessary.

Mr. MESTON said he did not remember anything equal to the extraordinary philippics delivered on the floor of the House, this evening, since Ovid's invective against the Ibis. He rose, in consequence of the appeal made to him, with regard to something that had passed in the Library. He regarded the whole scene referred to as the jocular end of a farce that had been played during the course of the evening, and it was hard to say what was serious and what jocular. The whole thing was a burlesque, which should never have been brought up in the House. It was simply a tug of war between the Ministerial whip and himself, and the hon. member for Moreton also treated the whole matter as a joke. He was quite certain that the hon. member did not join in the *melée* which took place on that occasion. The hon. member said, "I will leave him with you; bring him in";—but it was jocularly said. It was a pity an affair of that sort should ever have been brought into the House at all.

An HON. MEMBER: Who did it?

Mr. GARRICK: The statement made by the Minister for Works against me was the provocation.

The PREMIER said the House might have been spared a humiliating scene, if the leader of the Opposition had not chosen to bring an accusation against hon. members in such a way that he (the Premier), as leader of the Government, could not possibly notice it. The hon. member pretended to make his accusation, not against the Government members of the House, but against members of the House generally; but the reference was really to the Government side. The accusation was, that certain members had plied a member with drink so as to incapacitate him from performing his duties. The hon. gentleman ought to have given the names. He (the Premier) had devoted a good deal of time to the investigation of idle rumours of this kind; for it was quite usual for hon. members to come to him with what he must now consider a great deal of hypocrisy, and say that hon. members were plying members with drink, and thereby demoralising them. He had made it his business to examine those charges, and had found them incorrect.

Mr. STUBLEY said the hon. member had stated that some hon. members had made false representations, and he ought to give the names.

The PREMIER said the hon. member was fond of interrupting; and a little modesty, consistent with the length of time he had been in the House, would become him better. What he said was, that representations were made with, what he looked upon from subsequent debates, as a great deal of hypocrisy; and one of the most prominent of the hon. members who had made those representations was the hon. member for Wide Bay. The debate had led to the scene in which the hon. member for Moreton had been brought in. The charge was, that hon. members who tried every possible means to induce hon. members to come into the Chamber in an unfit state did a great deal worse than those who supplied them with drink. He (the Premier) was asked to interfere on one occasion, and he had advised six or seven hon. members who were there to prevent the hon. member from coming into the Chamber. They acted upon his advice and endeavoured to keep him out of the way. He was sure the House would not for a moment suppose that he wished to prevent the hon. member from voting, especially as he already had a majority. He had endeavoured all along to preserve the credit of the Assembly, and had, perhaps, ignored some of his duties that he might not make the weaknesses of hon. members prominent. The accusation that the hon. member had been forced into the Chamber on a division was repelled by the member for Moreton in the foulest language he (the Premier) had heard used in the House. He said to the Minister for Works, "You are telling an untruth, and you know it." He was sorry this should have been made the subject of a debate; but it had been made so by the leader of the Opposition, and it was incumbent upon him to answer the charge brought impliedly against hon. members on the Ministerial side. With regard to the other point, the member for Moreton had taken upon himself to deny that he had accused him (the Premier) of attempting to bribe the leader of the Opposition by offering him a judgeship. In what sense he could deny that, he (the Premier) did not know. The words he used were, "He has come out in his true colours now, and his tactics are seen in the attempt to bribe the leader of the Opposition with the offer of a judgeship." When the statement was made the shame visible on the face of the leader of the Opposition and other members was so apparent at hearing such an accusation, that the member for Moreton was cowed, and evidently sat down without finishing the contemptible speech he was making. The member for North Brisbane knew perfectly well the terms in which the position was offered to him, and that he (the Premier) had the moral courage to face the insinuations which might be brought against him, that he had tried to buy off a political opponent. The hon. gentleman, he knew, considered the question entirely on its merits, and he (the Premier) gave him credit for the way he had studied every phase of the position before giving an answer. It remained for a man of the calibre of mind of the hon. member for Moreton to put such a construction on the matter as he had chosen to do.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said he had intended to say nothing, and let the matter pass without any remark, but, after the challenge of the leader of the Government, he should be wanting in his duty if he did not rise in his place and say a few words. With respect to the matter last referred to, he could say—though not a pleasant matter for him to have to refer to—that he entirely acquitted the hon. gentleman of any improper motives in offering him the honourable position he had offered him. He believed then, and now, that the hon. gentleman was only actuated by honourable and proper motives, and he had always treated the matter in that light. With respect to the rest, he agreed with the head of the Government that this was a humiliating debate, and most humiliating because the hon. gentleman himself had joined in it. It might have been allowed to die out, as it would have done. He had been asked to go into details as to what he meant when he spoke on Thursday last, but he had nothing to add to what he said then. When speaking, he laboured under strong excitement, not unnatural considering the indignation with which any man of honour must view the circumstances he was then describing. He did not, however, speak on the spur of the moment, nor on consideration alone of the proceedings of the last week or the present session, or even the present Parliament. He had only then said what he had often intimated he should say on the first convenient opportunity. He was not going to give names, as he considered the result of what he had said would be that no occasion would arise for referring to the matter again. He might add—but not in extenuation of what he had said—that on more than one occasion he had himself personally, as a member of the Government, taken precautions to prevent the occurrence of such a thing as he had alluded to. He was sorry the matter had been brought up again, but he had nothing to add and nothing to retract.

Mr. HAMILTON thought it execrable taste on the part of any hon. member to bring forward in the House the occurrences of the smoking or refreshment rooms; but,

as they had been introduced, he was bound to speak a word or two on the question of veracity. The hon. member for Mitchell said that he saw the hon. member for Moreton engaged in a struggle in the lobby of the House, and that was contradicted by the hon. member for Moreton.

The SPEAKER said, the hon. member having denied the charge, the hon. member would be out of order to repeat it.

Mr. HAMILTON said he did not say the member for Moreton was incorrect, but that the statement made by the member for the Mitchell was correct, for he also saw it. It was an amusing struggle, and he (Mr. Hamilton) was concerned in it, because he did not think it advisable that the hon. member should go into the Chamber at that moment. He wished to explain that the member for Bundanba was not the hon. member referred to, because he regretted that the hon. member who had been referred to should have been held up as he had been. He felt confident that every hon. member on his side of the House regretted what had been said regarding him, because the hon. member in question had never, inside the House or outside, spoken a word to offend the most delicate ear; and had never disgraced the House by his presence in an unfit state. Therefore, he (Mr. Hamilton) was very sorry his name had been brought forward as it had been, and he wished to assure him of the sympathy of members on the Government side of the House.

Mr. PATERSON said he had a lively recollection of what was said by the hon. member for Moreton, the other evening. He followed closely every word that he uttered, and, without expressing an opinion as to whether the hon. gentleman should have said what he did say, he had a clear recollection that the word "bribe" was not used in his speech; and there were hon. members on both sides who would bear him out in this assertion. He was satisfied that, on reference to the shorthand writer's notes, it would be found the word did not appear.

