Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 23 *July*, 1879.

Ministerial Explanation. — Correction. — Petitions. — Questions.—Appropriation Bill No. 1—third reading. —Formal Motions.—Supply—committee.

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

MINISTERIAL EXPLANATION.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said: I wish to take the first opportunity of correcting an error made by myself the other evening, and which I am afraid was the occasion of a rather acrimonious debate. Hon. members will remember that the other evening, when the Estimates were under discussion, I stated, on the assurance of the Under Secretary to the Treasury, who was in the House at the time, that the sum put down for last year to meet the travelling expenses of His Excellency the Governor had all been paid. I now find that the amount has not all been paid, and that only £170 out of the whole £500 has been drawn. I am extremely sorry that the error should have occurred, because I was very careful in asking the particulars of the vote from the officer who was in the House at the time, but who, in the confusion of many items, misunderstood me, and gave an explanation that I fancy referred to the amount of £500 for uniforms, &c. I therefore take the first opportunity of correcting what I then said. At all events, £170 only out of the whole amount has been drawn. I move the adjournment of the House.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: I am sure we are all very glad to have the Colonial Treasurer's statement, which must be satisfactory to both sides of the House. I should not, however, have risen had it not been to suggest that it is not necessary when a Minister rises to make an explanation to conclude with a motion for adjournment. To my mind there is something inconsistent in a Minister moving the adjournment to make such explanations as he may think necessary. I hope we shall revert to the old practice of Parliament—of Ministers making their explanations without moving the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER: My reason was that, having made a statement which formed the subject of debate, and for which I was primarily to blame, I wished to explain myself, and it would be scarcely fair to make the explanation in such a way as to prevent hon. members saying anything they liked upon it.

CORRECTION.

Mr. MILES was obliged to the Premier for giving him the opportunity of correcting a mis-report of something he had said at the previous sitting. He was reported to have said that there was a flour mill between Dalby and Jimbour;—what he had said was, that it was contemplated to erect a flour mill between those places.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

PETITIONS.

Mr. STUBLEY presented a petition from residents on Charters Towers Goldfields, praying for the removal of the Supreme Court from Bowen to Townsville.

Petition read and received.

Mr. MESTON presented a petition from selectors and others on East and West Prairie and St. Ruth, praying for a reduction in the upset price of land in that district.

Petition read and received.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. COOPER asked the Premier—

1. Has the Geological Surveyor at any time reported upon the Burrum Coal and the Ipswich Coal?—If so, which does he say is the superior of the two?

2. What number of tons of Coal have been imported from New South Wales during the last five years?

3. Is there any export from the Ipswich Mines?—If so, what number of tons per annum?

4. What was the number of tons of Coal used by the Government last year, and total cost of same?

The PREMIER replied—

1. The Geological Surveyor, Mr. Gregory, has reported on both the Burrum and Ipswich coalfields. His reports, which will be found in the "Votes and Proceedings" for the years 1876 and 1879, do not contain any direct statements as to which is the best coal.

2. 37,951 tons.

3. Export from the Ipswich mines, 20,485 tons.

4. 14,332 tons, costing £10,011.

Mr. COOPER asked the Minister for Works and Mines—

When will the Report of the Department of Mines, for the financial year ending 30th June, be laid upon the table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS AND MINES (Mr. Macrossan) replied—

The Report of the Mining Department for the year 1878 will be laid on the table of the House in a few days.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Works—

Have any instructions been given for a trial survey of a Branch Railway line to Esk, *vid* Pine Mountain and Brisbane River?—If not, is it the intention of the Government to have such survey made, and when?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

A trial survey from Walloon, by the Pine Mountain and the Upper Brisbane River to the township of Esk, has been completed.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the PREMIER, Appropriation Bill No. 1 was read a third time, passed, and transmitted to the Legislative Council by message in the usual form.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to :—

By Mr. GROOM—

For leave to introduce a Bill to enable the Trustees of three Allotments of Land in the town of Toowoomba, granted for the purposes of the religious body called Methodists, to sell the same, and to devote the proceeds to the building of a parsonage on other land in a more convenient situation.

Bill presented, read a first time, and ordered to be printed; the hon. member giving notice that, to-morrow, he would move that it be referred to a select committee, consisting of Messrs. Amhurst, Rutledge, Davenport, O'Sullivan, and the mover.

By Mr. GROOM—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider the following resolutions, viz. :—

1. That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to provide for the more effectual destruction of the Bathurst Burr and certain thistle plants.

2. That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to recommend to the House the necessary appropriation for carrying out the provisions of the said Bill.

SUPPLY—COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. GROOM, before the motion was carried, said he desired to take advantage of the opportunity to call the attention of the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to the non-carrying out of the provisions of the Friendly Societies Act, 1876. He had not been aware that the provisions of the Act had not been carried out, although he had been expecting to see the annual returns laid before Parliament, but on the 7th of July last he received the following letter on the subject :—

"Adelaide street,
"Brisbane, 26 June, 1879.

"SIR,—I beg to call your attention (as compiler of the Act) to the manner in which the Friendly Societies Act of 1876 is being carried out.

