Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 9 JULY 1879

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 9 *July*, 1879.

Question.—Formal Motion.—Additional Sitting Day.—Messages from the Legislative Council.—Motion for Adjournment.—Acting Chairman of Committees.—Electoral Rolls Bill—committee.

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

QUESTION.

Mr. McLEAN asked the Minister for Works—

Is it true that an inspector under the Colonial Architect, some time ago, condemned 22,000 bricks at Toowoomba, and that since that inspector was dismissed the condemned bricks are now being used in a Government contract?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) replied—

The inspector condemned 12,000 bricks, and they were removed from the site of the building by order of the Colonial Architect. I am not aware that the condemned bricks are now being used in any Government contract, but will cause inquiry to be made.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. DICKSON—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a return showing—

1. The total cost of the Mackay Embankment to date.

2. The amount of expenditure incurred on groins and other channel improvements in the Pioneer River.

3. The amount, if any, received by Government for wharfage since the Embankment was constructed.

4. The date of sale of river-frontage allotments in sections 31, 36, 41, 46, and 50, town of Mackay, with names of Crown grantees, and respective amounts of purchase money paid therefor.

5. Copies of all correspondence and documents forwarded to the Colonial Treasurer, either by the Municipal Council of Mackay or other persons, in relation to the resumption by Government of the water-frontage allotments before mentioned.

6. The amount of tonnage entered inwards and outwards at the port of Mackay for the twelve months ended 30th June, 1879.

ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

The PREMIER (Mr McIlwraith) moved—

That for the remainder of the session this House will meet for despatch of business at 3 o'clock p.m. on Mondays, in addition to the other days provided by Sessional Order; and that on that day Government business take precedence of all other business.

In doing so he said he must refer to the progress of business made during the present session, which he attributed not to the obstruction of the Opposition, but to the increased number of members in the House and to the determination of so many to speak upon every matter which came under discussion. This was the first time that the House had had so many as fifty-five members in it, and there had never been so much talking on the various Bills as in this Parliament. The consequence was that *Hansard* had already run up to a very respectable size for an ordinary session, although very little business had been done up to the present time. It was absolutely necessary to take some steps to expedite the Government business, if they expected to get the business over in a reasonable time, and finish the session; but at the present rate of progress it seemed very much as if they might go on for another seven or eight months. It was therefore with the object of pressing on the Government business in the House, and relieving the country members of a long attendance, that he had brought forward the motion. Other suggestions had been made to him for gaining more time for the public business, and one by the leader of the Opposition, that they should take Friday evening. The objection, however, to that was, that the Government business would then be disjointed: but, if any arrangement could be made by which three consecutive days for the Government business could be secured, Government would not offer any objection in order to

get those three days. It would, therefore, he believed, be better to take Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday for Government business, and leave the private business for Thursdays. He was quite aware that, by making Monday a Government day he would inflict inconvenience on some members in business in town; but if those hon. members would but consider the sacrifice to which country members were put by a continuous attendance, they would see that the little inconvenience they were put to in attending an extra day in the House was nothing compared to the inconvenience which attached to members who came from a distance. What he proposed was the only way to give them an opportunity to get through their business in a reasonable time. He had also to refer to a prospective arrangement that the business of the House should be concluded while the Sydney Exhibition was in progress, and he would like to get through the business, so as to enable hon. members to go down there; it was a national object, and if they could do anything to further it, it would be advisable. However, his principal object was to enable the country members to attend a session of a reasonable length, and, next, to get through the necessary business in something like a reasonable time.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said that the motion on this occasion had been made rather early in the session. Two or three years previously a similar suggestion was made by the present Opposition when in power, and there did not seem any objection then to the protraction of the session to October or November. It was curious how their opinions had changed now, and that their demand was that they should get through the business as soon as possible. If he might be allowed to express his own opinion, he could give a different reason for the protraction of the session: Government did not consider their business before they brought it into the House. Were they to mature their measures before bringing them down, very much less discussion would take place on them; but the fact was, their measures were crude and ill-digested. If on the second reading of a Bill they had produced measures containing plain principles which could be argued they would have got on much faster, but instead of that they had had Bills in which the principle had not been enunciated, or if it was it was so curiously concealed that it took a long debate to discover what the Bill really meant. That was the real reason of the delay in the business, and Government could not, therefore, lay any blame on hon. members of the House or complain that there was additional talking power. So far as he could see, there never was a more anxious desire to get on with the business; and if the Government would make up their minds as to what they really meant to do, then they could get on a good deal faster. He was sorry the Government proposed Monday as the additional day. The only reason which had been given in favour of it was, that by utilising Monday the Government business would not be disjointed. So far as he was able to judge, it would be rather a relief to members of the Government if their business was broken. Three days' Government business in succession would be a great strain. In 1872 they had a long session protracted by circumstances not since repeated, and they sat towards the end of it on Friday afternoons, and did a great deal of work. Both sides of the House were willing, an arrangement was come to by mutual consent, and they did their best to assist in getting through the Government business. With respect to the present motion, he said that it would be very inconvenient to several members of the Opposition to attend on Mondays. He was aware Government were strong enough to carry any motion before them, but in such matters they should come to a mutual understanding, else they could not expect hearty good-will and co-operation on the part of members of the Opposition. They were desirous of getting through the business, but it was extremely inconvenient for some members of the Opposition to attend on Mondays. It meant that they would have only Saturday for themselves, because Monday would be broken in starting for and reaching Brisbane, and Parliamentary business would prevent their reaching home again before Friday night. If Monday sittings were agreed to, his side of the House could not be depended on to assist in the despatch of business as they otherwise would; but if the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government would take Friday, then the other side of the House would do their best. He was quite willing to follow the course adopted in 1872, which appeared a much more convenient course than the one now proposed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said that the leader of the Opposition entirely forgot that the House met now under very different circumstances than ever it did before. There was no use denying that the talking power of the House had been increased very materially, and it had been increased by many members who formerly never thought of addressing the House on the second reading of a Bill, but left it to the principal members on either side. Now they invariably spoke, and seemed to think nothing could be done unless everybody spoke. A Bill used to be passed without very many members taking part in the discussion; but now it was the rule for every one to speak, particularly the young members of the Opposition, and

treat the House to enormously long speeches, which would not be justified even in the leaders of the Government or of the Opposition. The hon. member (Mr. Griffith) also forgot the convenience of the members on the Government side of the House, who had not only no Friday and Saturday for their own business, but who had absolutely no day at all, for they were obliged to keep in town at considerable expense and inconvenience to themselves. They came from a considerable distance, and there was no parallel whatever between them and the members whose attendance was really a matter of recreation, and who, having finished their business by half-past 3, came to the House and spent a very pleasant afternoon. As to the project for meeting on Fridays, the hon. gentleman knew well that if there was a break in the Government business owing to the private work coming in on Thursday, the chances were ten to one that there would be no House on Friday. Did the hon. member, who knew what were the duties of a Minister, think they were personally anxious for an extra day? They were hard worked enough, in conscience, as it was. And what would the Printing Office do when, even with the present sittings, they were having no end of voluminous returns printed which would never be read by twenty persons? He would instance the return granted, to-day, to the hon. member for Enoggera, about the expenditure at Mackay;—with the exception of that hon. member, and three or four others who took some interest in the expenditure of public money, hardly a soul would look at it, and yet the country was put to a great expense, and the Government Printing Office to much trouble, in getting it out. He was authorised by the Premier to say that, although hon. members on the Government side considered Monday the most convenient day, yet he would accept Friday, if the House would give him three consecutive days for Government business. The Premier would yield to that extent, but no further.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said there seemed to be a general willingness to give up three days to the Government, and it was simply a question whether the extra day should be Monday or Friday. It was simply a question, therefore, which of those days was the more convenient. Monday had never yet been adopted as a sitting day, and experience testified in favour of Friday. For himself he was willing to come on either day, but he would point out that the convenience of hon. members on this side must to some extent be considered. The mere question of a break in the Government business by the intervening Thursday was hardly an argument against a Friday's sitting. There would certainly be more chance of making a House on Friday than on Monday, as there were some members who could not possibly attend on that day. The question, therefore, resolved itself into a calculation of probabilities as to the making of a House, and he was himself inclined to think that Friday would be the better day of the two.

Mr. DICKSON said that during the last Parliament a motion of this kind was never contemplated until the Estimates came under consideration, but it was as yet early in the session, and the Colonial Treasurer had not informed the House of his intention to proceed with the Estimates; until then the Government ought to have refrained from asking for an extra day. He demurred to the remarks of the Colonial Secretary, that many members came here simply to enjoy an afternoon's recreation, because most of those to whom the remark was addressed came here at great inconvenience, with the sole object of assisting to pass measures beneficial to the country. He also took exception to the hon. gentleman's remarks on the return he had asked for. That was a return which ought to have been rendered unnecessary by the Government anticipating it, and laying on the table such information as would be necessary for the debate on the large question introduced by the hon. member for Bowen. Without such return that particular question would be almost incomprehensible to a number of hon. members. As to the question under discussion, the selection of Monday would absolutely exclude the members for the Darling Downs from attending. He did not say this at haphazard. He had spoken to the Downs members on the subject, and they were all agreed that Friday would be more convenient to them than Monday. There was no reason why Friday should not be accepted by the Government, as in previous sessions. During one session Monday sittings were attempted, but the attempt proved an entire failure; and there was no likelihood of its succeeding now. The Government party would have, to a great extent, to form the House, and they would not have the assistance of a large number of members who could not attend on that day. He took exception to the remarks frequently made by members of the Government upon the part taken in debates by young members. He considered that the opinions of young members were quite as valuable as those of more mature ones, for in nearly every case they were not young in political education, although accident had prevented their entering the Chamber earlier. It had been frequently said by members of the Government that the debates this session had been largely protracted owing to the increased debating power caused by the

accession of so large a number of young members. He congratulated the House on possessing members who had so largely augmented the deliberative power of the Chamber, and had rendered such valuable contributions to the discussions on the several subjects brought forward. In considering these questions it must be borne in mind that, by giving up Friday to the Government, private members were surrendering a morning sitting; and he thought the Government might gracefully accede to the wishes and personal convenience of a large number of members on this matter.

Mr. SCOTT said the Monday sittings alluded to by the last speaker could hardly be called a failure; but even if such was the case, the reason for it was very simple. The House, at that time, was sitting on five days in the week—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; and if Monday sittings were a failure, it was simply because hon. members were utterly tired out on that day.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said he was glad to find that the Premier was willing to accept Friday if he could have three consecutive days for Government business. There was no need for further discussion on the matter, because, by accepting Friday, the Government would have exactly what they desired; for Friday, Tuesday, and Wednesday would be three consecutive Government days. Personally he was willing to sit on either Mondays or Fridays, but the hon. members for the Downs would be unable to attend on Mondays; and they ought not to be debarred from attending on sitting days. He hoped the Government would accept Friday instead of Monday.