Mr. STEVENSON said he had no doubt that members on the Government side had also a good recollection as to what was said the other evening. The words used by the hon. member for Moreton were, "The Premier has tried to bribe the leader of the Opposition by offering him a Puisne Judgship." He had a distinct recollection of what was said, and believed those were the words. With regard to the statement of the leader of the Opposition, that the most humiliating part of the debate was that the leader of the Government had joined in it, he (Mr. Stevenson) thought the most humiliating part was that the leader of the Opposition was the cause of its origin;—that the hon. member would not deny. No doubt he regretted his conduct now, and, indeed, he had so far admitted it that there was no need to say more about it; but, at the same time, he would have thought that the hon. member (Mr. Garrick) would have got up in his place and acknowledged that he was wrong in his statement. He was present when the hon. member was inducing a certain Opposition member to come into the division. The hon. member for Moreton, notwithstanding what the hon. member (Mr. Meston) had said, was the first to interfere with this member and try to induce him to come into the House; when certain members on the Government side saw this, they tried to induce him to keep out, believing him not to be in a fit state to take part in the division. He was glad to say the Opposition member in question had the sense left to know that he ought not to come inside, and was, therefore, more sensible than his friend. The member for Moreton at last said, "Meston, I will leave him with you;—you watch him and bring him into the division." When the member for Mitchell repeated these words, the other evening, the member for Moreton said, "It is untrue, and you know it;" which was equivalent to telling an hon. member that he was telling a lie. Further than that, the next day the member for Moreton admitted, outside the House, that he was wrong. The members for Mitchell, Gregory, and Gympie, and himself, came from the upper Library and saw the member for Moreton trying to get a certain member inside the House for the division; they had never seen him before that evening, but the member for Moreton accused them of plying him with liquor to keep him from the division. They told him it was not the case, and the next day, on their again saying the same thing to him, he admitted that he was wrong in his accusation. After making such an admission outside, he would not have thought that the member for Moreton would come inside and deny it. The words used by the hon. member, the other evening, were as he had already stated. Not only did he use those words, but he also said, "The leader of the Opposition is no Jesuit," as, pointing to the Minister for Works, "the Minister for Works is." Finally, he should like to advise the hon. member that he had better stick to the stereotyped speech on the Land Act that he used to deliver when sitting on the Treasury benches, and not make such an exhibition of himself—he would not say ass—as he had been doing lately.

Mr. BAILEY said that one or two hon. members opposite were apparently willing to degrade the Government and their supporters to the lowest pitch, for that was the effect the discussion would have. Members were here to do business, and Ministers professed to be anxious to get on

with it. Was this the way to get on with it? Were hon. members met together for the purpose of having an old woman's wrangle, and hearing one member say, "You said this," and another "You said that." Were they met to debate whether certain members were not sober, and whether certain other members wished to get them to vote in a division, whilst others were anxious that they should not? Was this the way the Government hoped to do their business? Members would soon no longer be spoken of as "honourable members," if some of their number were anxious to degrade themselves by raising such discussions as the one that had just taken place.

Motion for adjournment withdrawn, by consent.

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL—COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee to resume the consideration of this Bill.

The ACTING-CHAIRMAN (Mr. Cooper) said the question was—That clause 4, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he observed that the Colonial Secretary had given notice of an amendment to follow the clause. Under clause 12 of the present Act, persons were appointed by the courts of petty sessions for the collection of the rolls of the different electorates which came within each police district; and the result was there was no uncertainty. This system had been admitted to be a good one by many hon. members. The Bill, however, provided that for each electoral district there should be only one court of revision. It was pointed out, on a previous occasion, that this system was quite impracticable; except for the principal towns, it was quite impossible for one police court to deal with the revision of an electoral roll. It was pointed out that, in the cases of the Burke and Cook electorates, for instance, one revision court could not provide for the collection of the roll of the whole district. What was the alternative? It was agreed that the present system was good, and the Colonial Secretary, instead of leaving it as it was, proposed that each district should have one court, and that the Governor in Council could appoint as many others as the Ministry liked. If they passed clauses 4 and 5, the result would be to raise difficult questions of construction, while practically things would be left the same as they were at present. When a thing was well enough, why not leave it alone? He understood, the last time the Bill was under discussion, that it was agreed that all the different police courts should be the courts of revision; and now they had that in substance but not in form, and they had two long clauses subject to various constructions. He strongly advised the Colonial Secretary to let clause 4 go.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if the hon. member had taken the trouble to look at his (the Colonial Secretary's) amendments, he would see that clause 4 ought to stand part of the Bill. The objection raised was that, in large outside districts, it would be impossible for one court of petty sessions to compile proper lists of electors, and, to obviate that, he stated the last time the Bill was before the Committee that he would propose a new clause to take the place of clause 5, and the new clause ought to be in the hands of the hon. member. He (the Colonial Secretary) proposed to carry clause 4, and to substitute for clause 5 the new clause he had referred to, which would meet all the objections that had been taken to the Bill as far as it had gone.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. member repeated what he said, and then said it was an answer to his objection. What he said was that the proposed amendment would leave things exactly where they were, except that it would place power in the hands of the Ministry of the day to appoint courts of revision. The hon. member had often objected to such powers being left in the hands of the Governor in Council, and he (Mr. Griffith) objected to the Ministry having any more power with respect to the compilation of electoral rolls than was absolutely necessary. He had known instances of polling-places being appointed for particular purposes and for particular elections, and if this power were granted they might find it used in the same way—that a particular roll might or might not be properly collected. He did not suggest that any particular Government would do such a thing, but he thought the hon. member would agree with him that it was not desirable that the Government should have power to deal with elections in any way. The hon. member appeared to agree with him; then, why not let all police courts be courts of petty sessions? He would also point out that, if clause 5 were carried, it would necessitate recasting several other clauses of the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY called the hon. gentleman's attention to the fact that they had already passed clause 1 of the Bill, which repealed part 3 of the present Act, and if they negatived clause 4 they would have nothing left.

Mr. GRIFFITH admitted that it was quite right to repeal part 3 of the present Act, because this was a new scheme, and it was therefore better to repeal it altogether than to attempt to amend it. There was no difficulty so far as that was concerned; but in any case they would have to amend clause 5, because otherwise they would

have two "appropriate courts of petty sessions" meaning different things. He merely wished to assist the hon. member to make the Bill as perfect as possible;—it was a matter in which they were all interested.