"Since the Act came into force, 1st January, 1877, no returns have been sent to the Registrar by any society, on account of there being no 'prescribed forms available.' As secretary of the Loyal Hope of the Valley Lodge, I have several times gone to the Registrar's office to try to obtain the necessary forms, but have always been told 'there were no forms compiled yet.' I have asked them to take the balance-sheet submitted to the lodge, but was told that all documents must be in prescribed form, but no one could tell me what 'prescribed form' meant; and yet the whole of the lodges are liable to a penalty for not forwarding them.

"The Act provides that the Registrar shall report to Parliament each year; yet this is the third session since the Act came into force, and he has not reported yet.

"My object in writing to you is that the matter may be put right, as, if it goes on year after year as it is at present, it will be impossible (owing to the loose way nearly all the Friendly Societies' books are kept) for the back returns to be made; whereas, in most cases, the same secretaries are now in office as in 1876, and they may be able to do so, though in many cases I doubt if the secretaries themselves could make anything of their books after the accounts had gone out of their memory. I have seen a good deal of the method of lodge book-keeping, and, with a few exceptions, the books would be a disgrace to a schoolboy. Hoping you will give this your earliest attention,

"I am, sir,
"Yours obediently,
"B. R. BALE.

"W. H. Groom, Esquire, M.L.A.,
"Parliamentary Buildings."

The object of the Friendly Societies Act, which was a transcript of the English Act, was to bring those societies under the control of the House, and most assuredly under the control of the Government. There were from twenty-five to thirty friendly societies in the colony, and they dealt with the accumulated funds of the working classes, who had a right to know how their money was being expended, and how their accounts in connection with those societies stood. The duties of the Registrar of Friendly Societies were clearly defined in the 8th section of the Act, and in later clauses it was provided that, if a friendly society sent in a return and balance-sheet which, in the opinion of the Registrar, were unsatisfactory, that officer could call in two auditors, from the Auditor-General's Office if he chose, to audit the accounts, the expense of such audit to be paid by the society. It was also provided that the Registrar should, on the 31st December in each year, send in a synopsis of the working of the societies for the year just closed —and a most interesting return it would be —to be laid before Parliament. That was the course pursued in England, and it had done a vast amount of good. From the time the Act was passed, in 1876, to the present it had remained a dead letter, although every friendly society was liable to a penalty of £5 for each year it had not sent in its returns in accordance with the Act. When officers of friendly societies had applied they had been told there were

no forms. He did not attribute any blame in this matter to the recently-appointed officer; but the late head of the department could not be excused for the neglect he had shown in the carrying out of the Act. It was unnecessary to say more on the subject; and he trusted the Premier would in future see that the Act was put into operation.

The PREMIER said that, when he replied to the question put to him on the 10th July by the hon. member for Toowoomba, he was not aware that any provision had been made to put the Friendly Societies Act into force; the letter he read from the Registrar was the only information he had on the subject, and that was to the effect that no provision had been made to carry out the Act. That seemed to be the only obstacle in the way. Looking at clause 8, he gathered that there was a good deal of work in connection with it; but he had been informed by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that such was not the case, and, as little extra clerical work would be involved, it would be the duty of the Government to see if they could not take steps to put the Act into operation.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the work was really very trifling, and no extra expenditure would be required to get it done. He was himself to some extent to blame for not seeing to the execution of the Act before; but he had made inquiries occasionally, and was informed it was being done.

Question put and passed, and the House went into Committee of Supply.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that £3,478 be granted for the Department of the Colonial Secretary. He did not see any items that required explanation, but he should be happy to give any if asked for One clerk had been reduced, and an accountant had been put on in his place. The estimate showed a small decrease on that of last year.

Mr. MILES wished to know to whom the item "Assistant Under Colonial Secretary" referred. Was it a new appointment?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was only the chief clerk under another name. Since he (Mr. Palmer) came into office, the Under Colonial Secretary had been often incapacitated through illness from attending to his duties, and it was necessary to have some one to sign vouchers and cheques in his absence. The change was in the name, not in the pay.

Mr. BAILEY said that, in spite of the professions of the Government, their grand policy of retrenchment in this department had only gone to the extent of dismissing one miserable clerk at £150 a-year. Was it proposed to economise in any other way? Was any real retrenchment intended in this department, or were salaries to remain as they were in the colony's most prosperous times?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the questions of the hon. member were hardly necessary, as the Estimates spoke for themselves. The Government had no intention of reducing salaries on their own motion.

Mr. MILES moved that the items be put *seriatim*.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not see what the hon. gentleman could gain by such a motion, except a very considerable delay. The hon. gentleman could object to any item or every item in succession if he chose. He thought it was an unusual motion.

Mr. MCLEAN said it was not a new motion by any means; it was moved last year by the then Opposition, and instead of obstructing business it would facilitate it.

The CHAIRMAN said the motion was out of order. Every hon. member had it in his power to object to any item, supposing it was not the preceding one already dealt with.