Mr. STEVENSON said a great deal of consideration seemed to be given to the Darling Downs members, while none was given to members who had to stay here altogether, and who had nothing to do on days when the House was not sitting. He was in favour of sitting on Monday, because, then, there would be a break of two days at the end of the week, which would be far more convenient than a day at the beginning and another at the end. There was nothing to prevent the Darling Downs members attending on Mondays, the same as on Tuesdays. The only members who might be prevented from attending on that day were the hon. member for Dalby, and the member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) if he went up to his station. There were several supporters of the Government who, after a certain time, must go away, and it would be unfair to their constituents to be unrepresented during a portion of the session. Amongst others he might mention the hon. members for Gregory, Port Curtis, Balonne, Maranoa, Burke, and Blackall, as well as himself, who would be compelled to leave Brisbane after a certain time. They, too, ought to be considered in this matter, and their unanimous opinion was that Monday was by far the better day of the two. Friday sittings had never been a success, for either there was no quorum, or business was rushed through without discussion. He hoped the Premier would stick to his motion, and make Monday the sitting day.

Mr. MILES said that, through the blundering, cheese-paring policy of the Minister for Works in the train arrangements from Dalby, it would be utterly impossible for him to attend on Mondays. So long as the Government had three days a week, he failed to see what difference it would make whether they took Monday or Friday. It would be well for the Government to accept Friday. When a similar motion was before the House a session or two ago, the present Colonial Secretary said he thought Monday was the most inconvenient day that could be chosen, and that it would be almost impossible for some of the members to attend on that day, adding that he had no objection to Friday. It was extraordinary that the opinion of the hon. gentleman had veered right round in so short a time. It was evident the Ministry were going to make another blunder, and he would take care they did not do much business if Monday was forced upon the House. The Colonial Secretary had had some experience as to his power in blocking business, and he was prepared to do it again. The Government were, no doubt, extremely anxious to get off to the Sydney Exhibition, but the business of the country was far more important, and he objected to their rushing business through in order to go to the Exhibition. He trusted the Government would accept Fridays; if they did not he would pledge his word that he would put in their way all the impediments he could.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it seemed to have come to this, that the Legislative Assembly was to have a dictator in the person of the junior member for the Darling Downs. If the House did not do a certain thing, or sit on a certain day, that hon. member was going to block business! Would it not be better if the Government were to take the hon. gentleman into consultation before deciding on any course they might pursue? If the hon. member, instead of dictating, would calmly argue the question, he might perhaps be able to show cause why the House should not sit on Monday. For his own part he (Mr. Morehead) considered that Monday was the more convenient day of the two. Both sides seemed agreed that an extra day should be given to the Government, and it did not come with a very good grace from the junior member for the Darling Downs, that if the House decided on a certain day he should obstruct. Speaking as a man of business in the town, he should prefer Monday to

Friday, as being the more convenient of the two. By that arrangement hon. members would have finality: they would know they could have Friday and Saturday to themselves, and that was much better than having two broken days, Monday and Saturday, to do business on. He would appeal to any business man to bear him out, and they were simply wrangling about nothing. He failed to see how the Darling Downs members would be in any way injured by such an arrangement. Even if they were put to some little inconvenience, was the colony to be ruled by the Darling Downs? Was every other representative to put his own convenience aside for the convenience of the Darling Downs members? There were members who came much further than the Darling Downs, and who had far less facilities for getting backwards and forwards than the Downs members had. Had it come to this, that they were to be ruled by Darling Downs and Ipswich? He knew, however, that the threat of the junior member for the Darling Downs would not meet with favour from the other side. He knew that hon. member's bull-dog pertinacity, but even that could be defeated.

Mr. MILES: I can do it myself.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member reminded him of the ancient hero who fluttered the Volscians. He was as audacious, though not as capable, as Coriolanus; and no doubt he would like to say—"Alone I did it!" He should very much like to see the hon. member do it. He trusted the good sense on that side of the House would not allow the hon. member—obstinate as he was—to narrow down the conflict in the way he had indicated. He appeared to be ruled solely by selfish motives, whereas the Government were actuated by the desire to fix a suitable day to enable them to carry on the business of the country. If Friday were considered by the majority of hon. members to be the better day he (Mr. Morehead) was quite willing to bow to the decision of the House, but in any case he trusted the hon. member for Darling Downs would find few supporters to assist him in obstructing the business because the day selected did not meet his approval.

Mr. PATERSON thought the Government were entitled to an extra day, judging by the progress that had been made in the business since the session began. Some reference had been made to dictation from hon. members on that (Opposition) side, but he trusted the matter would be considered by hon. members without any such thought in their minds. If hon. members were willing to accord to the Government an extra day they should be consulted as to the day most convenient to the majority. The hon. member for the Mitchell was in favour of Monday, and appealed to business men as to the advantage of that day as against Friday. As a business man, he (Mr. Paterson) had not the slightest hesitation in saying that Monday would be highly inconvenient to himself personally. He might say at once that he did not think he could possibly attend one Monday out of six—and on the sixth only at great inconvenience and very great personal loss. Courtesy should be extended to hon. members on both sides, and the convenience of business men should be consulted as well as the desire of those who had come long distances, seeing that they were willing to co-operate in yielding an extra day. Although Friday also would be an inconvenient day for him to attend, he should be very happy, as some more time must be given, to assent to the extra day sought.

Mr. AMHURST said it was agreed that they should do all they could to meet the convenience of hon. members, and he, as a northern member, wished to point out the inconvenience many hon. members under similar circumstances with himself would be put to in attending on Fridays. The mails from the north arrived on Thursday, or early on Friday morning, and the return mail left on the Saturday morning. Therefore, hon. members having correspondence with the North would wish to have Friday to answer letters. Some hon. members might say that Monday would be still more inconvenient to them, and he should not say, at present, how he would vote on the question.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said, as the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) had said he would obstruct business, and that he could not attend on Mondays, it would be a good plan to decide for that day, and if the hon member would promise to remain away they might sit on Saturdays and Sundays as well. He hoped hon. members on both sides would show a certain amount of consideration to hon. members who came from a distance. A great deal had been said about the trouble and inconvenience sustained by hon. members from the Darling Downs and others, but they had not one-third or one-tenth of the inconvenience suffered by men who came from the north of the colony. Such hon. members came from long distances, lived here at considerable expense to themselves, and, when not engaged in public duties, sought relaxation and amusement by going to the Downs. They were anxious to get on with the business, but most of the hon. members on the other side could spend their spare time in attending to their own personal business and go to their own homes comfortably enough. With reference to the mails, hon. members from the north liked to have Friday to themselves to read and answer letters. It had been stated that the Government had changed their line, as they were not for-

merly in favour of sitting on Mondays. The fact was, that he some time ago mooted the idea of having three Government days a week, and the Government then did not care about having three days. However, seeing that so many hon. members, coming from a long distance, found great inconvenience in attending, the Government, in deference to them—many of whom were new members—consented to sit three days a week to get through their business.

Mr. KINGSFORD could not offer to assist the hon. member for Darling Downs in obstructing, as he would not make a blockhead of himself. He desired as much as any hon. member to proceed with the business of the country, and if the House decided to sit on Monday he should be there, or on Friday or Saturday. This question might easily be settled by a little concession on each side. Granting that it was necessary to have three unbroken days for Government business, would it not be better to make Tuesday the private night, and give Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for Government business? That arrangement would obviate the objection to sitting on Monday, and also the undesirability of dividing Government business.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that most of the hon. members who had spoken seemed to ignore the alternative proposition made by the Colonial Secretary, who said that the Premier was quite willing to accept Thursday instead of Monday, and allow Friday to be devoted to private business. All who had spoken seemed to look upon Friday as a very bad day for business, and none seemed willing to take it up as the private business day. Why should not the convenience of the Government be considered as well as the convenience of those who objected to Friday for private business, or as the convenience of hon. members from the Darling Downs? Those hon. members were very highly favoured in comparison with hon. members from a greater distance, and, in many cases, with those from a shorter distance. They had a railway every inch of the way from their own homes to Brisbane, whilst hon. members from other parts had to find their way down at their own expense. It came, therefore, with a very bad grace from the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) to talk about obstructing the business of the House simply because Monday was inconvenient for him. If every hon. member who was inconvenienced obstructed the business there would be no such thing as carrying on business at all. He knew the hon. member could obstruct, because he had seen him do so for hours and gain his point at last; but he hoped the hon. member would not carry out his threats. There was the alternative proposition before hon. members, and he would point out that during this session all the private business on the paper had generally been cleared off. The Opposition might very well accede to that proposition if they were unwilling to give Monday. With regard to the remarks of the late Colonial Treasurer with reference to the speeches of young members, the hon. gentleman had taken up too hastily what fell from the Colonial Secretary, who did not intend to censure them for making speeches or criticising Bills. He intended to convey that they spoke upon every subject, and that some made very long speeches. It was very well understood that the leading members—even the members of the Government — did not speak upon every question. They spoke generally only upon Bills they thoroughly understood, or upon some point about which they wished to enlighten the House. He knew as well as the hon. member that many young members had proved themselves an acquisition and a credit to the House, and he believed that others would show themselves to be so before the Parliament terminated. They would not, he hoped, take to themselves the remarks that fell from the Colonial Secretary, which were not intended in any offensive way whatever. The House might now come to a decision as to whether Monday should be a sitting day, or whether Friday should be devoted to private business. The leader of the Opposition said "No," and had, he supposed, like the hon. member for Darling Downs, put his foot down and would not take it up again. He hoped they would see fit to alter their minds, because it would be very undesirable to proceed to a system of obstruction simply because a majority of the House decided upon doing any particular thing. The convenience of individual members or of groups of members must give way to the desire of the whole House. The hon. member for Darling Downs and the leader of the Opposition would do well to reconsider their decision, and accept with a good grace whatever decision the House might come to. If the House decided to sit on Friday, he (the Minister for Works), like the hon. member for South Brisbane, should accept the decision; but he hoped the House would not, because such a decision would be highly inconvenient to the Government, and would not contribute to the convenience of hon. members generally.

Mr. MCLEAN said the argument used by the Premier in introducing the motion was, that he wished to expedite business as much as possible. That would naturally lead the House to suppose that business was much more in arrear than on previous occasions, but such was not the case. His experience had been that in former sessions the Government had been met with direct votes of want of confidence—sometimes

two in one session—causing long debates. The business this session was more forward than at corresponding times during the last four or five sessions. A motion similar to this was introduced in 1876, but then it was not introduced within a few weeks of the opening of the session, the notice not having been given until September 13th, after the House had been in session four months. Several Bills were now on the paper which did not require much discussion, and others had occupied a long time, simply because they were antagonistic to the best interests of the colony, and therefore the constituents expected to hear the voice of their representatives on such matters. He did not believe any Bills had been introduced by any Government aiming so much at the people of the colony as the Bills introduced by the Government; and, therefore, while not blaming the Colonial Secretary for his remarks, he thought young members were quite justified in speaking upon those measures. Hon. members on the Government side wished to have their convenience consulted; but they did not consult the convenience of other hon. members. They nearly all lived in Brisbane, or near it, and it made little difference to them whether they came on Monday or Friday. For his own part, he could not come on Monday before 4 o'clock. On several occasions he had assisted the Government to make a House when they could not do so from their own side. It was very evident the Ministry were determined not to consult the Opposition. They had tabled the motion and they meant to carry it, and were not prepared to yield one iota to hon. members of the Opposition. With reference to the time taken up by hon. members, he remembered that during a former session one hon. member took up almost as much time as all the other members together, and they heard little complaint about. As to the Government business being disjointed, it would be rather an advantage to them to have Thursday to prepare their measures for Friday. It was well known that they sometimes came to the House with measures not prepared at all. On a recent occasion the House adjourned shortly after 9 o'clock. To bring the matter to an issue, he would move the omission of the word "Monday" with the view of inserting the word "Friday."