The PREMIER believed the leader of the Opposition and the Colonial Secretary were trying to get the same thing; but the leader of the Opposition had left out of consideration that the amendment of the Colonial Secretary would have the effect of remedying a defect in the present Act. That defect was, that there were more than one court of petty sessions in several police districts; and, supposing there happened to be three or four such courts, in which one—according to the amendment of the hon. member—would the revision court be held? The amendment of the Colonial Secretary provided for cases of that sort by leaving it to the discretion of the Governor in Council. There was no difference in principle between the amendment of the Colonial Secretary and that suggested by the hon. member. With regard to leaving too much power in the hands of the Government, the hon. gentleman's illustration was not exactly to the point when he referred to polling-places being left with the Government. Why were they left with the Government? Because it would be highly inconvenient if they were left to anyone else; and for the same reason this provision was inserted in the Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was not aware of any instance where there were two courts of petty sessions in one police district. He knew very well that there were several electoral districts in one police district, but he never before heard of more than one court of petty sessions in one police district, and was not aware of that difficulty. With respect to polling-places, he did not say it was objectionable that there should be such powers with respect to them, but that they were capable of being abused, and that similar powers ought not to be multiplied.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was quite aware of that. No member in the House had more opportunities of knowing those abuses than he had; and, as to polling places, the Government of which the hon. gentleman was a member had more than once, or twenty times, done the very thing he now complained of. With reference to the hon. member's remarks that he had never heard of there being more than one court of petty sessions in a police district, he (the Colonial Secretary) thought his memory served him very badly. He believed the hon. member had been asked his opinion, as Attorney-General, where the jurisdiction of the police magistrate of Toowoomba began and ended. That was an instance in which there were three courts of petty sessions—Toowoomba, Drayton, and Highfields—in one police district; and the hon. member was asked, as Attorney-General, to say where the jurisdiction of the police magistrate of Toowoomba commenced and ended, and that question had never been replied to. He was quite aware that no amendment he or any other hon. member could draw would please the hon. gentleman. He contended that clause 4 should pass, and that new clause 5 would cure any incongruities in the Bill;—at all events, he should take the opinion of the Committee upon it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, in regard to the statement made by the hon. gentleman, that he (Mr. Griffith) was asked and was unable to give an opinion as to where the jurisdiction of the police magistrate at Toowoomba extended, that he had replied that he was unable to give an opinion as he did not know the boundaries of the police district of Toowoomba. The fact was, that the hon. gentleman had started with a wrong idea in his Bill—namely, that there was only to be one court of petty sessions in each electorate; and, finding that he was wrong, he wanted to amend the Bill in a round-about way.

Mr. MILES said there were already many courts of petty sessions not mentioned in the Bill, and therefore it should be left to the Governor in Council to appoint additional courts.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had already stated that he had no objection to any number of courts of petty sessions. The clause had been altered from top to bottom, and now the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) wanted to have it omitted.

Mr. GRIFFITH explained that that was because the scheme of the Bill showed that there was only one court of petty sessions provided for in each electoral district, and it was not until they had gone down the list that it was suggested by some hon. members of the Committee that there should be more than one court in each district. As the Bill was now framed, it provided that there should be only one court in each district, but the Committee had set their minds upon having more, which would render necessary an alteration of the Bill all through.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman was exaggerating the difficulties in the way. It was evident the hon. gentleman and his hon. colleague (the Colonial Secretary) were both aiming at the same thing, only by accepting the amendment of the former they would have to alter the Bill right through. The hon. gentleman said the Government had made a mistake by providing only one court of petty sessions in each electorate; but he would now see that it was proposed to have every court of petty sessions a revision court. It would be far more simple to amend clause 4 by

putting in so many additional courts, and leaving others to be appointed afterwards if necessary, than to adopt the suggestion of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was only desirous to make the Bill as perfect as possible; in fact, he hoped that it would become law before the end of the month. His object had been to prevent many difficulties that he saw in the Bill were the clause to remain in it; as, for instance, the words "principal collector for the district" appeared in many places.

The PREMIER pointed out that clause 13 was included in the other clauses to be omitted from the Bill by the amendments of the hon. member for Blackall.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that if the hon. gentleman was anxious to get the Bill made law he should allow the clause to pass. He would pledge himself, if that was done, to re-commit the Bill and put in every police district.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that if that was done his objection would be met; but it seemed rather absurd to mention all the police courts in the colony when half-a-dozen words would save that enumeration.

In answer to Mr. Stubley,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would repeat that it would be absolutely necessary to recommit the Bill. The fact of the matter was—and he might as well explain it to the Committee at once—that he saw what was the feeling of the House on introducing the Bill, and that the tendency was to allow the people te register themselves and do away with the present system of collecting the rolls. The amendments to be proposed by the member for Blackall had been drafted with the knowledge, and in some measure with the assistance, of the Government. At the same time, he (the Colonial Secretary) intended to stick by clauses 4 and 5, lest the amendments of the member for Blackall should not be carried.

Clause 4, as amended, put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 23.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Macrossan, Perkins, O'Sullivan, Beor, Davenport, Kellett, Swanwick, Norton, Low, Amhurst, Lumley-Hill, Weld-Blundell, Morehead, Stevenson, Stevens, Lalor, Persse, Walsh, H. W. Palmer, Hamilton, and Archer.

NOES, 18.

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

Question, therefore, resolved in the affirmative.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved a new clause, 5, to follow clause 4.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, as it had been decided to recommit the Bill to amend clause 4, the proposed new clause would be of no use.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY agreed with the hon. member.

Clause, therefore, negatived.

Clause 5—Appropriate courts to appoint collectors—moved.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it raised the question of whether the collectors of the rolls should be abolished; and he wished to know what course the Government were going to take on that point.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that, in order to make the matter clear, he would explain it again. He proposed to take an amendment of the hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer) on clause 6, as, on the second reading of the Bill, there seemed to be a feeling in the House that Government should do away with the collection of electoral rolls altogether, and leave it to every man in the country who had a vote to register himself or go without a vote. To this end the hon. member for Blackall had, with the assistance of Government, drafted an amendment, on which they proposed to take the sense of the House. If the amendment were carried, it did away with the whole, or nearly the whole, of the rest of the Bill. It would test the feeling whether the clause of the hon. member for Blackall, and the succeeding clauses which hon. members had in their hands, should be the law, or whether they should go on, as at present, under the objectionable system of collecting the rolls. The scheme under the new clauses would be that the justices should sit four times a year: they should start with the electoral rolls now in force, and from them form registers of those who conceived they had a right to be on the new rolls;—the rolls would thus be formed, and collectors done away with altogether. The clerk of petty sessions was to be the enumerator, and he was to be paid for his services. If they wanted to have work well done they must pay men for doing it. Clerks of petty sessions were believed to be the men best adapted for this work, and it was only fair that they should be remunerated. If the first amendment of the hon. member for Blackall was negatived it would involve the fate of all the other amendments, and he (Mr. Palmer) should go on with the original Bill.

Mr. REA said he had never before heard of a Government allowing one of its supporters to bring in some thirty new clauses, and thus do away with a Bill already read a second time and partly considered in committee. It was a most extraordinary instance of incompetency on the part of the Government, and it was an attempt to get back again to the system of 1874, under which hundreds and hundreds of men were

left off the electoral rolls. It would be the height of folly to revert to a system which had been found so unworkable.