Mr. MILES moved that the item "Under Colonial Secretary, £800," be reduced by £160, or 20 per cent. His object was to test the feeling of the House, beginning with the higher salaries at 20 per cent., a lower grade at 10 per cent, and so on down to 5 per cent. The colony was going through a very severe period of depression, and every class was suffering. Farm produce was almost unsaleable, and one farmer had told him, the other day, that it was utterly impossible to dispose of their produce. At the same time, when a change for the better took place he should be glad to see the Civil Servants restored to their present rate of pay. He hoped the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) would assist him in this matter, and, if he did, that hon. member's constituents, and the taxpayers of the colony generally, would thank him far more than for getting up and making long speeches about Royal favours and future marquises.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said a much better means of testing the feeling of the Committee on this subject would be to introduce a comprehensive motion for the reduction of salaries all round—so much per cent. for the highest grades, and gradually reducing the scale in accordance with the amount of salary received. Such a course would shorten the work of the Committee, and Government would be bound by the decision arrived at. They would agree to take a division in a full committee on that question, and that ought to satisfy hon. members opposite.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that, as he had been appealed to for assistance by the hon. member for the Darling Downs, he would inform that hon. member that he might count upon his assistance whenever he proposed anything which he (Mr. Rutledge)

believed would be for the good of the country generally, and would not operate oppressively upon any individual or class of individuals. He was not going to be a party to cutting down the salaries of Civil Servants all round on a general motion like this. It was all very well to get up a cry, and say that Civil Servants should be made to participate with the colony generally in the suffering occasioned by the prevailing depression; because, while that might hold good in times of depression, he doubted very much whether those very economical gentlemen, of whom the hon. member for the Darling Downs might be taken as a representative, would be as anxious, when the colony was prosperous, that they should participate in the prevailing prosperity. He did not intend to plead the cause of the Civil Servants; but he thought a sweeping motion of this kind, which made no distinction, would not commend itself to the common-sense of the Committee.

The Hon. G. THORN said Government ought to set the example in the direction of retrenchment by each member of the Ministry knocking off £200 from his salary. He should like an expression of opinion on that point from them. Such a reduction would come from them with a good grace, and would make the outside public believe far more than they did in the reality of their professions of retrenchment. He did not think the higher grade of Civil Servants should be reduced 20 per cent., but he should like to see 30 per cent. knocked off Ministers' salaries.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman was in receipt of a large salary for a number of years, for which he did nothing except run the country into enormous expenditure: let him begin by refunding some of it. He (Mr. Palmer) had been four years in office at a reduced salary—the Ministry of which he was a member reduced their salaries on their own motion; and yet when they proposed to reduce the salaries of the Civil Servants on that occasion they were beaten, and the hon. member for Northern Downs was one of those who beat them. The Government were not going to adopt the course suggested by the hon. gentleman: they had done it once, and were not likely to do it again. If the hon. gentleman would repay to the country the enormous sums he had drawn from the Treasury without giving any value whatever for them, but, on the contrary, ran the country into a very large expenditure, the Government would take the matter into their very serious consideration.

Mr. BAILEY said the suggestion of the Colonial Secretary was a good one, and such an arrangement would accelerate the despatch of business. Every class of the community was bound to carry out an actual, and not a sham, retrenchment. The Committee was not able to reduce the salaries of Ministers unless they could see a way to consent to the reduction themselves; but they could reduce the other Estimates all round upon a regular scale. He was willing to propose, therefore, that all salaries be reduced on the following scale: Above £500, 15 per cent.; from £300 to £500, 10 per cent.; from £150 to £300, 5 per cent. That would be a very moderate and fair reduction, and if Government would consent to it many hon. members would assist to carry it into effect. According to that scale of reduction the first item would be reduced by £120.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said his proposal was to take a division on the general subject in a fairly full House, and accept the decision as a test. The hon. members present would make as full a House as they were likely to get, and if they gave a decision adverse to the salaries as they stood, Government would accept the decision. But the Government were bound to stand by their own Estimates, and they certainly would oppose the motion of the hon. member for Wide Bay.

Mr. THORN said the Colonial Secretary had made a remark a little while ago, to the effect that he had run the country into debt. He would like to know how and where?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Everywhere.

Mr. THORN said no Minister had been more economical than he had been while in office; and he had always kept the expenditure within revenue. Everything then had gone on swimmingly, and they knew nothing about deficits; and he believed it was so afterwards, until the season of depression. That depression was no more owing to the action of the Administration of which he had been a member, or of the following Administration, than the depression at present existing in England was due to the Government there, though a great many unthinking people had ascribed it to the Beaconsfield Government. He should like the Colonial Secretary to explain in what way he ran the country into extravagance, not in a big way but even in a little way, as he could then show that he had no part whatever in running the country into debt. He wished to show to the country that while he was in office, and during the Administration of his successors, the country steadily progressed. But since the present Government came into power he noticed with regret that there had been a steady falling off in the revenue, owing to the exodus of the people from the country. His great object when in office had been to bring people to the colony, and then keep them there; but he was not aware that he had in any possible shape or form run the country into debt or extravagance.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member asked him to go into a question of detail which would occupy about a month. He could say for himself that he believed the hon. member had, in one way, run the country into debt by creating a great number of unnecessary offices and cramming his friends into billets.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS: No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, yes; and he had heard the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) say almost as much. He (the Colonial Secretary) could name one man put into an office where he had nothing whatever to do. He believed a great deal of debt was incurred in that way; and he knew that it was stated by Ministers succeeding the hon. member that there was no chance of any fresh appointments in the Service for at least a year.