The PREMIER wished to have the ruling of the Speaker as to whether that amendment could be put, as it would clash with the Sessional Order already passed.

The SPEAKER said the Sessional Order referred to contained the words "unless otherwise ordered."

Mr. PERSSE said, when the hon. member (Mr. McLean) said nearly all the hon. members on that side resided in Brisbane he must have laboured under a great mistake, as hardly any of them lived in Brisbane—nearly all of them lived a long way from Brisbane; but to hon. members who did live in Brisbane it was only a pastime to come into the House in the evening and have a debate. He had to ride a hundred miles a week to attend, and although the hon. member for Moreton had taunted him with not coming until 6 o'clock, he found by his experience this afternoon that at twenty minutes to 5 very little business had been done. The Government wanted an extra day, and wished to keep the Government business together. He did not care, personally, whether Monday or Friday was selected, but should assist the Government to get the extra day.

Mr. WALSH said the hon. member for Mackay seemed to think Friday would be an inconvenient day, on account of the northern mails. He had probably as much correspondence as the hon. member; but, after consideration, he thought the letters might be answered before the House met. Looking to the inconvenience that would result to the members for Darling Downs—whom he should be sorry to see absent—he should be glad if the Government could forego their desire to have Monday instead of Friday. With regard to hon. members on that (Ministerial) side residing in Brisbane, no doubt they nearly all temporarily resided in Brisbane, and therefore it did not matter very much to them on which day they attended. It was very desirable that the session should terminate as soon as possible, and he should be glad to see another Government business day added.

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL said he had no very great business to detain him in Brisbane beyond the business of the House, but he intended to stop as long as it lasted, and he was quite prepared to see the hon. member (Mr. Miles) out. Would the hon. member promise not to obstruct, if they gave him Friday? It was a matter of indifference to him which day was agreed to, and, if he could do anything to appease the hon. member for Darling Downs, he should be almost too happy to do it. He almost quivered when he heard the hon. gentleman threaten to obstruct—and all alone, too! He really did not care which day was taken, and should vote with the majority.

Mr. REA would like to know who had obstructed the business of the House hitherto? Who had obstructed it last night? By an innovation upon Parliamentary experience such as had never been known, twenty-nine new amendments had been introduced to a Government Bill by a Government supporter. What was that but obstruction? It was monstrous to throw the blame on the Opposition, when they had sat patiently night after night debating no more important question

than the condition of a sheep's head. The Minister for Mines had said that Ministers always spoke upon matters that they understood. He could quite understand that that was a very proper resolution, because he was quite sure they had not understood one Bill which had yet been brought in. The Government did not understand last night's Bill, nor the Lands Bill, and others before it, that had to be turned upside down before they could be understood. It was the Ministry who had occupied the time of the House. According to the Financial Statement they knew that they would bring innovations into the House which had never been attempted before, and they should therefore have called hon. members together in April; had they done that the House would by this time have got through the extraordinary measures which had been introduced, and which the Ministry did not yet understand. The Opposition had been patient sufferers all this time, and the Government should have Friday and nothing else.

Mr. GARRICK really thought the Ministry should give way. He did not remember any previous session where the Government had asked for an extra day so early, but the Opposition had appreciated the position of the Government, and had agreed to give them another day; they wished it, however, to be Friday instead of Monday, and the Government might fairly concede the point, especially as many of their supporters were indifferent whether Monday or Friday was taken. The Opposition had shown that it was not a matter of indifference, but one of inconvenience to them, and that Friday would suit them better. He was not in the House when the discussion began, but he understood that the Colonial Secretary had made some allusion to young members speaking oftener and longer than usual. It was quite excusable for anybody, whether an old or new member, speaking long with reference to the business that had been brought before the House this session. He did not suppose that in any previous session they had so many Bills of primary importance placed before them in such a short time and in so imperfect and incomplete form. The measures had been misunderstood by those who introduced them, and how, therefore, could it be wondered at that new members had also misunderstood them? Take the Electoral Rolls Bill as an example. At a day's notice merely, hon. members found they had to consider thirty new amendments, which introduced an entirely new principle, and were accepted by the Minister in charge without a murmur — he simply stated that he preferred them to his own Bill; he could have given little consideration to it when he accepted the amendments so readily, and he could hardly wonder at new members discussing them at some length. The next order was the Lands Bill. Many hon. members opposite, and the whole of the Opposition, had objected that matters had been introduced which should not have been. The hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) made such a statement.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: No.

Mr. GARRICK said that hon. members opposite had stated that nothing should have been included in the Bill except the Allora exchange lands; the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) said this, and so did his colleague. The hon. member, who seemed to be difficult to please in the matter of language, also said that the measure as it now stood might cause the introduction of amendments in the land laws generally; and, if it did, he had a pocketful of amendments. Going down the Orders of the Day he noticed there were at least half-a-dozen measures to which the same objections were open. It was rather the fault of the Government than of new or old members that more progress had not been made. It was their fault that they had to ask for an extra day; still, the Opposition were willing to make the concession, but they expected the Government to reciprocate and accept Friday instead of Monday; and the Government would do well to meet them.

The PREMIER said he had made a distinct proposition to the leader of the Opposition that the Government would take Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for their business, and leave Friday for private business, and that offer he would repeat, so that all the arguments against meeting on Monday would not apply to it. It was only reasonable that the Government should ask that all their business days should come together. The Government were as much interested as the Opposition in pushing through private business—in fact, they were more so, having more private members on their side; and if the Government supporters consented to Friday he did not see why the Opposition should object. In addition, he would promise that, should the Opposition accept the motion, and should the private business get pressing, there would be a willingness on the part of the Government to concede, when practicable, an occasional Thursday to forward private business. The hon. member's accusation that the Government were to blame for the lengthy debates had already been fully answered. He had been referring to the debates which took place on the same question in 1872 and 1876, and he found that in 1872 his colleague, the Colonial Secretary, carried Friday, the then Opposition opposing. In 1876 the then Government proposed Monday, and his colleague, as leader of the Opposition, wished to sub-

stitute Friday, but Monday was carried. On each occasion the question was soon disposed of, the debate covering not more than a page of *Hansard*, whereas the present debate would, no doubt, extend over five.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he had no intention of prolonging the debate, but he wished to reply briefly to the member for Moreton, who would insist upon putting words in his mouth that he had never used: he had never known the hon. member to quote him properly. In reply to his statement that it was very hard to find language which would suit him (Mr. O'Sullivan), he would say that the hon. member had used language which would suit nobody, and that he was able to use language which only Biddy Moriarty could utter. His statement that the Colonial Secretary had said that new members had spoken longer than usual looked an absurdity and a contradiction in terms, and he believed that the hon. member himself was wrong, as usual, in the statement.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, with reference to the Premier's offer that the Government should have Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for their business, and give Friday to private members, the hon. gentleman knew very well that he was offering nothing at all. It was much easier for the Government to get a House together than for private members. The Government could get a House whenever they liked; but, if this suggestion were accepted, the result would be that members, after devoting three consecutive days to Government work, would be often unwilling to sit on Friday, and there would be no quorum or the House would adjourn until Tuesday. If the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Kingsford) were acceded to—to let Tuesday be devoted to private business and the three following days to Government work — a satisfactory arrangement would be come to. On referring to the debate in 1876, he found that the present Premier said that, as regarded the convenience of members and the duties of the officers of the House, Monday would be a most objectionable day, and the Colonial Secretary used a similar argument, but mentioned that, personally, he did not care whether the House sat on Monday or Friday. Nearly all the members opposite resided in Brisbane whilst the session lasted, and several of them had admitted that it was practically a matter of indifference to them whether Monday or Friday was the extra day; but to one-half of the Opposition it would be a matter of great personal inconvenience to attend on Monday. The Government would gain more by conciliation than by attempting to force upon the Opposition an extra sitting day that would be extremely inconvenient. He did not think the Premier was desirous of carrying matters with a high hand, and he hoped an amicable understanding would be arrived at. For the last seven years he did not believe there had been five Fridays during which any private business had been done; it was only when the Government were anxious to get a House to do their business that one could be formed on that day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that in 1876 the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) had voted with the majority, and carried Monday's sitting, so that it would seem his opinion then was that Monday was a superior day. Suppose the Government tried to meet the Opposition, and said, "Take Monday for your private day, and let us have the three following days"—would that suit the Opposition? for, if it would, the Government would agree to it. He would repeat what he had said in 1876, that, individually, he did not care whether Monday or Friday was the day; but their supporters said Monday would suit them best, and the Government were bound to meet their views.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS thought, after what had been said, it would be best to withdraw both the resolution and the amendment, and to adopt the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Kingsford), which would be generally acceptable. It would be even better to act in this way than to go to a division and leave a rankling sense of something like discourtesy on the part of the Government in not meeting the Opposition. The Government should consider what would secure the good will of hon. members; if that were not done business would not be really facilitated, as it was quite possible, if an inconvenient day were chosen, that members would avail themselves of their privileges to move the adjournment of the House on that day. It would conduce to public business to adopt the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Kingsford).

Mr. Low said that, if the sense of the House were taken, a majority on the Government side would not accede to Friday on any consideration. Members, when they sought election, generally promised to do their best to forward the interests of their constituents; but they were not keeping the promise by "blocking" business.

Question—That the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 26.

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

NOES, 22.

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

Resolved in the affirmative.

The original motion was then put and passed.

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received messages from the Legislative Council, forwarding the Bills of Exchange Bill and the Bankers' Books Evidence Bill.