Mr. MILES said he was always glad to accept a good amendment from whichever side of the House it came, and he thought this was a step in the right direction. At Warwick, the other day, he found that a number of gentlemen, some of them well known in the community, and residing within four or five miles of the town, had had their names left off the roll. A provision enabling electors to see that their names were on the roll would be very beneficial indeed. Under the present system names were continually being left off the rolls, because the constables, not being paid, did not trouble themselves about the work. He should feel inclined to support the amendment, were it only because it enabled persons to send in their claims once a quarter, instead of only once a year as at present.

Mr. ARCHER moved that the following new clause be inserted in the Bill:—

Preparation of Electoral Lists.

6. On the first Tuesday in the months of January April July and October in every year the court of petty sessions shall sit at the principal police office in every police district for the purpose of adjudicating upon claims to registration on the electoral list and every such court shall be called the "Quarterly Registration Court" and shall have power to adjourn from time to time and if at the time appointed for the sitting of such court two justices shall not be present the clerk of petty sessions shall adjourn such court from day to day Provided that the October sittings of such court shall not be adjourned to any time later than the tenth day of that month

Such court may examine any person on oath in proof or otherwise of any such claim and the name of every person whose qualification shall be proved to the satisfaction of such court as hereinafter provided shall be then and there entered in the form hereunto annexed in a book to be kept by the clerk of petty sessions and called the "Electoral Register Book"—

Electoral Register Book for the Police District of in the Electoral District of

List of Names of Persons who have proved their qualifications as Electors this day of 18 .

Christian and Surname.	Residence.	Qualification.	Where property situated or how claim arising.

And every name which shall be so entered shall be initialled by the presiding judge crown prosecutor or justice at such court.

By taking the existing roll as the basis for any future roll there would be only a very few names to add each year, and as claims were to be taken into consideration once a quarter there was very little fear that anybody would be left off the roll. Were the roll to be collected yearly many people would not take the trouble to register themselves; but under the provisions of this clause, and taking the old electoral roll as the basis for the new one, there was little doubt that the name of every man who had a right would find its way on to the list. Besides, there was a provision further on that people could apply, not only personally but also by letter, each applicant's signature being witnessed by a justice of the peace. The aim of the amendments was to make it as easy as possible for people to get their names on the roll, and sufficient precautions were taken that names should not be put on the roll of people not properly qualified. As the amendments had been some time in the hands of hon. members he would say nothing further at present in support of them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it would be more convenient for him to withdraw his motion, and allow the hon. member for Blackall to move that the new clause stand clause 5 of the Bill.

Motion withdrawn accordingly; and Mr. ARCHER moved that the clause just read stand clause 5 of the Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was unfortunate the Committee should have such short notice of so important an amendment. This was a proposal to go back to the old system repealed in 1874. Then, as now, they found the Conservative party in the House objecting to the collection of the electoral rolls. His experience had been that the collection of electoral rolls, with all its defects, had been of great service in obtaining the real voice of the people. He did not agree with those who argued that if men did not choose to register themselves they ought not to be allowed to vote. This House represented the whole people, and it should be their desire to get the opinion of the whole people. If at any moment the people were apathetic or lethargic, that was no reason why the majority in Parliament should be determined by that for one year or five years, as the case might be. This was a most serious step in the wrong direction, and the Bill as brought in by the Colonial Secretary was infinitely better. The only grievance they had to complain of under the existing system was, that the collectors would not take the old roll as their basis;—had they done so the system would have been perfect. It had nothing to do with the matter whether a man wanted to be on the roll or not. This was like the other system introduced by the Conservative party, but since happily repealed, that no man should be allowed to vote unless he paid a shilling. The effect of this amendment would be that if a man could not manage to get to a court of petty sessions, or find a

friendly justice of the peace to witness his signature, he could not register himself as a voter. This was what occurred in 1872, and the evil was only modified slightly by some justices taking upon themselves the duty of going round and witnessing declarations. But that was a rotten system, and ought not to be reverted to now. The public did not always take the interest in politics which, fortunately, they did at present: their names ought to be placed on the rolls when there was no political excitement, and then at critical times they would get at the real feeling of the people. There were only two changes in the law made by the Bill passed in 1874, by Mr. Macalister's Government—the collection of the rolls, and the dispensing with registration before justices of the peace—both in the interests of the people, and both most objectionable to the views of the other party. He was not surprised to hear the same views adopted now, but he trusted the Government would stick to their Bill, as all that was wanted was provided by it. The provision for registration would be found a great convenience, but the same provision was to be found in the Colonial Secretary's Bill. The 20th clause of the Bill, and the 19th clause of the present Act, provided that any person entitled to have his name inserted might give notice to the clerk of petty sessions on or before a certain date. The proposed change was that, instead of the lists being all dealt with at once, they would be dealt with four separate times, but until the fourth time the names would not be put on the roll. He did not see any reason for the court sitting four times when the work would be done at one sitting. He sincerely trusted the House would give the matter due consideration, before making a change which might have the effect of disfranchising a great number of electors. The usual arguments would be used that men should not be allowed to vote if they would not take the trouble; but to say, "it serves them right," was no answer, because the interests of the public, and of the whole colony, required that no person should be disfranchised. Another serious objection was, that the compilation of the rolls should not be made at times of excitement and by partisans. Those were valid arguments against making amendments in the present law, which had worked well for the last five years.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN could not agree with the leader of the Opposition, as he considered that all the elections as now carried on had been dead failures. One of the reasons alleged for the failures was, that the police were not paid for collecting, and the work would not be done properly unless paid for. He would suggest that all the rolls be left at certain places, and applications for registration made in the same way publicans applied for licenses, once a month or perhaps once a fortnight. A great deal of money would thereby be saved, and the collection of the rolls would not be, as hitherto, in the hands of partisans. Men were appointed by the bench on account of certain merits, and he had recently stated a case in which a magistrate collected the rolls and sat in the revision court, though it ought to be beneath the dignity of a magistrate to do anything of the kind. The old roll should be left as a basis, and people given to understand that they could get their names put on at four separate times in the year. On one occasion sixty men applied to have their names on the Ipswich roll, and forty of them, including himself, were disfranchised. It was generally known how he voted, and some persons considered the more often his name was struck off the roll the better. There was another point which had not been referred to: the revision courts would be packed in the same way as the licensing benches were all over the colony. Perhaps the hon. member for North Brisbane could suggest some means by which they could prevent the packing of benches. A roster might be called, and the bench limited to a certain number. The district court judge and Crown prosecutor should be with the police magistrate to revise the rolls. Their hands were entirely clean, and they did not enter into village politics. Human nature in Ipswich was no better, and perhaps no worse, than elsewhere, and he had seen more rows there over revision courts than over anything else. A man with plenty of brass on his cheek got his name on the roll whether he had a right to a vote or not. Men who owned half-an-acre of land worth £4 had their names on the East Moreton roll from year to year as freeholders, whilst other people had to give an account of every blade of grass on their property, and take their Bible oath that their holding was worth £100—£99 would not do. Another evil which required to be met by an amendment of the present law was the continual practice of personation. The ballot had been praised in the finest and most eloquent language by the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge), and he might be original enough to be able to suggest some means by which they might prevent this everlasting impersonation. At the present time, there was not a more corrupt manner of voting ever invented by man. He had been told by a man from a certain electorate not 500 miles from here, that he had prevented twenty-five cases of impersonation. At one polling-place a certain foreign gentleman walked in and told him his name was Donald Ross. His informant said he never before knew a Chinaman of that name. That was the way all over the colony, and some means

should be devised to prevent the abuse. Knowing the ability and ingenuity of the hon. member for Rosewood, he looked to that hon. member to suggest a remedy. It was only necessary to prevent the packing of benches and personation, and to give the people an opportunity of registering three or four times a year, to make the Bill a better law than had ever been passed in the colony.