Mr. THORN said he had never cared about patronage, and as soon as he took office he instituted a system of examinations for the Service. He knew very well that out of every ten applicants for an appointment the one to whom he gave it was ever afterwards an ingrate and the other nine became enemies. It was the same with magistrates, but he had been too clever and too wise to make many appointments. The present Government had lost caste through their appointments of magistrates. They had been doing a great deal in that way, but they would only make enemies, as for each one appointed nine other persons in the distrit considered themselves just as much entitled to be put on the Commission of the Peace. The less a Minister had to do with patronage the better he would be appreciated hereafter. Before he had been three months in the Post Office he instituted competitive examinations, and he tried the system with other departments, but failed. He would like the Colonial Secretary to show where he had foisted people into the Service? Upon the list of names of the persons employed in the Ipswich workshops there appeared twenty-four or twenty-five names as names of persons appointed by him, but half of those named were boys, and one was appointed in November, 1878, when he was not in the colony. Appointments had often been attributed to him which he had never made nor recommended—perhaps, because his shoulders were broad and he could bear the burden. He believed it had been already stated before a select committee by the heads of departments that he had never interfered with the appointments in the Ipswich workshops, except to appoint a few boys. He had done that because he liked to give encouragement to the rising generation, believing it was necessary there should be something besides stock-riders and clerks in the colony, and that trades should be encouraged. He was not at all ashamed of having made those appointments, and, with those exceptions, he had made very few, never having cared about making them.

Mr. MILES was understood to say that one person in the Works Department had been appointed on the recommendation of the Colonial Secretary. He wished to state that he had made a mistake in moving that the first item should be reduced by £180; he should have said £160. He did not see why he should withdraw his amendment in favour of that of the hon. member for Wide Bay, but he had no wish to retard the business of the House. What would the Colonial Secretary consider a full House—was he prepared to accept a division to-day?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.

Mr. MILES: And abide by it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes; certainly.

Mr. MILES begged to withdraw his motion to allow that of the hon. member for Wide Bay to be put.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that in Committee of Supply an hon. member could not move an abstract resolution, but a definite motion must be made with regard to some item. Besides, in any case, it would be very undesirable that an abstract resolution involving three things at once, as in this sliding scale, should be moved. Some hon. member might wish to reduce the amounts, but not according to that scale; and the Committee would get into the greatest confusion. They could test the feeling of the House by moving that all salaries under a certain amount be reduced according to a percentage. That would be more convenient and practical, but to do so they would have to go back into the House and move the resolution there.

Mr. BAILEY said the leader of the Opposition misunderstood the whole affair. His proposition was to reduce the salaries according to a certain scale, and the Colonial Secretary had agreed that the first salary should be the test whether the Committee adopted that scale.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not agree to that. What he said was, that if the proposal of the hon. member for Wide Bay to adopt a certain scale was carried in a moderately-filled House, the Government would accept it as the decision of the Committee and be guided by it. He saw no difficulty in the motion being brought forward, but the Government would not support it. If a motion of that sort was carried the Estimates could be voted as they stood, with the understanding that every item would be reduced according to the scale.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had understood that the hon. member for Darling Downs was going to withdraw his motion, and that the hon. member for Wide Bay now came forward with an abstract resolution appli-

cable to the whole of the Estimates. It was evident that such a resolution could not be put in Committee, but it was also clear to his mind that if the hon. member moved a reduction on that salary, and announced his intention of applying the same scale to all similar salaries, they had an issue which could be accepted at once by the Committee. On the other hand, he was well aware that propositions of that kind involved very serious issues, and he should like to hear it well argued. He should like to hear what the Colonial Secretary had to say in justification for retaining salaries at the present rate. The Committee had a fair plea to hear on what ground the Government objected to the proposition made. They were also entitled to be informed by the hon. member for Wide Bay, or to infer for themselves, what effect his proposed reduction would have upon the whole of the salaries they had to consider, and to ascertain from the Government what effect it would have on the Estimates as a whole. He was not prepared to say what that reduction should be. These were days of economy, and the Estimates were compiled upon professed principles of economy. There were certain reductions upon the Estimates which might be criticised when the Committee came to consider them. The Government had professed a belief that it was necessary to economise, and the present Estimates were the result of the deliberation of the Government upon the necessities for reduction. Of course, therefore, the Government were bound to abide by their Estimates, subject to the decision of the Committee. It would only be becoming in the Committee to ascertain exactly what they were doing, or they might do some injustice. He, for his own part, was willing to admit that these were times for economy; and he was very desirous not to give expression to any opinion leading to the conclusion that they had been led aside by unnecessary panic in this respect. The times were difficult; but he hoped they were not times to necessitate the re-organisation of the whole Civil Service; and short of that it was doubtful whether they should make a reformation, unless they clearly saw that it was absolutely required. They should act, if necessary, on the clear conviction of the necessity, and know the ground and extent of their action. It must not be forgotten that the Colonial Treasurer, in framing his Estimates for the ensuing year and the results of the operations of the year, had brought in at the end a balance in favour of the results as he estimated them. Did they concur in the opinion the Colonial Treasurer had arrived at, that there would be an excess of revenue over expenditure? If they did, they were scarcely called upon to adopt any sweeping system of further reduction. If, on the other hand, they believed, from the best information they could obtain, that the calculations of the Treasurer were miscalculated, they should probably be justified in effecting further reduction; but, before acting, they should know exactly what they were doing.