On the motion of Mr. GRIFFITH, the Bills were read a first time, and the second readings were made Orders of the Day for the 17th instant.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. ARCHER said he was under the disagreeable necessity—he thought, for the first time since he had been a member of the House—of moving the adjournment for the purpose of making an explanation, or rather to call attention to something said the other evening by the junior member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea). He should have done so yesterday afternoon, if that hon. member had been in his place at the opening of the House. Last Thursday the hon. member called attention to what he called some disrespect having been shown to him in the House; with that, of course he (Mr. Archer) had nothing to do. Amongst other things the hon. member made this remark—"With his own hand he wrote out the Land Act of 1868." Whatever relations the hon. member and he had to each other outside that House—and he, for one, saw not the slightest reason for changing those relations, such as they were, at the present time—he looked upon him in quite a different light inside—as a member representing a large and influential constituency, and he was not only prepared to listen to his speeches, but it was his duty, likewise, to assist him in legislation, either for the benefit of the whole colony, or for the district which returned him as their representative. But, although he was quite prepared to treat him with all the respect that one member of the House should receive from another, he was not prepared to overlook anything stated by that hon. member to his (Mr. Archer's) own disadvantage. He was told, during the time he was canvassing Blackall, that the hon. member had made the same statement as that to which attention was now called. Whether it was a fact that the hon. member made that statement he could not say. Out of that House he had a perfect right to pay no attention to what the hon. member said, and he paid no attention; he never inquired whether the statement was true or simply a rumour, and he had never contradicted it. But it was quite a different thing when the same statement was made in the House, and might be afterwards used in argument, or for other purposes. He might again have to contest that constituency; he might again be honoured by the hon. member's opposition; and if he (Mr. Rea) were allowed to make statements of that kind in the House uncontradicted, he (Mr. Archer) could hardly contradict them out of the House. The hon. member had now thrown down a challenge in the House by making a statement which, of course, he (Mr. Archer) denied. He had, however, several times remarked that it was no use either to bring charges or to deny charges in that House, unless it was done in a manner to satisfy hon. members that it was not done merely from rumour or malicious motives, but really to give proof that there was nothing in what was stated. He was not going to give a denial to what the hon. gentleman had stated—that would be putting his word against that of the hon. member for Rockhampton, a thing he should decline doing—but he was going to give proof that the thing was an impossibility. He might state that his (Mr. Archer's) name had been connected a good deal with the Land Bill of 1868; and he might also frankly state that he felt proud of being connected with it, because, although in some respects a faulty Bill, he believed it had done a great deal of good to the country. But there could be no greater mistake on the part of anyone than to suppose that when he came down to the House in 1868 he brought a Land Bill in his pocket. He came to it, as many other hon. members did, with a Land Bill in his head, but he had not a single clause of it written down, and it was only from his intimate knowledge of the question that he was able to deal with it. But he had not a single clause written, and he very soon discovered that, even if he had brought forward the most perfect Bill in the world, no private member could possibly have carried a measure of that kind through the House. Therefore, what was done was this: He and his friend, Mr. Fitzgerald, who then represented Bowen, tried to get members of the Opposition at that time to meet with them outside the House to see how far they could come to terms on the matter of a new Land Bill. A Land Bill had been introduced by the Mackenzie Government; and those members who met with Mr. Fitzgerald and himself were the present Chief Justice Lilley and Mr. T. B. Stephens, then the representative of South Brisbane. There were, of course, other gentlemen as

well; and he might state that when first they met their views diverged very far, but, after several meetings, they at last arrived at some points upon which they could all agree. He might say that this occupied some considerable time, and, after they had settled the points upon which they could agree, Mr. Fitzgerald and himself drew up the amendments which it was decided were to be proposed in the Land Bill introduced by the then Government. Those amendments were submitted to Mr. Lilley, and Mr. Stephens, and others; and it was decided that they should be put into his (Mr. Archer's) hands to be brought before the House. On the second reading of the Bill, he had incidentally remarked that he approved of the American system of land laws; and at this stage of the proceedings the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan), who then sat for Ipswich, came to him, and asked if he had any objection to insert some of the homestead clauses, or a modification of the American system, in his amendments. He said he had not the slightest objection to do so, because the object of Mr. Lilley, Mr. Stephens, Mr. Fitzgerald, and himself was to settle population, and they all agreed that it was desirable to draw up clauses to that effect, and they thus became embodied in the Bill. It was hardly necessary to state that such a number of amendments being brought into any Bill of that kind was sufficient to bring it into such a state of "confusion worse confounded" that nobody could understand either the Bill or the amendments. It was then agreed, on the motion of Mr. Walsh, at that time member for Maryborough, that the Bill be referred to a select committee composed of Mr. Lamb, Mr. Fitzgerald, and himself. They were allowed to sit at all times, both when the House was in and out of session, and after three or four days' hard work they re-wrote the Bill from beginning to end, and presented it to the House again. It then went through all the amendments the House liked to put upon it, and it was only after the longest and fiercest struggle that had ever taken place in the Parliament of Queensland that the Bill came out as the Act of 1868. It was, therefore, perfectly obvious that the statement of the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea) could not be literally true; and he did not suppose the hon. member could possibly mean that it was so. He would probably say that it was a figure of speech—that he meant, probably, that he (Mr. Archer) had sucked his brains in the part he took in this transaction. Of course, if the hon. member liked to say so, people might believe him if they liked; he could not deny it; he could not deny a negative. But even that would hardly explain the matter, because, in that case, the other gentlemen—Mr. Lilley, Mr. Stephens, Mr. Fitzgerald, and the hon. member for Stanley—must have drawn their inspiration from the same unfailing source of wisdom, because all their minds had been employed in the formation of that Bill. He was therefore perfectly justified in saying that not only was it not the case that he had any Bill whatever when he came down here in 1868, either from the hon. member or anybody else, but it was impossible that he could have had the Bill of 1868, because no one had ever seen such a thing at the time, and the first time the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea) could possibly have seen it was after it came out of the House printed. Having drawn attention to this—having denied *in toto* that he ever saw any Bill drawn by the hon. member, he had, of course, said all he could say. He would be prepared to deny it outside of the House as well as in it, but he thought he had vindicated his position to the House. He had brought no accusation against the hon. member. He had referred to facts which were yet alive in the memory of many gentlemen both in and out of the House. He had not had the slightest communication with Mr. Lilley or Mr. Fitzgerald, who were both living and remembered the circumstances; Mr. Stephens, unfortunately, was dead, and he had referred to them to show that he had not in any way tried to colour any circumstance that took place at that time. They were all men of honour, and, of course, would state what really took place. He could only say that, had he not been able to refer to matters of this kind to show the unfounded nature of the statement of the hon. member, he should not have brought it forward at all, but being pefectly able to refute it, he had put himself in a position to deny it at any time he liked. He had nothing more to say in the matter, and he did not think the House would blame him for occupying a few minutes in explaining what was to some extent a personal matter. He moved the adjournment of the House.

Mr. REA was understood to say that, if the hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer) had been in the House when he (Mr. Rea) was addressing it on Thursday last, he would have been saved the trouble of making the speech he had just made. What he did say was not what the hon. member had read. What he said referred to the rough draft of the Act; and he thought he could prove that his hand drew out the draft which led to the Land Act of 1868, which botched—that was the word he used—the recommendations he made in that first draft. The hon. member said he had not tried to colour the circumstances to which he referred in any way, but he (Mr. Rea) would give a plain statement of what took place at that time. It was this: The hon. member for Blackall and two other gentlemen in Rockhampton and himself were appointed

a sub-committee by a larger committee to draw up the basis of an alteration of the then existing land laws of Queensland. The four met, and he asked them if they had prepared a draft of their views individually as to the amendments they thought should be made in the old land laws so as to foster settlement in Queensland? On that occasion one gentleman after another said he had done nothing at all. One gentleman admitted that he did not know how to begin, another said that he knew nothing of the past land laws, and the member for Blackall said he had nothing prepared. They then asked him if he had put his views on paper, and, if so, to produce them. He said it would not be fair for him to do so, but he thought it would be better for those gentlemen to adjourn for a week and consult together, and then put a rough draft on the table showing what their views were. They then said that if he would give them his rough draft they would see what should be done. He then took out his rough draft, which was rather voluminous, and he read it through. The hon. member for Blackall said he wanted nothing more than that, and the other two gentlemen said it was beyond them altogether, as they had never previously considered what the past land laws were, he (Mr. Rea) having gone back not only into the past land laws of the colony, but also into the land laws of America, and having followed them step by step. He then put his draft before the member for Blackall and asked him to sign it, which he did, and he (Mr. Rea) signed it afterwards; and that was the basis of the Land Act of 1868. That was what he meant by saying that with his own hand he drew up the Land Act of 1868. With regard to the statement of the hon. member for Blackall, he could not but think the hon. member had entirely forgotten the first Land Act he initiated by putting his signature to the rough draft. That was the time when he (Mr. Rea) first introduced the term "homestead area," and the member for Blackall asked what was meant by it and he told him. His idea was, that a homestead area should be given to a man who should not part with it to any other but one prepared to stand in his shoes. Had that scheme been adopted it would have stopped all means of dummying. The member for Blackall referred to what Mr. Lilley and Mr. Fitzgerald had done, but they had never heard the A-B-C of the Act until his draft was submitted to them. If the member for Blackall had asked for an explanation he should have risen to say all this before; but that was his explanation of what really had occurred. He thought the member for Blackall, who was remarkable in that House for his candour, when he said it was a remarkable statement on his (Mr. Rea's) part had altogether forgotten the circumstances.

Mr. Douglas said he had been amused with the revelations given both by the member for Blackall and the member for Rockhampton. They vividly brought back to his mind scenes of those days when the Land Act of 1868 was enacted. He merely rose to make a very brief statement on the point that had been referred to. It was very clear that the Bill did not emanate from any one bright genius, but was the work of many bright geniuses who were in council. He did not think that the hon. member for Stanley would say that he it was who first suggested the exact form that the homestead area should take. As far as his recollection went of the history connected with that Bill, it was this, that they were all at sea as to what the homestead-area provision was. They could not get at the enactment of the United States referring to it; but, it happened to be his good fortune to alight on a transcript of the Act in a book of travels in the Library, and he took it to his friend the late Mr. Stephens, and he had a clear recollection of the beam of enjoyment on that gentleman's face when he found he had actually the exact form of homestead that was in America. That provision was not exactly adopted, but a modification of it only. The Homestead Act of the United States had been subjected to more than one modification; that he ascertained when he was at one time travelling through the States; but those were the exact facts as far as related to the portion of the Act which referred to homestead areas.

Mr. O'Sullivan said there was no necessity for prolonging the debate, but he had heard the statements referred to made by the member for Rockhampton on two occasions, and he was rather astonished at them at the time, as there was no foundation for them from beginning to end. The substance of the Bill of 1868 was embodied in an address he delivered on Separation. He had no doubt at all that the hon. member knew very well the old Acts of this colony, and also the American Acts, but the hon. member would not deny that it was very possibly in the power of others to have the same knowledge! In his address on Separation, when he was elected one of the members for Ipswich, he embodied the whole question. He suggested that all the lands under the Range should be thrown open for free selection and homestead settlement, and shortly after that the hon. member for Toowoomba came into the House, and he certainly had as much knowledge of what would do for the settlement of the colony as anyone in it. He was certain that hon. member gave as much assistance to the passing of that Land Act as he (Mr. O'Sullivan) did, and, perhaps, more, as he had more ability. The member for Toowoomba was writing about the state of the land laws for some

years before he was a member of the House, and it was partly due to his writings on that subject, and the necessity of an Act which would settle the people on the lands, that brought him into the House. In his (Mr. O'Sullivan's) own feeble way he was writing on the question for seven or eight weeks before Parliament met, and they formed a committee of ten at Ipswich to consider the matter. He believed that Dr. Challinor joined them, and was a most energetic member; also, Mr. Murphy, the present Police Magistrate at Roma; and a very able man, Mr. Reed, who was now in New Zealand. They went into the House and supported Mr. Macalister's Government against their inclinations, on the sole understanding that he would bring in a comprehensive Land Bill. They cared nothing about what else he did all the session so long as he did that. They gave him a majority on that understanding, but they found out afterwards that he actually resigned rather than bring in such a Bill. He knew for certain that the hon. member for Blackall was at that time writing to the northern and southern Press on the same subject, and when that hon. member and Mr. Fitzgerald entered the House it was actually on the cry that a Land Bill was wanted, and on the understanding that they would throw all their energy into the matter. When Mr. Macalister resigned rather than deal with a Land Bill, the hon. member for Blackall took up the subject, and he (Mr. O'Sullivan) and others gave the hon. member all the assistance they could; in fact, he believed the Land Act of 1868 would not have passed but for that assistance. He saw for some time that they could not agree on every point, and they all put down their views in the form of amendments, the result being that they were so much at variance that he felt like the devil in a gale of wind. So far, however, from the member for Blackall sucking the brains of the member for Rockhampton, he did nothing of the kind. The ideas that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) put forward in 1860 were carried out almost to the letter in that Bill —namely, free selections and homestead areas. They certainly thought at the time that, if half of the runs were cut up, there would be sufficient land thrown open for twenty years: but they did not suffice for half of that time. They all had a hand in the matter, and it was very egotistical for anyone to say that he was the author of the Bill. The whole colony, in fact, had a hand in it, as no member could at the time get elected to the House who would not go in for a liberal land law. He had very little doubt that the member for Rockhampton gave some good suggestions, and was able to give them; but a man who took too much praise to himself was too greedy, and if he gave all to his neighbour was too liberal, and therefore they should divide the credit; but, certainly, the author of the Bill was the present hon. member for Blackall.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that, when so many claims were being made to the authorship of the Bill, he had a perfect right to put his in also, as he had thrown the Bill down on the table to be worried.