Mr. HENDREN said he would point out one means of preventing personation. There should be a fifth column, in which the elector should state the name of the place at which he intended to vote, supposing there were half-a-dozen polling-places in the one electorate. If he voted at any other place he should be compelled to do so openly. He noticed that there was no provision made for the appointment of sub-collectors, except by benches of magistrates. The principal collector was responsible for their acts, and yet had no voice in their appointment.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN could not understand the hon. member's allusion to a fifth column. If he meant that where there were several polling-places a voter should state which he should poll at, he would ask how the hon. member would provide for an electorate like Fortitude Valley, where there was only one polling-place, and where one enterprising gentleman, he was told, had voted twenty-seven times?

Mr. DICKSON said the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall would introduce a new principle in the compilation of the electoral roll, and one which the circumstances of the colony would not justify. It might be that the compilation of the rolls under the existing system had not been so successful as they might wish; but it was yet a decided improvement upon the system previously prevailing, and had been the means of adding largely to their electoral rolls. In towns and thickly-populated districts the proposed amendment might be practicable; but in sparsely-populated places and the rural districts it would be exceedingly inconvenient. It would necessitate claimants for registration wasting, possibly, one day, hanging about the police court to wait for their turns to have their names enrolled. As to the statement of the Colonial Secretary that he had been led to imagine that the opinion of the House was favourable to the abolition of collectors, there was a discussion as to the desirability of continuing the police as collectors or transferring their duties to civilians, but there was no expression of opinion that collectors should be abolished. If collectors were done away with it could not be denied that it would create additional difficulties for obtaining registration, and anything which had such a tendency must tend to curtail the possession of the franchise. He really did not view the expense of collection as an alarming matter, and, even if it did entail considerable expense, it was his opinion that the electoral rolls should be enlarged as much as possible, and every facility should be given to electors to have their names easily enrolled.

Mr. KELLETT said the easiest way to refute the arguments of the leader of the Opposition, and the last speaker, was to point out that in 1878, when provisional rolls were prepared and people found it necessary to register personally or by agent, the best rolls that had ever existed were obtained. This clearly disproved the argument that the Conservative party, as they had been called by the leader of the Opposition, wished to disfranchise the people. For his part, he believed that both sides were equally anxious to have the people in possession of the franchise.

Mr. RUTLEDGE did not think it followed that, because the provisional roll under which the present Parliament was elected was a success, a roll collected in the same way would be a success on all occasions. Everybody knew that a great deal of trouble and expense was incurred, not merely by the electors but by parties interested, to have voters properly placed on the roll; and therefore the illustration given did not hold good for the future, when there might not be the same interest felt and the same inducements at work. The objection raised by the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) as to the revision of the rolls by a bench of magistrates was not a valid one. Whatever might be the order of the day in Ipswich in regard to a revision court, he could state that in the metropolis, last year, where four or five rolls were revised, and when the excitement was great in anticipation of the coming elections, only some four or five justices sat on the bench; and there was a perfect absence of anything savouring of "packing." Under the amendment proposed by the hon. member (Mr. Archer) the revision court would still have the same powers as under the existing law; therefore, so far as that was concerned, the hon. member's (Mr. O'Sullivan's) amendment would not be the least improvement. A great deal had been made of the fact that many persons entitled to the franchise did not take the trouble to put their names on the roll; and it had been said, "If they don't take the trouble to do so let them go without the privilege of voting." This matter should not be looked upon so much in the light of a privilege as in that of a duty. It was the duty of every intelligent citizen to exercise the franchise, as it was his duty to do many other things, such as to educate his children, in regard to which the House had found it necessary to pass a law which exercised something more than persuasion. If they wished a certain thing done they must

provide not only facilities but inducements. Hon. members were aware that, with regard to many persons whose names were enrolled, it was not sufficient, when an election came on, to point out who was a desirable candidate; but, if their votes were required, a cab must be sent to bring them to the poll. Frequently it was not a matter of choice on the part of the electors, but a question whether the candidate would go to the expense of bringing them to the poll; and it would be very undesirable to say that because a large number of electors, who had business of their own to look after, did not choose to do a service to the country, they were therefore not to be brought in a cab. He maintained that it was the duty of that House to take care that all who were entitled to vote should have a vote. That ought to be, and he believed was, the object of both sides of the House; the Bill contemplated that, and he thought it only required to be pointed out to the hon. member for Blackall, that by the adoption of his amendment a large number of electors would be disfranchised, to induce him to withdraw it. This was a matter in which they required to move with great caution. It resolved itself into this: who would spend most money? At present, if they wanted the rolls properly collected, the efforts of the collectors had to be assisted and money had to be spent in order to have names that were left off the rolls put on—in other words, they had to spend money in order that some one should go and see that all who were entitled to vote were on the roll; so that the people who had most money to spend would have their friends on the roll, while others would not be on it. He said they ought to pause before they committed the country to such a serious departure from existing principles as the introduction of partisanship on such a scale as that. He contended that the more thoroughly they put their foot upon and crushed out partisanship, the better it would be for the country; and here was a deliberate attempt—he did not say it was so intended—to foster the most bitter and objectionable kind of partisanship. He thought the hon. member for Stanley had exaggerated the difficulty of collecting the rolls under the existing system, because he had lost sight of the fact that under this Bill the existing rolls would be the basis upon which the new rolls would be formed. That was where the difficulty had been all along. If they could have enacted that the old rolls should be the basis of the new, and that there should be no alteration unless a man had died, or removed, or become disqualified, they would not have heard any complaints about disqualifications. He thought the hon. member would also see that it was quite chimerical to attempt to prevent personation, but they could prevent double voting.

Mr. WALSH thought the discussion should be confined to the question whether they should have collectors or not. He did not go with the hon. member for Stanley as to benches; happily, in his district, no such occurrence as the hon. member referred to had ever taken place there, and the bench of magistrates were somewhat purer than they appeared to be in Ipswich. With reference to the collection of the rolls, although there had been some complaints, it was generally admitted that the collection by the police was on the whole satisfactory. He could mention two or three principal men of business in his district who were left off the roll, and blunders of that kind would occur. He would support Mr. Archer's amendment, if some provision was made by which wardens on goldfields could provide means for having the names of miners placed on the rolls. If that were not done a large number of his constituents would be disfranchised, and unless the Colonial Secretary would agree to an amendment of that kind he could not support the clause.