Mr. SIMPSON said, as a member elected to advocate retrenchment, he thought this was a proper time to say something. They had not now to do with the extravagance of past Governments, but to look to the future. He considered that a moderate reduction upon a sliding scale would be a very fair thing for Civil Servants. Such was his present impression; but he was quite open to conviction, and any hon. member who thought the proposal unadvisable should state his reasons. There was no doubt that outside the Service every person in the colony had to put up with reduction of income. The squatter got less for his cattle and his wool; the farmer less for his corn and wheat; and, with regard to the labourer, in the west, where wages used to be high and labour scarce, now employment was scarce and wages low. There was another reason in favour of reduction: the very causes which reduced the incomes of other members of the community enabled the Civil Servants to live cheaper. Meat was cheaper; butter and all colonial produce was cheaper; and therefore the Civil Servant could live for less than he could some time ago when prices were high. A general reduction would be the fairest way to meet the case, with the understanding that when the times improved the salaries should be again raised; it would be a very simple matter to add on the same percentage then. The proposed reduction of 15 per cent. for the largest salaries was too high; it should not be more than 10 per cent., and at that, even, the Civil Servants affected would be in a much better position than almost every other class of the community; for there was not the least doubt that producers had lost more than 10 per cent.—in extreme cases the loss had doubtless been more than 50 per cent., but a great many producers had lost more than 10 per cent. If salaries over £500 were lowered 10 per cent.; over £250, 7½ per cent.; and over £100, 5 per cent., the reduction would be moderate, and Civil Servants would have nothing to grumble at. He would vote for a moderate reduction if it were made uniform, but he was opposed to wholesale reductions of particular salaries. The limit of a general moderate reduction might be £150—he was open to conviction on the point. He would support a moderate scheme of reduction, but a wholesale one he would not.

Mr. MOREHEAD thought the main point with reference to the Civil Service had not been touched yet. He should be very sorry to underpay any officer, but the State

was over-officered; there were a great deal too many Civil Servants, which might possibly be the result of their representative institutions under which every member might be expected to obtain situations in the Civil Service for his supporters, or every Government might see the necessity of making a billet for a supporter's friend. This was one of the great evils of the Civil Service, and would no doubt continue. He agreed almost to the full extent with the hon. member (Mr. Bailey). These were the times to go in for retrenchment. They had been living in a fool's paradise for a considerable time, and had been pampering their Civil Service to an extent that the circumstances of the colony did not warrant. Hardly any member of the Committee would deny that many Civil Servants were overpaid for the work they did. No mercantile or other business establishment in the city, or any station or business in the country, was so over-manned as the Government departments—the State employés were actually tumbling over one another. Inefficient men had been put in through political influence, and the consequence was that the Government offices were overcrowded. The work could be done by two-thirds of the present staff, and in this statement the hon. member (Mr. Miles) would bear him out, for he must remember that he once said that his department could stand a loss of a third of its staff. He would much rather have supported a dismissal of the drones; but against this proposal the objection might be raised that this was a bad time to dismiss. If these men were turned out of the Service they would have to look a long way for employment, and therefore he would not press the proposal. Possibly, it was not the fault of these inefficient men that they were in the State Service, but of the persons who put them there. With reference to the remarks of the Colonial Secretary, he would point out that, even if the Committee fell in with the proposition the hon. gentleman had made—that he would accept the decision of a moderately full House as favouring a general reduction—he (Mr. Morehead) would not consider it as binding upon him to accede to all the salaries down on the Estimates. There were certain salaries to which he objected *in toto*, and, therefore, if the proposition for a general reduction was accepted, it must be understood that any member of the Committee was not bound to refrain from opposing *in toto* any salary to which he might object. There were some departments down on the Estimates in regard to which he intended to raise not only the question of a reduction of salaries but of their actual abolition. The hon. member (Mr. Douglas) had tried to raise small technical objections to prevent the discussion of this question. He understood the hon. member to say it would be no use discussing the matter in the form in which it was put—that it might give rise to a general discussion, but not tend to any progress in the direction of a general reduction.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. member was not right in his interpretation of his (Mr. Douglas') remarks. The tendency of the hon. member for Wide Bay's remarks was that the proposed reduction should apply to all similar cases. Of course, it would be necessary eventually, before they arrived at a general reduction, that something like an abstract resolution should be moved. If the principles advocated by the hon. member for Wide Bay were adopted, it would be necessary that he should move the Chairman out of the chair and bring forward something like an abstract resolution.

Mr. MOREHEAD regretted that he had not understood the hon. member correctly. He held a similar opinion to the one just expressed. But to return to the question: as to the question of reducing the number of Civil Servants rather than diminishing their salaries, he would point out that the Government had already adopted the former course in regard to the police. They had reduced that branch of the State Service with the intention of retrenchment; and if they applied the same paring knife to the other departments it would be better than the proposed reduction. Perhaps, however, that course could not be adopted. Knowing that the colony must go in for a serious reduction as regarded the Civil Service in order to retrench, he should support the hon. member (Mr. Bailey). It was no use making a small reduction of salaries, for it would have no appreciable effect. He did not hold with the hon. member (Mr. Simpson's) opinion, that a lesser percentage off the highest salaries would be better. The heads of departments were well paid, and had their salaries increased only lately, and could well afford a reduction; very few Civil Servants would really be touched by the maximum reduction. He would rather have wished that the hon. member (Mr. Bailey) had drawn the line at £200, and he hoped that the hon. member would modify his resolution. This suggestion did not, however, affect the principle of the resolution, which he hoped would be supported.