Mr. ARCHER said it had been stated that the words imputed to the member for Rockhampton had never been uttered; but he could only repeat what the hon. member was reported to have said in *Hansard*—that with his own hand he wrote out the Land Act of 1868.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He did say so.

Mr. ARCHER said he was very busy at the time talking over the Electoral Bill with some hon. members, and, therefore, did not hear the remark. Had he heard it there would have been no necessity for his moving the adjournment of the House, as he had now done, for the purpose of contradicting the statement. He would repeat that he had not the slightest recollection of having ever seen any Bill drawn by the hon. member; the Act was really a compromise come to by many members of the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had a distinct recollection of the words used by the member for Rockhampton, which were that he drew up the first draft of the Land Act of 1868.

Mr. WALSH said he could positively assert, without the slightest fear of contradiction, and with the feeling that nineteen out of twenty hon. members would support him, that the hon. member for Rockhampton said what was reported in *Hansard*.

Mr. GROOM said that he had paid particular attention to the statement made by the hon. member for Rockhampton on the occasion referred to. The hon. member stretched out his hand and said—"This is the hand that drew up the first draft of the Land Act of 1868."

ACTING CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Mr. Cooper was appointed to act as Chairman of Committees for the sitting.

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL—COMMITTEE.

Mr. GRIFFITH called the attention of the hon. member for Blackall to the fact that there was no provision defining who should sit at the quarterly registration courts. By the 22nd section of the existing Act it was provided that the justices of the peace resident in the electoral district should be able to sit as a revision court. Adhering to that principle here, they must include a provision something like this—and which he had intended to move—that justices of

the peace usually resident within any electoral district any part of which was included in the police district should constitute the quarterly registration court. Since then he had seen a copy of other amendments turning these quarterly registration courts into revision courts. If that was to be so, they ought to declare that the quarterly registration court should consist of the same persons as the revision court. He should like to know what the Colonial Secretary's views were on that point.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said his views were these—that there should be a revision court every three months, so as to enable electors to go on the roll every six months. If at the first quarterly revision court a certain number of names were passed they would be exposed in the usual form by the clerk of petty sessions, and any objections taken against them would be heard at the next revision court, after which they would go on the electoral rolls. Nothing would be gained by the Bill if they were only to have the revision court once a year.

Mr. GRIFFITH moved that the following new clause be inserted after clause 5—

> Every such quarterly registration court shall be constituted of such and the same justices and other persons as are by this Act declared to constitute the court of revision for revising the electoral list for the electoral district in question.

Mr. DICKSON wished the Colonial Secretary to throw some light on the very numerous amendments before the Committee. The Bill consisted of nine pages, and the amendments would make nearly double that number. Which of the amendments did the Government wish to accept, and which to reject? The hon. member for Blackall seemed to have taken the Bill out of the hands of the Colonial Secretary; but that, however, was a matter between the Government and the hon. member. With regard to the matter more immediately under consideration, he was inclined to think that if the returns were made up quarterly and added to the list under which an election was to be held, it would be advantageous. But the new clause to follow clause 8, which had just been circulated, would make it of no practical use; because between the issue of a writ and the day of election there would not be sufficient time for printing and circulating the quarterly roll. He should feel inclined to support the hon. gentleman if the quarterly rolls were to be forthwith made up and added to the list on which an election would be held.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he thought the amendment a very valuable one. A man might, under the present system, have resided within a week of six months in an electoral district before the court met, and the consequence was that he would remain off the roll for twelve, sixteen, or seventeen months, because he had no chance of getting put on until the next annual revision court. Thousands of cases of that kind had occurred. Under a system of quarterly revision courts such a thing would be impossible.

Mr. GRIFFITH pointed out what he thought was an inconsistency in the amendments. If rolls were to be made out quarterly the necessity for the annual revision would be gone; or, if the latter was to be retained, it would be necessary to modify the former in accordance with it.

Mr. ARCHER said the amendment to be proposed by the Colonial Secretary, making the quarterly registration court a court of revision, would not interfere with his amendment.

Mr. DICKSON said he was unable to gather whether persons would be enabled to vote in case of an election occurring directly after their names had been put upon the supplementary rolls, or whether they would be unable to vote until after the annual revision court had been held.

Mr. ARCHER said that, according to his amendment, there was not the slightest doubt they would be able to vote immediately on being placed on the supplementary roll. The first time the revision court sat it could, of course, do nothing but accept the new names and expose it till it met again three months hence, on which occasion they would not only accept new names, but deal with the old names given three months previously. From this a fair list would be prepared by the clerk, but it would not be printed unless an election was impending.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in reply to the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson), said that, as long as a good Bill was made for the benefit of the whole colony, he did not care who got the credit of passing it—the hon. member himself might have all the honour and glory, if he liked. With regard to his question as to whether the Government were going to adopt the amendments of the hon. member for Blackall, he might say the Government had already adopted them, and there were a number of others to be considered. They were amendments to make the Bill workable, and if the hon. member for Maryborough would bring forward any amendments to improve the Bill he should be perfectly willing to accept them. This was not a party measure but one for the good of the whole colony, aiming to get as many names of electors on the rolls as possible. Whether the amendments would be carried was for the Committee to say: they should go on clause after clause, so that after a few hours' work they would be able to see whether other amendments would be required. It was impossible for

him to say that he would take all amendments and pass them through. Hon. members would be sure to find flaws in the amendments: he did not profess that they were perfection, or anything like it.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had not before addressed himself to the subject, nor had he taken any great interest in the Bill, because he did not think it was a measure called for by any extreme pressure. Public opinion had not expressed itself in favour of electoral reform in this shape. They were now nightly treated to more new amendments. On the last occasion when the Bill was discussed whole sheets of amendments were placed in his hands, and he confessed that he stood aghast at the responsibility of being called upon to consider their bearing without sufficient notice. Again, to-night, four amendments were placed in his hands as those, he understood, of the Colonial Secretary. They involved most important principles, but the hon. gentleman gave no explanation except that he was willing to frame the Bill in any way the Committee, after deliberation and counsel, saw fit. It was not conducing to the furtherance of business to hand over such matters to the Committee. The Colonial Secretary, being in charge of the Bill, should advise the Committee as to what he considered necessary; and to him hon. members looked to propound something like an adequate scheme of reform, if reform were required. The question had not come in such a way as to convince him (Mr. Douglas) that reform was at all required. When he considered the nights spent on this Bill, which was so unimportant in comparison with many other things to be dealt with this session—a session in which they would probably have to consider matters of greater importance than they had ever had to consider before—he could not approach the subject with patience. At five minutes' notice they were called upon to pronounce as to what the effect of those clauses would be, and without an explanation from the Colonial Secretary as to his views. The longer they treated the matter in this form the deeper they would get into the slough of despond. The first night's discussion clearly showed, in the first place, that the reform sought to be attained was not so apparent as to justify any extreme measure; and, then, that the form in which the proposed reform was put was clearly inapplicable, so that the Colonial Secretary himself withdrew it. He had hoped they would never have seen anything more of the Bill; but it was again brought on, and now hon. members were informed that it was practically in the charge of the hon. member for Blackall—his advice was taken, his counsel looked to, for guidance in the matter. When that hon. member assumed the responsibility of office—and he should be glad to see so capable a member in such a position—he should be very glad to listen to him, but he confessed that he regarded with suspicion and impatience the handing over to a private member not connected with the Government, so far as responsibility was concerned, the important duty of saying how they were to steer their course in a matter so seriously affecting the general interests of the colony as a reform in the electoral system. Such a reform was not urgently needed, and the measure might be laid aside to allow the consideration of matters of far greater importance.

Mr. GROOM could not but think that in this matter they were over-legislating. The Bill, as introduced, would have been unquestionably a useful measure—and he had said so at the time—more particularly the clause which compelled the acceptance of the roll at present existing as the basis of the new roll, with the words proposed to be added providing that the collectors should place against the names "dead," "disqualified," or, "left the district," as the case might be. Taking the old roll as the basis, he did know any objection to the law as now in force. It was perfectly true that in some districts there were packed benches, but not for the purpose of revising the rolls. If, as he inferred from the remarks of an hon. member, the benches at Ipswich were packed for that purpose the case was an exception, and the benches of the colony should be relieved from the imputation that the practice was general. The hon. member for Ipswich said the imputation did not apply to Ipswich, and he (Mr. Groom) was glad to say that, as far as his knowledge extended, it did not apply to any bench in the colony. There were, he admitted, packed benches on licensing days and when collectors were appointed. When collectors were to be appointed the applicants canvassed for magistrates to support their applications, and in that respect the practice had been very objectionable. The amendments introduced by the hon. member for Blackall would revolutionise the existing system, and he (Mr. Groom) agreed with the hon. member for Maryborough that there had been no demand for such a measure, nor any petitions to show that injustice had been suffered under the existing law. As far as the temporary roll of last year, on which the general election took place, the electors showed the greatest indifference as to whether their names were on the roll, and had it not been for active agents, in some cases with powers of attorney, a great many names would have been left off. He himself had sent down fifty or sixty persons who were qualified as freeholders to vote in the electorate of Stanley, and the hon. member (Mr. Kellett) was returned by the benefit of those votes. In

Toowoomba the Police Magistrate announced that he would sit fourteen days, and during the whole fourteen days he had with him on the bench only one solitary magistrate. There was therefore not the slightest disposition to pack the bench for the purpose of revising the roll; so that the remarks of the hon. member for Stanley, that it was a general practice, did not apply. He confessed he should be glad to see the work of revising rolls removed entirely from the bench and placed in the hands of revising barristers, as in England, or the District Court Judge compelled to revise the rolls. In some cases candidates had been known to sit on the bench and revise the rolls by which they hoped to be elected ;—that was an anomaly this Bill did not and could not rectify. The Bill as introduced by the Colonial Secretary was an advisable amendment, because it would remedy grievances arising from various interpretations of the existing law. Many magistrates interpreted the Act to the effect that collectors must form new rolls separate from the existing ones. Owing to that interpretation, in his own and the Aubigny electorates large numbers of electors had been disfranchised. The collectors were told they must take down the names of the resident population, but that they had nothing to do with the non-resident population. Most of the non-resident voters were freeholders, and they had to apply personally or they were disfranchised. He presumed such would not be the case under this Bill. He was in favour of the Bill pure and simple, as introduced by the Colonial Secretary and if he would stick to that measure no one would give more cheerful assistance than he (Mr. Groom) would. These amendments constituted an entirely new Bill, and it was hardly fair to hon. members to discuss, within five minutes, an entirely new Bill introducing entirely new principles in regard to a matter of so much importance. If the Colonial Secretary would stick to his original Bill he should support him, as it met existing difficulties ; but the Committee should not be asked to go into new-fangled notions such as were embodied in the amendments without having ample time to consider them.