Mr. KINGSFORD said the objection to the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall was this: The large majority of the people were not only willing but most anxious to have their names placed on the roll and to record their votes, but if personal registration were required it would be utterly impossible for the working classes to comply with it, because the hours the court would sit would be their working hours. It was therefore necessary that this work should be done for them—that there should be collectors—in order that their wishes should be gratified. The objection made a short time ago was not to there being collectors, but that it was wrong that the police, who had other work to do, should be called upon to collect the rolls without being paid for it; but he saw no reason why suitable collectors could not be appointed.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said it had been stated that the appointment of collectors was in order to increase the numbers on the rolls, and to have everybody's name on; but he could positively assert, after mingling in these matters for the last thirty years, that it was the other way—that the collectors had done more to keep people off the rolls, and had been paid for doing so. As he had frequently said, "one fact is worth a dozen arguments;" and he would point out one fact to show the result of having collectors:—Just before the last extraordinary election for the appointment of this House, the people got notice that on a certain date their names would have to be on the roll, and that they would have to put them on themselves. There were no

collectors paid to go and collect that roll—the provisional roll—and what was the result? In his own district there were over 1,500 names on the roll. What happened immediately afterwards? That when collectors were sent out to collect the roll there were only 1,100 names on it, although the population, in his opinion, had increased from 20 to 25 per cent. during the interval. Was not that one fact worth all the arguments they had heard from the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge)? He could also tell the hon. member this—that they never found a man's name left off the roll until the collector came round; but after he came they found nearly all the respectable names left off. Would these men have been off the roll if there were no collectors? The whole mystery was that the police were not paid to do the work; and, as the Colonial Secretary said, work was never well done unless it was paid for. If the police had to do extra work, why should they not get extra pay? By taking the old rolls and establishing revision courts four times a year, and also advertising that such would be the case, there would be at least 55 per cent. more names on the rolls.

Mr. PATERSON said that the whole reason of the unsatisfactory result of the work done by collectors arose from the wrong work being put on their shoulders. The germ of the electoral law should be that the work of compilation should not rest with collectors. It was the duty of the benches of magistrates to say whether a man's name should be on the roll or not. Therefore, if the existing rolls were taken as a basis, and the collectors were not allowed to interfere with that basis, the whole thing would be different. The duty of the collector should be to take the existing roll, with which he should not interfere, travel through the length and breadth of a district and put on those names not already on it; and any support he should give to an amendment of the present law would be in that direction. If the existing roll was taken as a basis or guide, and a clause for the establishment of quarterly courts was passed, and the system of collection was continued, the present law would be a most excellent one, and their legislation should not go outside of that. He was prepared to put the collection of the rolls on much the same basis as taking the census, as the country ought not to incur the expense yearly of making these collections. Those persons who preferred political oblivion—the electoral drones, in fact—should not be the cause of such a great expense to the country annually; but a system of triennial collection of names not already on the rolls was quite as much as those negligent voters should ask the country to expend money upon. Something should be done for those people who did not care to take upon themselves the trouble of enrolling their names; and therefore, whilst anxious to reduce the expense, they should not obliterate the duty of making collections. He concurred with the establishment of quarterly courts. The latter part of clause 8, as proposed by the hon. member for Blackall, referred to seven questions. A justice of the peace who was bound to put these questions before registering the name, might not have a copy of the Act with him;—in fact, applicant or justice would be bound to carry a copy of the Act for reference. Much trouble would occur in centres of population, but it would be worse in the outside districts, where copies of the Act could not be obtained so easily; in fact, the clause was cumbrous and would be inconvenient in its working. Again, at the end of the same section, it was provided that no claim should be rejected for informality unless reasonable proof be given;—well, if a person took the trouble to make out a notice and made a solemn declaration that it was correct, no court should have a right to reject that claim, unless on proof of similar standing to that submitted by the applicant himself. He should support the establishment of quarterly courts, and oppose the abolition of collection.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) had lost sight of the fact that by the present law persons who wished to get their names on the roll could apply personally or by agents, and it was a fact that nine-tenths of the names put on the rolls last year were by agents. Those were names of persons who were not apathetic in the matter, but who either had not time to attend to it or who did not think of it at the right time.

Mr. WALSH explained that, when addressing the Committee previously, he had overlooked clause 8. He saw by it, however, that in the case of wardens on the goldfields there would be no difficulty in their taking declarations made by miners, so that that clause would meet the wants of electors in his district.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was very unfortunate that such an important change as was now proposed should have been brought on for discussion without proper notice. The issue was whether they should correct the present incomplete system or abolish it altogether, and substitute one which made it much harder on the elector. It was not the duty of wardens or police magistrates to go about the country collecting votes for registration. It was a duty not contemplated by the Bill, and very strong arguments could be adduced why they should not do it. One of the results would be that they would be accused of only collecting the names of those electors

who they knew were inclined to their particular way of thinking. There was a defect in the present system, because under it names were frequently left off the rolls, but the amendment would not affect that. It was an old maxim that Parliament was always supposed, when it amended a law to consider first the grievance to be amended. If the Committee would only consider the grievance here, they would see that the hon. member for Blackall proposed not to amend the grievance of collectors leaving some names off the old rolls and not putting them on the new ones, but to let them leave them all off. That was no remedy. The Colonial Secretary proposed a proper remedy himself—to take the old rolls and the names in them as a basis. The system of the hon. member for Blackall was not as if it was a new and untried one; it was one which had already been found wanting. Some hon. members actually seemed to speak of the electors as if they were a set of pestilent fellows that Parliament ought always to be legislating against; but there had no good reason been given why obstacles should be thrown in their way. The amendment tended towards the disfranchisement of the population, and therefore every member who had the interests of the populous communities at heart should do his utmost to resist any such change as was proposed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that on the second reading of the Bill the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) had opposed it strongly, and now he said that the Bill was perfection itself. He (Mr. Palmer) felt overwhelmed by the compliment, but he might add that their object was to make the best Bill they could for the country, and in the second reading the House seemed to be inclined to revert to the system under the Act of 1872, minus the electors' rights. It had been said over and over again that it was a pity they could not revert to the old system of voters registering themselves, and he gathered, therefore, that the feeling of the majority was to allow voters to register themselves. As for its being a party question, the object of the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) appeared to be to make it one. Hon. members on the other side even had said they approved of the amendment; but he had not given up the Bill he originally brought in, for if a majority of the Committee did not agree with the amendment he (Mr. Palmer) should go back to his old Bill, knowing that it would be a better system than that at present in force. Where the hardship could be of allowing a man to register himself he could not see, and it was a notorious fact that, under the Act of 1872, the electoral rolls were very much larger in proportion than they had ever been previously. He believed the amendment would prove better for the colony than the Bill he first introduced, and, as the hon. member intended to test the feeling of the Committee by a division, the remainder of the amendments would, if this one was carried, go with it.

The PREMIER said that, if there was any speech which had been made tending to make this a party question, the hon. leader of the Opposition had made it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had not said it was a party question; but that he hoped it would not be regarded as such.