Mr. STUBLEY said he did not believe in the proposed method of retrenchment. These Civil Servants had to perform the same amount of work, if not more, that they had to do in prosperous times; they received no benefit from the times being prosperous, and therefore there could be no comparison between them and business men. A business man made provision during the time of prosperity to carry on in times of depression, but a Civil Servant could not do so, having to continue at the

same salary. If they wanted good men—men with brains—to enter the Government Service, they must pay good salaries. The question was, could they do with less Civil Servants? He was afraid they could not. He should not vote for a reduction of salaries as proposed. The last speaker had said that he could not appreciate the idea of dismissing Civil Servants in these times; but the Government, to start their policy of retrenchment, had already dismissed working men. When, however, they came to the Civil Service, the feeling of the Committee seemed to be in favour of a reduction of salaries and not of a lessening of the staff. If the existing staff was required the wages must be maintained.

MR. BAILEY said no doubt it was by no means pleasing to the Committee to reduce salaries; they had always had greater pleasure in increasing than decreasing, but it was their duty to reduce the salaries of the State employés. The taxpayers of the colony would be of opinion that they had failed to do their duty if they allowed the present rate of State salaries to remain when the income of every taxpayer had been lessened more than the amount proposed to be taken off the Civil Servants' pay. With regard to the member for Dalby's objection to the reduction of the highest salaries by the percentage proposed, he would remind him that, in 1873, the Under Colonial Secretary received £600. Under the reduction he (Mr. Bailey) proposed that officer would still receive £680, or £80 in excess of his salary of 1873. The Registrar-General, in 1873, received £600, and under the reductions proposed he would receive only £5 less. Practically, the best-paid officials would be reduced to a little below or above their salaries of 1873. His proposition that the scale he had suggested should be considered general, if the Committee passed his amendment, was made in the interest of the Government and to accelerate the passing of the Estimates; if they began reducing salary by salary, pound by pound and shilling by shilling, the Estimates would not be got through by Christmas. He hoped the Government would offer no factious opposition to his proposition. Many of his friends wished the decrease to be much larger, but he desired to adopt a fair medium reduction.

MR. MILES said it would be remembered that when the Minister for Works discharged a number of men from the railway workshops some hon. members on the Opposition benches said, "Why were not their salaries reduced, or why were not the men put on half or three-quarter time?" When, therefore, it was proposed to reduce the salaries of the Civil Servants, none of these members should get up to argue against the proposal. He should like to hear the Minister for Works in connection with this matter. He had a letter from the Mayor of Dalby, informing him that a deputation of men had waited upon him to ask him to intercede with the Minister for Works in reference to his decision to deprive their wives of the 5s. per week which they used to receive for opening and shutting the railway gates; these men offered, as a compromise, that their wives should be allowed 2s. 6d. a week. When the Government could practice economy in regard to such a matter they should be able to deal with £800 salaries. They all knew that the necessaries of life were now to be procured at half the prices previously ruling, and that Civil Servants protected themselves by having a co-operative store, where they got their wines and groceries at one-third less than anyone else could. They could afford a reduction in their income better than any other class in the community. Seeing that every other class had to submit to greatly reduced receipts, was it not fair to ask that Civil Servants should also be required to bear their share? The Committee had never been backward in increasing salaries when the country was in a prosperous state. Last session, and the session before, salaries were increased, and it was only fair now, considering that there was a great falling off of the revenue, that there should be a reduction. The Colonial Treasurer told them the Treasury was empty. Were they still to go on paying enormous salaries when this was the case? Some allusion had been made to Ministers reducing their own salaries. If he should be successful in reducing the salaries of Civil Servants, he should propose the next day to introduce a Bill reducing the salaries of Ministers, but he wished to pave the way first. He did not blame the Government for refusing to reduce their own salaries—they had done the same thing once before and had been taken in. Their reductions were accepted; but the principle was not carried further. An hon. member asked why the late Government did not reduce their salaries; but he would remind him that the times were then prosperous—the traffic on the railways were increasing, but since the present Government had come into office it had been falling off month after month, so much that they had to discontinue some of the trains. The policy of the present Government was frightening people out of the country. In regard to this question of a general reduction of salaries, he knew the hanky-panky tricks that might be played, and he did not wish to be caught in a trap: he would take the items one by one.

MR. KING said he agreed with the hon. member (Mr. Stubley), so far as he could understand him. The proper way to economise was to reduce the number of Civil Servants rather than to reduce their pay.