Mr. Beattie said he also preferred the original Bill. In some of these amendments most extraordinary powers were given to the clerk of petty sessions: under the 10th clause the clerk had virtually the power of striking names off the roll. He was aware that his work would have to come before the revision court; but he compiled the original list, whereas his duty ought to be to simply compile from the list of the collectors. The amendments would not give the same satisfaction as the Bill of the Colonial Secretary. If the amendments were to be gone on with he was glad to think there was some little chance of making improvements, especially by means of the amendment of the Colonial Secretary to compile the list every six months; for, under the amendments of the hon. member (Mr. Archer), no one would get his name on the roll until after the month of October in each year. He hoped, with the last speaker, that the Colonial Secretary would stick to his own Bill.

Mr. Griffith was understood to say that it was too much to put into their hands a new Bill every night, and that he should require certain information before he could make up his mind what course to take with regard to the proposed amendments. Under the 10th clause a complete electoral list had to be compiled between the 1st and 31st August. What was to be done with the names received after the quarterly registration court held in July? Were they to be put on the complete list to be dealt with in November, or were they to be adjudicated upon by the October quarterly court? If the names received after July were to be put on the general list, which was to be revised in November, it was unnecessary to hold a court in October; and, if they were not to be put on the general list, the annual revision court in November would not have a complete list before it. He now came to a more serious difficulty. Presuming that the registration court to be held in October registered certain names, a list had then to be made out and suspended for three months—until the next registration court; and in the meantime objections could be made to any name. It seemed to him, however, that a man might save himself this trouble and the necessity of waiting to secure the franchise by sending his claim to the clerk of petty sessions for the annual roll. If this were correct the quarterly registration and revision court in October was not necessary. A radical change in their electoral law, such as was proposed by these amendments, deserved more consideration than they had been permitted to give it; the amendments meant an entire recasting of their system of compiling and revising the electoral rolls, and members were not competent to deal with them on so short a notice. The difficulties that he had raised had occurred to him on the short notice that had been given, and they appeared to have escaped the hon. member for Blackall and the Colonial Secretary. Probably other difficulties would be discovered if sufficient time were afforded. He should like to know definitely, beforehand, what the Government were aiming to do, and must confess that in the meantime he was entirely at a loss.

Mr. Kates said that when the original Bill was first placed before the Committee he was pleased to see such a good measure,

and he laid it before several of his constituents, who agreed that it was desirable it should be passed; since his return to the House, however, he had found a lot of amendments introduced by the hon. member for Blackall. He saw no harm in the scheme of quarterly registration courts, but he objected to the abolition of collectors. The Colonial Secretary had said that the chief reason for doing away with them was that the country could not stand the expense, which was said to be something like £5,000 or £6,000. If the old rolls were to be the basis of the new ones the expense would be comparatively trifling, for there was a great difference between the cost of collecting a new roll and collecting a few additional names; in fact, the collectors might be paid so much for every 50 or 100 *bonâ fide* new names that they obtained. He should be glad to see the original Bill passed independent of the amendments.

Mr. BAILEY said the hon. member's objection was not a good one, as it had already been agreed to abolish the system of collecting the rolls. As to the suggestion that collectors should be paid a certain sum for every 50 or 100 names that they obtained, it would be a distinct inducement to the collectors to put on the rolls the names of people who never existed. If collectors were sent, say, 120 miles from town, he was afraid they would find a good many people who only lived on paper. He hoped the amendment abolishing collectors would be adhered to;—it was a useless expense to the country, and it took from the people the responsibility of seeing that they were enrolled, which all qualified voters should bear and were willing to bear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY thought a very small amendment in his proposed amendment would sweep away all the objections of the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) as to the holding of the annual revision court. If at the commencement of the new clause to follow clause 8 of Mr. Archer's amendments, the words "after the holding of the registration courts in January April and July respectively" were inserted, the whole thing would be quite clear, because further on in the Bill the annual revision of the electoral rolls was provided for. If hon. members would confine themselves to the clause under discussion, and went on from one clause to another, it would be found that the Bill would be a good workable measure; but if they persisted in talking about matters far in advance of the clause before the Committee they would never get through the Bill. He was certain the voice of the House last night—that the collection of the rolls should be done away with as far as possible—was decisive, and should be so accepted by the Opposition.

A good deal had been said about the expense of collecting the rolls; and not being able to get at the cost in the Auditor-General's report, or anywhere else, he wrote last night, from the House, to the Auditor-General, asking where he could find that information, and the Auditor-General referred him to a report he sent to his (the Colonial Secretary's) office last week, where it was given in full. This was a return of the expenses of elections from 1st July to March, 1879—about nine months; but they could in no way arrive at the actual cost of collecting the rolls from this, because a great deal of work was done by the police, who were not paid for it, and a considerable sum would have to be added on that account. The police were taken away from their proper duty for a month at a time to collect the rolls, and they could only arrive at the actual cost by guess-work. According to this return the cost of collecting the electoral rolls for the period he had mentioned was £3,093 15s.; printing, £951 12s. 4d.; and then there were election expenses, £1,729; but they had nothing to do with that now. There was, however, the large expenditure of £3,093, besides the services of the police, for the collection of these rolls, which were useless, or comparatively useless, because they did not give a fair list of the electors in any district. Even in Fortitude Valley, where it would be supposed everyone was known, some of the principal men were left off. The House had affirmed that the proper principle to go upon was to make the voters register themselves, and there would be no difficulty in carrying the Bill to a proper conclusion with a few amendments on those already printed. If hon. members would only take clause by clause they would find the Bill would work together very well.

Mr. GRIFFITH said what the hon. member had just stated showed how difficult it was to deal with a complicated matter on the spur of the moment. At first he (Mr. Griffith) thought it was all right, but on further consideration he found it was all wrong. The hon. member proposed that lists should be compiled in January, April, and July only. That meant that they should be revised in April, July, and October. As to the lists to be revised in April and July there was no difficulty, but how about the lists to be revised in October? They would have one revision court sitting in October and another in November. Was there to be a double revision of names sent in before July?—or, if not, what was to be done with them? The result would be that after July no names could be put on until the next April. The hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) seemed to take an extremely warm interest in this Bill, so much so he (Mr. Griffith) began to suspect there was something under it.

He seemed to think that he had got a perfectly clear idea of the Bill.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: The hon. member talks as much in an hour as I do in a week.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he took great interest in preventing bad legislation.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Why shouldn't I do the same?

Mr. GRIFFITH said they were simply disgracing themselves by attempting to do what no body of men could do—to digest in a few minutes an entirely new and complicated question. It was admitted that they must recommit the Bill, and he trusted for their own credit's sake they would not attempt to go further with the matter at present. He was certain the Colonial Secretary did not understand it. As he said before, if the hon. member would only give him an idea of what the scheme was he was aiming at, and reconcile these two conflicting systems, he (Mr. Griffith) would endeavour to assist him to the best of his ability; but he was certain that hon. members did not know what they were driving at, and the discussion was only wasting time.

Mr. RUTLEDGE gave the Colonial Secretary credit for being anxious to make the Bill as perfect as possible, and, if he might presume to offer a suggestion to that hon. gentleman, it would be this:—He had before him a whole sheet of amendments proposed by members on both sides of the House, and he should ascertain the mind of the House on those amendments, boil them down, withdraw the Bill for the present, and bring in something that they could concentrate their attention upon, so that they might know what they were talking about. Another thing was that the amendments of the hon. member for Blackall completely revolutionised the present state of things, and they had not yet heard the opinion of the Press upon it, and if it were passed in this hasty manner it would be very unsatisfactory in the estimation of the country. He also thought it ought to be the object of the Colonial Secretary to make this Bill cover as much ground as possible. There were many improvements that could be made in the present electoral law, and he had some amendments to introduce to prevent the pernicious practice of double voting; but it had been pointed out to him that his amendments were beyond the scope of the Bill, and if that were the case some of the most important defects in the present law would be excluded from consideration. This was legislating piecemeal. Where was the demand from the country which aimed exclusively at the compilation of the electoral rolls? If they were going to have an amendment of the electoral law let them have something comprehensive. He also held that they had a right to demand the attendance of hon. members who sat in such large numbers behind the Treasury benches to assist in this matter. Hon. members on that (the Opposition) side of the House were trying to unravel the complications before them, and the supporters of the Government left them to work it out as best they could, only coming in to vote occasionally whichever way the Government voted. He thought they ought to take some interest in the matter, and help the Committee to struggle out of the difficulty into which the Government had—unwittingly, he was free to admit—led them.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that hon. members would be prevented from taking that active part in the discussion of the Bill they would otherwise do if an imputation was made by the leader of the Opposition that they had personal motives. It was very improper of that hon. gentleman to have suggested that he had some personal interest in the matter, although the hon. member, in his high position, scarcely knew the weight of his own words. He had no personal motive whatever, but he had seen the working of the electoral laws for the last thirty years, and he was anxious to assist in making the Bill before them as workable and perfect as possible. He was sent to that House to do the best he could, and to give his humble assistance to the legislation of the country, and he was not yet aware that, by anything he had said, he had given the hon. member reason for saying that he had a personal interest in passing a new Electoral Bill. He had already given his reasons for a court sitting oftener than once a year, as he had known cases where a man's name had been left off a roll for months and months. His argument was that it would be well to leave the rolls as they were, and to have a registration court sitting once a month, or even fortnightly, so that a man whose name ought to be, but was not, on a roll should be able to go and have it put on. That being his opinion, he was at a loss to know how the hon. leader of the Opposition could impute personal motives to him. He had no personal dislike to the hon. gentleman, but would caution him to deal with his own followers instead of censuring him (Mr. O'Sullivan).