The PREMIER would accept it in that way;—an Election Bill should not be a party question. The Act of 1872 embodied exactly the same principles as the amendment, that it lay with the elector to put himself on the roll. What had been the result of that Bill being carried into effect?—that Mr. Palmer was put out of power and the present Opposition came in. That Act was replaced by an Act brought in by Mr. Macalister, in which the electoral system now in force was introduced, and the electoral rolls were obtained at the expense of the country. The result of that Act was—and they were the only House elected under it—a large majority against the very party which framed it. The leader of the Opposition tried to mislead the House when he said that hon. members did not understand the point at issue. The question was, as had been said, why should the drones be forced at a great expense to get their names on the electoral rolls at the expense of men who valued the franchise, and who would go to the trouble of getting their names put on? The compilation of a roll at the expense of the State would cost £5,000 or £6,000 a year, and he (the Premier) did not think it was worth £1,000. The leader of the Opposition had led the Committee away from the real point at issue, which was, not whether they could get rid of the evil that the collectors did not make the old rolls the basis of the new ones, but whether they could not obtain by voluntary action as good a roll as would, under the present system, cost the country £5,000 or £6,000 a-year.

Mr. BAYNES said that, in spite of all that had been said by the leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Enoggera, that a large number of persons would be disfranchised by this amendment, he contended that no man had a right to the privilege of voting who would not take the trouble to see that his name was on the register, more especially as, by clause 8, facilities were given him to make a declaration before a justice of the peace.

Mr. LOW said that, in clause 8, he should move that the words "or managers and superintendents" be inserted after the words "justice of the peace." If that was not done one-third of his electorate would be disfranchised, and he would not stand that.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that was exactly what this amendment would come to. Nobody would get his name upon the roll unless he had some friendly justice to put it there. This system of requiring voters to register themselves had proved a great failure, and he would most emphatically protest against its being considered that nobody had a right to a vote unless he was fortunate enough to reside close to a magistrate or a police court so that he could register without expense to himself. Men who lived beyond that distance must stop off, and, no doubt, hon. members on the other side would rather prefer that they did stop off.

Mr. BAILEY said the system of collectors had been tried and had failed. When the responsibility was divided between the voter and the collector, the voter had the privilege of supposing that the collector would put his name on the roll, and in thousands of cases it was found, when too late, that the collector had done nothing of the sort. It was a voter's duty to see that his name was put upon the roll, and if it was made compulsory he would take it upon himself right willingly. Then, again, a Liberal Association had recently been started in Brisbane, and he hoped soon to see them all over the colony—they would take care that all liberal voters had the privilege which the leader of the Opposition said was their right. He hoped this amendment would be carried, as he believed the present system was bad in many respects. The responsibility would then be put in its proper place—namely, on the shoulders of the voters, who would most certainly not shirk it.

Mr. LOW said he had forgotten to mention that it was impossible to get magistrates to go long distances, and it was absurd to think they would travel forty or fifty miles to enable a man to register a vote. For that reason, he hoped the words he had suggested would be inserted in the 8th clause.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he had never seen the leader of the Opposition in a denser fog than he appeared to be on this question. That hon. gentleman's remedies for present grievances were, first, to make the old roll the basis of the new one—which nobody would dispute; secondly, to see that the collectors did their duty; and third, that, if the collectors failed in their duty, voters could put down their own names. But the fatal defect of these remedies was that, generally speaking, a man did not know his name had been omitted until it was too late. If there were no collectors men would themselves look after registration, for they did not keep dogs and bark themselves, and if a man had a servant the employer would not wash up the plates and dishes. There were three other evils which the hon. gentleman had not touched upon—the greatest of these was personation, for which the hon. member for Enoggera said there was no remedy, but for which he (Mr. O'Sullivan) affirmed there was a remedy. The next evil was packed benches. Would the hon. gentleman say that such a thing had never been heard of in connection with the compilation of the electoral rolls? If it was impossible to stop personation, it was quite possible to stop packed benches. Did the hon. member know of a magistrate who was also the registrar for births, deaths, and marriages, and who was hired by a party to go down to the court-house with the secrets of his registry office to enable him to disfranchise the electors of Ipswich?

Mr. HENDREN said that what the hon. member stated was the reverse of true. The hon. gentleman had a terrible grievance about the Ipswich elections, but it was well known that magistrates could not be got to sit on the bench day after day. When he had acted as returning officer, the hon. member had given him a good deal of trouble. As to bringing secrets to the revision court, there were no secrets in the office of registrar of births, deaths, and marriages—it was an open office. What he had done was perfectly justified by the fact that 400 bogus votes were brought forward, and he had stopped them.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. gentleman, as an auctioneer, had written to parties asking how much they would take for their pieces of land. Being hard pressed, some offered to sell for £80 or £90 what had cost them £300; and the hon. gentleman brought the replies forward to show that their properties were not worth £100. On another occasion, when the contest was a very close one, the hon. gentleman gave to sixteen men, whom he knew to be plumpers for him (Mr. O'Sullivan), unsigned papers, and then rejected the votes as informal.

Mr. HENDREN said he could not allow such statements to go uncontradicted, as there was not a word of truth in them.

Mr. KINGSFORD said, if hon. members were going to wash their dirty linen in the House, it would be better to adjourn than go on wasting time.

Mr. REA said it was not right that the affairs of Ipswich should monopolise the time of the House, night after night. He would protest against the reintroduction of the Act of 1872 under any pretext, and he objected that these amendments in reality formed a new Bill. Unfortunately, in this colony there was only one party who, having great interests at stake, could afford to see that all on their side were registered. Nothing would have been heard about these amendments if he had not proposed his amendment, that any

man might have his name put on the roll within three weeks of recording his vote. He tested this matter at the last Rockhampton election, and every man said the remedy he proposed was the only one for having electors placed on a fair footing. No man would then neglect his privilege, but at present he never got the opportunity;—when the period for an election arrived it was too late to have one's name enrolled if it was omitted. It was not at a distance of time, when no excitement existed, to test people's sincerity as to whether they valued the franchise. He would vote for the whole of the amendments if the one he was ready to propose were agreed to.

Mr. BAILEY said that, during the last election for Wide Bay, men had ridden from twenty to thirty miles—one man had travelled fifty miles—to record their votes; but to their great surprise they found that their names were not on the roll, notwithstanding that they had been residing for many years in the district and had property in it. The responsibility rested with the collectors who, as usual, had not done their duty; and it was an unfortunate circumstance that often the most intelligent men were those who were disfranchised, making it appear as if there were almost a conspiracy to leave their names off. Let voters have the full responsibility of seeing that their names were enrolled, and have every opportunity to do so. As to the amendment of the hon. member, Mr. Rea, he should support it if it came to a division; he should support any amendment which would allow voters themselves to register. He could not agree with the remarks made a little while ago by the hon. member, Mr. Kingsford. A charge had been levelled against the hon. member, Mr. Hendren, which was little short of felony. He regretted that such an accusation should be made, and he should regret very much more if the hon. member's mouth were closed against answering it.