He had always believed that their Civil Service was immensely too large for the colony, and that the people here required to have things done for them which the people did for themselves in other countries; and when hard times came upon the colony it would be no great hardship to require that the people should perform a few of the services which hitherto they had been in the habit of getting done for them. He came from a country which was more civilised than even Queensland was at the present time, and in the country districts of Ireland there was nothing like the proportion of Civil Servants which were to be found here. Here police magistrates were provided all over the country, for the convenience of small communities and to save them from the performance of duties which were rendered gratuitously by the people in other countries. A reduction, to be useful, must take shape in this direction: they should compel men who were in a position to render honorary services to perform them, as was done in other countries, and thus lessen the number of Civil Servants. With reference to the proposition to reduce the higher salaries, he was well aware that it was a popular notion out of doors, but there could not be a more unjust one. They must have a sufficiently number of good appointments to offer to members of the Service. How did the pay of their higher offices stand in comparison with private appointments? There was not a single Government officer, with the exception of one or two professional gentlemen, who got as high a salary as was paid by the large mercantile establishments to their managers. Take the Under Secretary in the Colonial Secretary's Department at the present time; he was the permanent head of that department, and last year had the expenditure of £310,000; this year he would have the expenditure of £279,000, and his salary was only £800 a year. He believed that any private firm conducting business of that magnitude would pay a much higher salary than that to their manager. It was undoubtedly right that Government officers should receive less than the employés of private firms, because they had greater security in the employment of the Government; but if they carried out the principle of making the Civil Servants pay for the falling off in the revenue, or for extravagant expenditure, by reducing their salaries, their position would be less secure than if they were in the service of private individuals or firms. If they carried the examination all through the Estimates they would find that, except in the case of one or two professional gentlemen, there were no officers who were drawing such salaries as were paid to managers of banks or large pastoral properties or manufacturing companies. Take the case he had mentioned—that of the Under Colonial Secretary—surely, the duties that devolved upon him were as important and responsible as those of a bank manager in Brisbane? There were five banks in Brisbane, and the managers of those banks were receiving much higher salaries than any that were put down in these Estimates.

Mr. THORN: Three times as much.

Mr. KING said it would have bad effect on the Civil Service if reductions were made in this way, at a time when there was some reason for saying that the difficulties they now laboured under had been brought upon themselves. They had plunged into expenditure which had rendered these reductions necessary. He thought no one could deny that they had been spending more money than they ought to have done on revenue account; they had been spending lavishly, and, in consequence of that, it was proposed to reduce the salaries of men who were not overpaid with their present salaries. He hoped hon. members would bear in mind that there were very few under secretaries in the Government service—perhaps not more than half-a-dozen, and if they reduced their salaries in this way the result would be to diminish the feeling of security that existed in connection with those offices, and make them much less valuable than other appointments in private firms, and they should only get men who were unable to get employment elsewhere. In Victoria, the other day, when a considerable number of Government servants were dismissed, it was much to the credit of that colony that a large number of them were immediately employed in responsible positions in private institutions, and he thought they ought to endeavour to keep at the head of the Civil Service here such a class of men as banks and private institutions would be glad to get if they had the opportunity. The heads of departments in the Government service ought certainly to be no worse than officers holding similar positions in private institutions, but should be better, if possible; and they could not get the best men unless they gave fair salaries and a fair amount of security.

Mr. STUBLEY asked a question with reference to the Civil Service Act of 1864, which was inaudible in the gallery.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) entirely disagreed with the opinions put forth by the hon. members for Kennedy (Mr. Stubley), and Maryborough (Mr. King), that it would be better to pay off a few Civil Servants than to reduce all round. When the dismissals at the Ipswich workshops took place, he advocated a general reduction rather than dismissing a certain number of men altogether; and he believed that principle should be applied in this case to all Civil Servants. The hon. member for

Dalby (Mr. Simpson) made a very true statement when he said that at the present time the Civil Servants could live a great deal cheaper than they could in the past. He knew for a fact that in wearing apparel and house-rent they could now live from 10 to 15 per cent. cheaper than they did a year ago; and that being the case, he thought it would be much better that the burden should fall upon those who were able to bear it, rather than a few men in the Service should be paid off altogether. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) said that private establishments would be very glad to get Civil Servants who were paid off; but if it went forth to the commercial community that the Civil Servants whose services were dispensed with were the drones in the Service, they would not be very likely to get employment in commercial establishments. Civil Servants were continually required in various places in the colony, and he had always advocated that, rather than pay off a number of officers, it was better to transfer them to where they were required; and, in the meantime, during the present general depression that all were suffering from, it was only fair that everyone should bear a fair share of the burden. He knew that commercial men and labouring men were suffering in all parts of the colony, and why should not heads of departments in the Civil Service also bear part of the burden until they tided over these bad times? He did not approve of reducing salaries as a rule, and would be happy to vote the full amounts when the colony was in a position to pay them.