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) seemed very anxious to have the opinions of the Press on the matter, and it was a pity the hon. member could not get a few members of the Press to come to that Committee and give their opinions; or that he did not join some other members of the Press and become an editor and write scurrilous articles, and so on, although he had a higher opinion of the hon. member than to think him capable of doing that. He looked upon clause 8 as a very important one. So important, in fact, that he had drafted a clause which he

had intended to introduce for a similar purpose, considering that the most important part of the Bill was that which would enable those whose names were not on the roll to register their names and to have a voice in an election during the current year, which they could not do now. It often happened that a man who had resided in a district for many years and was the owner of large property found his name was left off the roll, and had to wait for twelve months before he could get it put on; but this clause would meet such a case as that. There appeared to be some difficulty about what the leader of the Opposition called a dual system—namely, that there was to be a revision court in August, and another in October; but the one in August would only be for the purpose of erasing the names of those who were dead, who had left the colony, or who were disqualified, whilst at the court in October all names entered in the electoral register book would be declared a supplementary electoral list and put on the annual roll. If a person applied in November to be placed on the roll it was brought before the court in January, exposed to public view at the court-house for a certain time, and then, if an election took place in May or June, he would have an opportunity of registering his vote. Practically, there was a quarterly revision by which fresh voters could be placed on the provisional roll.

Mr. GRIFFITH merely rose to say, in reply to what had fallen from the member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan), that when that hon. member professed to know more about the Bill than any other hon. member he must expect to be slightly chaffed. No one supposed he had any personal motives. The hon. member was very much respected in that House, and knew it, and his opinions were always received with great respect.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that, of course, the hon. member for Stanley, being an old member, had had great experience, and he did not think it was necessary for him to assume the airs of humility he had done. The hon. member was as well informed on matters connected with the revision of the rolls as any member of the Committee, and he thought that instead of taking a personal interest in such matters, as he had been accused of doing by the leader of the Opposition, he was bound to take a paternal interest in them. He confessed that he himself was so far behind the age that he was not aware until the present hour that the hon. member had a most important amendment to bring forward affecting members of the Civil Service. That alone would furnish a fund of argument for a whole night—for one of the new Monday night sittings they were going to have. He would ask the Colonial Secretary to bear that in mind, as he could assure him that the Land Act of 1868 would be as nothing compared with this Bill when it came out of Committee. Did the hon. gentleman think there was any possible limit to the high intelligence of that Assembly bearing on the subject? Again, the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) had told them that he intended to bring forward amendments respecting the conduct of elections, which would open up a large constitutional question; and unless the hon. Colonial Secretary was prepared to say how far he was prepared to go in accepting amendments, and what he proposed to be the policy of the Government in connection with the Bill, he was leading hon. members astray, and inviting them to follow all kinds of wills of the wisp that would lead them to destruction. It had been said that these new provisions should have been discussed in the Press; and, whilst he (Mr. Douglas) was not there to advocate all that writers for the Press said, he believed it would be conceded by hon. members that the Press was the best channel for enlightening the public as to what they were doing in Parliament. Yet now it was proposed to do things of which the people outside were absolutely ignorant.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he should like to know what all this high-falutin' was about? What did they pay *Hansard* for but to give the fullest possible information through the Press? He did not understand what the hon. member meant by getting into a passion upon the subject. No one, he supposed, in this nineteenth century denied that the fullest information should be given through the Press. If the hon. member would just try to devote a little of the ability they knew he possessed to allowing the Bill to get fully into committee, so as to bring all the clauses together, he would be doing better than making a rampagious speech about the freedom of the Press. They owed a good deal to the Press, and even to the writers of scurrilous letters, for it was well-known that over-writing against a thing recoiled upon itself. When writers in the Press overdid an attack they were really conferring a favour upon the person or thing attacked. What objection there could be in the amendment of the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) passing he could not understand. If it passed they might get on to the next clause, and then come to the amendment which he proposed to insert. If they got so far they would be able to see their way clearly to progress. There was no mystery at all about the Bill if members would only attempt to understand it. If, however, they refused to look at it no arguments that came from the Government side of the House would have the slightest effect. If the member for North Brisbane chose to apply himself he

would not be long in seeing the whole drift of the Bill, for he (Mr. Palmer) knew the talents of that hon. gentleman too well to suppose that if he really wished to understand it, instead of carping at details and stopping even his own amendment, he would soon do so.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he must confess that, while perfectly acknowledging his hon. friend's ability, to focus any number of amendments, he had some little doubt whether in this instance his facile power of drawing different ideas into a converging centre would be of use if the business were hurried. His hon. friend had often placed his ability at the disposal of the House in this direction, and there was no one his equal in such matters; but when the Committee got into the mood it was in at present they rightly began to doubt the wisdom of proceeding with undue haste. Four important clauses which would revolutionise the system of collecting the electoral rolls had been placed in their hands without any previous notice. This was directly in the teeth of all usage of parliamentary practice, and was not a precedent which ought to be adopted. Time should be given to consider these things. He believed with his hon. friend (Mr. Griffith) they would get into a muddle if they had not time to consider, for there was no doubt the Committee at the present time did not know how these clauses would bear upon the general question. He viewed with some alarm the passing of such a measure as this through committee, because when the Bill was through the Government would have control of it, and it was one of those subjects that would not be dealt with elsewhere. He should hesitate extremely before he committed himself to principles which he did not understand.

Mr. WALSH said the whole principle to be asserted was asserted last night—namely, that collectors should be done away with. There was no difficulty at all in making this a good measure, provided the members on the other side directed their abilities to make it so. As it was, they were only going over the same ground again they had gone over before.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said that this was the second time he had been deliberately misrepresented by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas). On a former occasion the hon. member had twisted his (Mr. Weld-Blundell's) words, and now he accused him of having expressed an opinion that the Press should be gagged. He had said nothing of the sort. No one was more willing than he was that every word uttered in the House should be published to the whole world; but that was a very different thing to taking advice from the Press how they were to act. Hon. members were returned to express their own views, and not to put forth the views which might be expressed in newspaper articles and letters. That an hon. member in the position of the hon. member for Maryborough should deliberately and in an open manner falsify the words of another hon. member was not a credit to himself or the House.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. member was not justified in saying that he (Mr. Douglas) had "falsified" his statements. He objected to the term. He had great respect for the hon. member, and could only say he thought it was right to point out to him that he was mistaken in a statement he made. He did not wish they should fall down before the Press as a guide for their conduct; but the hon. member was broaching a very unwholesome doctrine when he seemed to indicate that it was not desirable that these subjects should be argued and talked about by the Press, which was the best vehicle they had for conveying what was done in the House to the people.

An HON. MEMBER: There is *Hansard*.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that was true, but what was *Hansard* but an emanation of the Press? He hoped the hon. member would accept his assurance that he had no wish to twist anything the hon. member might say, but he (Mr. Douglas) supposed he would admit they were both learners in the House, and he trusted the hon. member might be occasionally reminded that when he gave an opening for criticism he should not be above being criticised.

Mr. REA said that he had heard something about scurrilous articles, but that was not intended for any hon. member on his side of the House, when they knew the Ministry had retained a member specially to do those scurrilous articles. However, after what had been said by the Colonial Secretary, he doubted whether he might get up at all. It would, however, be better to say nothing than to imitate what had been the system of the hon. member during the whole of his career, which was on the pattern of a blustering London Bridge bargee. The hon. member seemed to have that standard and that standard alone. But were they to come there, night after night, only to see one of the oldest members of the House moving amendments on his own amendments? No man could be more weak than the Colonial Secretary had proved himself over this Bill. First, he brought down a Bill, then he made it into a new one by the introduction of a number of new clauses, and then he amended it to make it plainer, and, finally, asked further amendments. Were they to listen to this for ever?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that he had made no allusion to any speech. His complaint was that the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea) could not behave himself. He was continually interrupting with a running fire of "Hear, hear." He

did not complain of any speech the hon. member might make, for he (the Colonial Secretary) treated them with supreme contempt; but, unless the hon. member could sit still and behave himself when other hon. members were speaking, he would have to be told of it.

Mr. REA said that it was a new doctrine that he must now glue himself to his seat or revolve on a patent screw like a music stool. As for the expression "Hear, hear," he might inform the Colonial Secretary that in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords it was the right and the Parliamentary way of expressing assent to any utterances of speakers. He expressed his assent that way always.

Mr. PATERSON said he regretted that to-day's sitting had been of a most profitless character. The hon. member for Clermont had told them what they were sent to Parliament for, and he approved of his interpretation so far as it went. But there was one thing they were not sent to Parliament for, and that was to sit on Mondays. It was very discouraging to country members who had come from distant parts of the colony, to see so much time frittered away by the introduction of matter quite foreign to the subject under discussion. He was beginning to feel the greatest amount of dissatisfaction and distaste for the Assembly creep into his mind, owing to the unseemly style in which debate was carried on. What he rose to say was, that he did not think the House had had time to carefully examine and digest the amendments of the Bill before them. Country members, who had nothing else to do, might have mastered them, but business men had to do a hard day's work before coming to the Chamber, and they had not the requisite patience to see valuable time frittered away in this useless, shapeless fashion. He trusted that further time would be given, and if that request was not assented to he should have nothing to say either on the Bill or the amendments: if it was assented to he should do his best to make the Bill a good one. The Bill introduced by the Colonial Secretary had passed away, and the matter before them now was to all intents and purposes a new Bill.

The PREMIER said there was not a member who did not agree with most of the remarks made by the last speaker. It was with the object of coming to some definite conclusion that so long a discussion took place last night, and he gave the leader of the Opposition full credit for having intelligently put before the Committee the real issue before it—namely, that, if they passed the first amendment of the hon. member for Blackall, they agreed to the principle on which the whole of them were based. That principle was affirmed by a majority of twenty-six to fifteen, and having thus affirmed it the House had again gone into committee to-night. If the new clause to be proposed by the Colonial Secretary had not come on until after clause 8 had been passed, every hon. member would have perfectly understood it; it was as simple as possible. The hon. member for Blackall proposed that registration courts should be held once in three months. A desire had been expressed by many hon. members that those courts should be revision courts as well, and machinery required to be provided for that purpose. Could anything be more simple than the language of the proposed new clause? But the leader of the Opposition had rushed the Committee into the consideration of the clause prematurely, and the hon. member for Maryborough had boasted that he knew nothing whatever about the amendments. How could they possibly pretend to do business in that fashion? The leader of the Opposition had confused the Committee by trying to show that, from the time at which the registration courts were to be held, the votes registered in one court would never be revised at all. That was a mere verbal quibble, as would be seen when they got to clause 13, and applicants in July would be put on the roll by the revision court held in November. He held the Committee to the conclusion to which they were brought by the leader of the Opposition last night—namely, that, the first amendment having been carried, all the other amendments went with it, unless verbal amendments were required.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was quite true the Committee affirmed a principle last night, and he was prepared to accept that decision and make the best of the Bill. But, at the very last moment, the Government came down with an entirely new principle; and all he asked was, that some one would tell the Committee what was the scheme they intended to introduce, and he would do all in his power to help them to carry it out. At this moment they had not the slightest idea what that scheme was, except that there were to be quarterly courts of revision. How were they to be worked? It was impossible for any hon. member at a few minutes' notice to frame a Bill to carry out a change of policy of this kind. He had had as much experience in drafting Bills as most men, but he had never been forced to put in an entirely new scheme to make a Bill workable. There were two conflicting schemes in this Bill, based on entirely different principles, and it was said they would work into each other. That might be so, but hon. members were not prepared to say whether it would or

not. The Government were departing entirely from Parliamentary practice, which required that every measure should be introduced, read a first and second time, and then considered in committee. This was an entirely new Bill, and they were beginning with it in committee. No one knew anything about it; indeed, he felt more than half inclined to say he would wash his hands of the whole thing, and let Government make it as bad as they would. It was utterly impossible for anyone to revise a Bill of this kind at a moment's notice.