Mr. HENDREN said he denied every statement made by the hon. member, Mr. O'Sullivan, and challenged him to prove them; but he would admit that he went as a citizen or elector to prevent forty names, which were perfect dummies, being placed on the roll. With reference to his accusation about the election, he (Mr. Hendren) had acted as returning-officer for seventeen years. He remembered that some fourteen years ago, the hon. member kept him and the scrutineers at the polling-booth until nine o'clock at night counting the ballot-papers time after time. There were fourteen informal votes—all having his signature to them—and the hon. member claimed these as having been given by supporters of his; he did not say that he had disfranchised them, and because he would not give the votes to him the hon. member now made this bold, untrue accusation. The clerk of the House could produce the ballot-papers, and it could be seen whether every one of the returns that he made was not accurate. He challenged inquiry.

Mr. BEOR said it seemed to be admitted by everybody that the old rolls ought to be preserved. If they were going to do that, was it worth while to incur the expense of employing collectors? The leader of the Opposition said that nobody would come in ten miles to register, and possibly that might be true if a voter had to register over and over again; but, supposing that the name, when once on the roll, were to remain as long as the party remained in the district, it would be different. The leader of the Opposition also said that the old roll should be preserved; that collectors should be sent round; and, if any names were omitted, the parties should have the opportunity of putting them on the roll;—but the persons affected would not know that they had been omitted until it was too late. It had probably never occurred to the hon. gentleman that, in some electorates, such as Bowen, a man might have to ride 200 miles to see whether his name was on the roll. He quite agreed with the hon. member (Mr. Bailey), that when people knew it was their business to register they would see to it; now it was not their business, and the result was that the work was left to the collector, and was done badly.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) had no doubt that the hon. member (Mr. Archer) had brought in the amendment with a view to improving the Bill, and that it was the general wish to have the electoral rolls purged and made clean. They all desired to have purity of election and to do away with double voting, but the amendment would not obviate the difficulty which now existed; on the contrary, the roll would be more likely to be packed under the amendment than under the original Bill. He would much prefer a packed bench to a packed roll. Something had been said of Ipswich, but he would maintain that the bench there was quite as pure as any other in the colony, and he could further say that when the electoral rolls had to be revised it was a very difficult thing to get a bench in Ipswich. To revise the very roll for which fifty names were refused it was hard to get a bench. In reference to those fifty names, it was well known that they were brought in on the last day of the revision court, that they were all in the handwriting of one man, and that this was the reason why they had been rejected, and it was a very good one. He believed that the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) had something to complain of in the number of names that had been left off, but he did not believe that there was any design to omit names purposely, for both Liberals and Conservatives had been left

off. He did not believe in any justice being a collector. He was not of opinion that the amendment would be an improvement on the original motion, and should therefore oppose it.

Mr. MILES said it had been stated that this was a Conservative measure, but it was nothing of the kind. The amendment of the hon. member for Blackall proposed that there should be three revision courts in the year, the first to be held on the first Tuesday in January, and, supposing an elector had not been six months' in the district when the first revision court was held, he might get his name on the roll at the second revision court, so that he would be put on six months earlier than he otherwise would. He was induced to support the measure, because, during the late polling at Warwick, six men who had been living near that town for years came in to record their votes and found that their names were not on the roll, and they all confessed that it would be better if the responsibility of seeing that their names were on the roll was thrown upon themselves. Besides that, should the Bill become law, it would not be necessary to revise the rolls every year, but only to put on new names, as the old rolls would be the basis. It was the fact of the old rolls being thrown aside and new ones being collected that had led to so many names being left off.

Mr. GRIMES moved—That the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not know whether they were prepared to come to a division to-night. Under ordinary circumstances it might be desirable to do so, but several members had left that side of the House, so that the Government would probably have a larger majority than they otherwise would. He did not know whether it was worth while pressing a division for the sake of a temporary advantage of that kind.

The PREMIER said, surely that was no reason why they should stop business at that hour. They had been sitting all night to pass one clause; the Bill had been fully discussed; and now the hon. member asked them not to go to a division because two or three members had gone home.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not ask anything of the kind. He said that if a division was taken to-night the Government would get a temporary advantage. As to the discussion being on one clause, it was on a most important change of policy—much more important than the Bill itself.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member's remarks might have some force if there was likely to be a close division, but if he had counted heads he would see that the members who had gone to Ipswich to their comfortable beds would make no difference whatever in the division. There was a clear majority in favor of the motion.

Question—That the Chairman leave the chair and report progress—put and negatived.

Mr. BEATTIE was sorry that the Colonial Secretary had acceded to the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall. He believed the Colonial Secretary had applied the correct remedy for improving the electoral rolls by the clause he introduced at first, because the great defect in the present Act was that the old rolls were not taken as a basis of the new ones. He did not consider the money paid to collectors a loss to the country; but, at the same time, he did not think it was necessary that it should cost any such amount as had been stated. He knew that, when the present Act was passed, the Colonial Secretary objected to the police as collectors; but they all knew that the police were as good collectors as anyone else if they were paid for the extra labour, as he thought they ought to have been. A good deal of capital had been made out of the omissions of names from the rolls in various districts; and, taking his own electorate, he would point out that the way the omissions had taken place was this: There were a great many small freeholders there, and, when the collector called at a place, if there was no one there he did not ask who was the owner. That was one reason; another was because, in some districts, the clerks of petty sessions had not directed the collectors to take the old rolls as the basis of the new ones in accordance with the instructions given them from the Colonial Secretary's Department. He believed the 5th and 6th clauses of the Bill would be of great advantage in the collection of the rolls, and he should give them his hearty support. He did not see any advantage in the clauses proposed by Mr. Archer, because, although a man might go to the registration court and register his name, he would not be put on the roll until October, and that was already provided by the Bill. Besides, how were selectors living at a distance from a justice of the peace to get their names on the roll? He could not understand how country members could support such an amendment. He should vote for the original clause.

Mr. GRIMES said, that whatever the cost of collecting the electoral rolls might be—even if it was £6,000, as had been stated—it was money well spent. He did not consider the amendment any improvement on the clauses of the Bill. The method proposed by it of enabling a man to get his name on the roll was cumbrous; and perhaps at the very last minute, after going through a great many forms, a man would find that he had been more deceived than

he could be under the existing system, especially if collectors were appointed who took the old rolls as a basis and did not remove any names.

Question—That the new clause follow clause 4 of the Bill—put.

The Committee divided:—

AYES, 25.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Perkins, Weld-Blundell, Macrossan, Archer, Morehead, Lalor, Norton, Baynes, Amhurst, Stevens, O'Sullivan, Walsh, H. W. Palmer, Beor, Persse, Lumley-Hill, Stevenson, Sheaffe, Bailey, Meston, Swanwick, Hamilton, and Miles.

NOES, 16.

Messrs. Griffith, Dickson, McLean, Garrick, Paterson, Rutledge, Rea, Grimes, Beattie, Low, Stubley, Horwitz, Groom, Kates, Kingsford, and Douglas.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the House resumed, and the Chairman reported progress and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes past 11 o'clock.