Mr. MESTON said he congratulated the Colonial Secretary upon getting a new Bill into Committee without passing through the usual preliminary ceremonies of first and second reading. Having first introduced an original Bill, he accepted amendments which virtually repealed that Bill. He (Mr. Meston) confessed that his reason was endangered. He had become hopelessly bewildered, and it could not be wondered at seeing that the leader of the Opposition—the most distinguished lawyer in the House—admitted that he was perplexed. If the keen legal intellect was not keen enough to enable him to master the incongruities and extraordinary perplexities of the Bill, how, in Heaven's name, could an ordinary intellect possibly comprehend them? The Bill reminded him of an affiliation case in which a woman swore that her child had two fathers. There was a Bill with two fathers, and the outcome of the dualistic incubation was something that no one could understand. He believed in the amendments of the hon. member for Blackall—the abolition of collectors and voluntary registration; but the original Bill and the amendments had become so hopelessly entangled that it was impossible to understand them. If this Bill with its innumerable satellite amendments passed into law, it would send clerks of petty sessions and benches of magistrates to the lunatic asylums; and when the leader of the Opposition appealed to the Colonial Secretary to give information —beseeching him to enlighten the Committee—why did not the hon. gentleman reply in the manner of old Jacob Boehmen, the metaphysician, when on his death bed? Several of his students came and appealed to him to explain, before he died, certain ambiguous passages in his writings. The old man said, "My friends, be satisfied: when I penned those words I no doubt clearly understood them, but God alone knows what they mean now." So the Colonial Secretary might say that when he penned the clauses of his Bill he thought he understood them, but God alone knew what they meant now! He believed the hon. gentleman was perfectly sincere in the desire to make the Bill a good one, and, believing this, he was willing to give him every possible assistance. One hon. member to-night wondered that there had been no expression of opinion from the Press. He could only presume that the Press were as hopelessly mystified as they were, and were patiently waiting until the Bill was made comprehensible to the ordinary human intellect.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY congratulated the hon. member on the style of his speech, which was a first-class one. The reason why he did not reply like the metaphysician was, that if he did so he would be telling a lie. He perfectly understood what the clause meant, and so could the hon. member or any other hon. member who would give it five minutes' consideration and not be led away by the hon. member for North Brisbane, who had got into one of his "Snarley-yow" humours. When he got into one of those fault-finding tempers, he (Colonial Secretary) would defy any man to pen a clause or an amendment to please him. He had himself proposed a new clause early in the evening, and yet he had been speaking against it all night. Surely he understood the amendment he had proposed himself, and might allow that to be carried. Every step they took onward, every fresh clause they passed, would make the meaning of the Bill plainer, until at last it would shine out perfectly clear to every member of the Committee. As long as hon. members kept away from the only clause that should be under discussion, so long would the Committee be mystified. When all the clauses had been considered the Bill would come out clear to the smallest comprehension. If it turned out to be the monster they had been led to suppose, then let them destroy it or smother it; but in the meantime they should give it a chance of showing what it would be.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman had made his usual speech, and would probably repeat it whenever the House was in Committee. If, instead of making that speech, he had answered his (Mr. Griffith's) challenge and said what he meant by the clauses, the result would have been more satisfactory. As it was, he only said the matter was perfectly clear.

Question—That the new clause, as read, be inserted after the last clause adopted—put and passed.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. member for North Brisbane had just reminded him that he had neglected to provide for giving notice of the holding of those courts. The hon. gentleman had written out for him the following clause, the adoption of which he begged to move—

Fourteen days' notice of the sitting of such quarterly registration court shall be given by

the clerk of petty sessions by advertisement in some newspaper usually circulated in the police district.

Mr. DICKSON said the question of dispensing with collectors had occupied so much of the discussion last night that very little attention was paid to the introduction of the principle of quarterly registration courts. It appeared to him that they were introducing very formidable machinery, considering the size of the colony and the smallness of the population. At first glance the matter appeared to him to be attractive, but on consideration he thought they were over-doing the thing altogether. Last night this question was entirely eclipsed by the question of dispensing with the collection of the rolls.

Mr. BEATTIE said before the clause passed he should like to be informed how it would be possible for the notice to be circulated in agricultural districts? Under the present Act electors knew that the revision courts was held every year in the month of October, and the elector got notice by the collector coming round.

Mr. ARCHER said that any person could send in his name at any time during the court of petty sessions, and it would not be necessary for him to attend personally as he could send in his name by writing.

Mr. GRIMES thought it would be better to give a little more notice. Under the old Act many qualified electors found that their names were off the roll when the time for getting them put on had gone by. For the rural districts a rather longer notice than fourteen days should be given.

Mr. ARCHER was understood to say that under the amendment people would know exactly that the registration courts were to be held on the first Tuesday in January, April, July, and October.

Question—That the proposed new clause be inserted to follow the last new clause—put and passed.

Mr. ARCHER proposed the following new clause, to be inserted after the last new one:—

Every person entitled to have his name inserted in any electoral roll may personally appear before the quarterly registration court aforesaid and may on oath there make his claim and prove his qualification.

The court before registering the name of any such person shall put to the applicant the following questions (that is to say)—

1. What are your christian names surname and residence?
2. Are you of the full age of twenty-one years?
3. Are you a natural-born or naturalised subject of Her Majesty Queen Victoria and which? [And if the answer be "I am naturalised"] When were you naturalised and where?
4. Have you resided in this electoral district for the six months last past and if so where?
5. [If the applicant allege a property qualification] What is the full value of the freehold [or the annual value of the household or leasehold as the case may be] by virtue of which you claim registration?
6. Where is such qualification situate?
7. Are you disqualified for registration under the provisions of the tenth and eleventh sections of the Elections Act of 1874?

Mr. GRIFFITH said this amendment raised a nice question, and he would compare it with the existing system to show the tendency of the new style of legislation. The present system was contained in the 20th clause of the Colonial Secretary's Bill, and under it all that a man claiming the franchise had to do was to send by post to the clerk of petty sessions a notice of his claim and qualification. Under the amendments, however, a man would have to be sworn to give the court all these particulars, or else go to a justice of the peace. He objected to any statement on oath or solemn declaration before a justice being required from any claimant. If he gave sufficient particulars, and there was no objection, why should he not be registered? Were the Committee going deliberately to disfranchise people, for that was the principal feature of the 7th and 8th clauses? If a man was determined to be registered as an elector, did anyone suppose he would hesitate at making a declaration? The present system had worked well, and he could not see why it should not be left alone.

Mr. MCLEAN thought the amendment a very objectionable one. Last night, the hon. member for Cook was informed that, to enable electors in his district to have their names enrolled, there was nothing else necessary than for some one to carry application forms round and have them filled up; but, according to this amendment, an applicant for enrolment had to appear personally before the registration court. Instead of giving facilities to people to have their names enrolled it would have the very opposite effect.

Mr. ARCHER was understood to say that he could not see that the amendment would have the effect described, and that it was optional with an applicant for registration as a voter to appear personally before the court to prove his claim.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that what he had objected to was the proposed system of requiring a man desirous of being registered to attend the court or make a solemn declaration before a magistrate.

Mr. MCLEAN would point out that the next new clause distinctly negatived the

amendments before the Committee, for it provided that the justice who witnessed his signature to his claim should put the seven questions.

Mr. GROOM did not like the amendments, and thought the questions proposed to be put to applicants would prove most confusing. Take the seventh, for example: how could the generality of men be expected to answer it? and yet if it were not answered a magistrate might refuse to register a person who was really entitled to the franchise. It was impossible to make ill-informed people understand such a clause as this, and it was only putting unnecessary obstructions to the making of genuine claims.

Mr. HENDREN said it would be very inconvenient for residents in the country districts to appear personally before the registration courts to make their claims, and that he preferred the existing system.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY could not say that he felt a very great affection for this amendment. It was copied almost literally from the Victorian Act, which contained these seven questions, and another as to whether the applicant was receiving relief from a charitable institution. The amendment did not go so far as that, but, in looking closely at it, he preferred the clause in his own Bill; the amendment had better be negatived, and he would then move his own clause.

Question—That the proposed new clause be inserted to follow the last new clause—put and negatived.

Mr. DOUGLAS moved that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Question put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 21.

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

NOES, 24.

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

Resolved in the negative.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the following clause, to follow the last clause inserted:—

8. Every person entitled to have his name inserted in an electoral list may give or send by post notice in writing thereof to the clerk of petty sessions for the police district in the electoral list of which he so claims to have his name inserted Such notice shall be signed by the applicant and shall be in the following form or to the like effect—

To the Clerk of Petty Sessions of in the Police District of

I hereby give you notice that I claim to have my name inserted in the Electoral List for the Electoral District of my name and qualification being as hereunder stated And I hereby solemnly declare that I am possessed of such qualification.

[*Here follows the form showing qualification.*]

(Signed) A.B.

And such clerk of petty sessions shall produce every such notice at the next following sitting of the Quarterly Registration Court aforesaid

No claim made in any such notice shall be rejected for informality unless reasonable proof thereof in writing or otherwise shall not be given to such court And if any such claim be rejected by such court the presiding justice shall endorse on the notice the cause of rejection and the clerk of petty sessions shall forthwith transmit the same by post or otherwise to the person from whom such notice was received.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he could not understand the meaning of the first sentence in the last paragraph of the clause. The sentence was complete if it stopped at the word "informality."

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had a printed clause before him, and a new one had been moved which was not all printed; so, perhaps, the Colonial Secretary or the member for Blackall would explain in what respect the two clauses differed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY explained that the new clause did not require any declaration before a magistrate, and the questions were left out. He had written the amendment hurriedly, and thought the latter part of the clause might very well be omitted.

Mr. DOUGLAS trusted he should not be considered unduly inquisitive in asking the hon. Colonial Secretary, who had so frequently had recourse to the leader of the Opposition for advice on the Bill, whether it was the intention of the Government to shortly appoint an Attorney-General whose assistance in this respect would be found useful? He rather objected to his hon. friend doing the work of Acting Attorney-General under the circumstances.

Mr. GRIFFITH suggested the omission of the words "unless reasonable proof thereof in writing or otherwise shall not be given to such court;" and also called attention to the fact that the clause under consideration was wholly inconsistent with that carried last night, which would have to be borne in mind on the recommital of the Bill.

Mr. DICKSON thought it would be better for them to retrace their steps, and for the Colonial Secretary to adhere to his first love and to admit frankly that when he gave his adherence to the voluminous amendments of the hon. member for Blackall he did so without due consideration. The general expression of opinion on the second reading of the Bill was that several of its clauses were sound, and had the hon. member stuck to the Bill as it then was it would by this time have been through Committee. Now, however, the further they went on the more difficulties they found themselves in; and he would suggest to the hon. gentleman the policy of retracing his steps.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had always found that the best way to get out of a fog was to move the Chairman out of the chair.

On the motion of the hon. member the House resumed, the Chairman reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday, the 15th July.

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