Mr. GRIFFITH did not think that this was a matter that could be dealt with summarily, or that this one case could be taken to govern all others. All the salaries on the Estimates did not stand upon the same footing. There were two or three cases in which gentlemen were brought to the colony on a distinct understanding that they were to have a certain salary, and any general reduction at so much per cent. would be manifestly unjust to those gentlemen. The principle could not be applied generally. He had not yet made up his mind whether he should vote for a general reduction or not—he wanted further information first. There were some salaries that he was quite prepared to vote for reducing, but the difficulty that struck him was that, if the resolution were carried reducing this particular item, and that was to be held to apply generally, then the Estimates would require to be recast. That was a matter for the Government. If the Estimates were recast the Government must take the responsibility of recasting them and bringing them down in the ordinary form. He objected to the Committee doing the work of the Government. The Government themselves knew how difficult it was to adjust the claims of some Civil Servants for increases, and, on the other hand, how difficult it was to make reductions. That was a responsibility the Government must take upon themselves. It was a responsibility the Committee could not justly perform, because they had not the necessary information. Take, for instance, the case of Civil Servants who had been in the Service for many years, and whose salaries had always been the same—it would be manifestly more unjust to reduce their salaries by even a small amount than to reduce others who had been only a short time in the Service, or whose salaries had been recently increased by even a larger proportion; so that it was impossible to lay down any general rule. He looked upon the proposal as something the same as making the Civil Servants pay an income tax—that was really what it amounted to; because he did not understand that it was to be a permanent reduction, but only a temporary reduction, so that the Civil Servants should contribute something towards the support of the State in proportion to what they were paid. However, they were entitled to have the opinion of the Government on the question, and not simply a statement that they would stick to their Estimates—that was not the question raised. The Government were in a position to know whether a reduction of 15 or 10 per cent., or at any other rate, would work fairly or equitably, or whether it would be necessary to take particular instances on the Estimates; and he submitted that the Committee were entitled to be placed in possession of that information before proceeding further.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if the Government had brought down Estimates with reductions in all the salaries of Government officers they would, in his opinion, have assumed to themselves the powers of that House, because, if the Estimates were brought in cut down in that way, there was no power in the Committee to raise one of them. They could reduce as much as they liked, but they had no power to increase; and he therefore held that it was not the duty of the Government to bring down Estimates with salaries cut down, that being the business of the House essentially. It would be assuming to themselves powers which he held inherent in the Committee of Supply—that was, to reduce. The Government were, as he said before, in the hands of the Committee. As to the difficulty of taking a test-vote, which was started by the hon. member for Brisbane (Mr. Griffith), and referred to by the hon. member for Maryborough, he must confess that he could not see the slightest difficulty

in the matter. It would be in the remembrance of older members of the House that, in one year when he was Premier, he brought in Estimates increasing the salaries of the under secretaries by £100 each; there was a strong expression of opinion with reference to the very first sum on the schedule—that of the Under Colonial Secretary—and the conclusion come to was that they should take a division on that vote, and the decision arrived at should be taken to cover the whole of the increases for the under secretaries. That division was taken and the salary was reduced, and as the Estimates came on he put the estimate at the lower sum in each case, and there was no difficulty whatever. In the same way, if the Committee agreed to what had been called an abstract question of the reduction of salaries, and took 15 per cent. off salaries over £500, 10 per cent. off others, and so on, on a certain scale, there would be no difficulty in getting on with the Estimates, because the items would be put with the reduction. He did not advocate the reduction himself, and he considered that a man who, after very long service in the country, had gained what might be called the "blue ribbon of the Service"—namely, an Under Secretaryship, was not at all overpaid at £800 a year. It was a small prize in a large Service such as they had in this colony. There were only six such prizes in the whole Service; but if the Committee agreed to reduce all salaries at a certain rate—according to the amount of the salary—if that were agreed to by a majority in a fairly full House, such as he considered the present House, the Government would abide by it, and there would be no "hanky-panky" business as insinuated by the hon. member for Darling Downs. The Government had no right to be charged with anything of the sort, and, if the resolution were carried, hon. members would see that there would be no "hanky-panky" business in dealing with it. If a majority of the Committee affirmed that there should be a *pro ratâ* reduction of salaries, it would be carried right through the Estimates. The leader of the Opposition said there were several gentlemen in the Service who had come out to the colony under agreement with the Government for a certain salary, and, if there were any such parties, faith ought certainly to be kept with them. He (the Colonial Secretary) knew only one or two. There was the Geological Surveyor up north, who might have come out with an understanding as to salary, and, if that were proved, he was sure no member of the Committee would think of interfering with it. Dr. Smith, Superintendent of the Woogaroo Asylum, had also come from Victoria, with an agreement as to salary, and he presumed no one dreamt of breaking that agreement. Such cases as these could very easily be excepted from the general rule. The Engineer of Harbours and Rivers certainly did not come out with any understanding as to his present salary. He got an increase from £700 to £1,200 at one jump, and he (the Colonial Secretary) knew of no other gentleman who had come out under engagement with the Government who would be interfered with by a resolution of this sort. As he said before, Government did not consider it their duty to bring forward Estimates cutting down general salaries, which the House would have no power to raise. The Estimates were in the hands of the Committee, and whatever their decision might be the Government would abide by it faithfully and well.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. member had referred to what took place in 1872, when he proposed to raise the salaries of under secretaries, and the House struck off the first increase placed on the Estimates; but he (Mr. Griffith) could not see the similarity between that case and an important change in the financial policy of the Government. He did not know what saving would be effected by the proposed reduction, but it was certainly a matter of much greater importance than anything they had yet heard in connection with the financial policy of the Government. But the Government simply said they were in the hands of the Committee, who could do whatever they pleased. He held that it was the duty of the Government to bring down the policy they intended to carry out; but, from what the hon. Colonial Secretary said, he seemed rather to invite the reduction, and he (Mr. Griffith) maintained that a Government had no right to bring down Estimates unless they honestly believed that they were Estimates that should be carried. He did not regard the Government as clerks who simply prepared a thing and offered it to the House to worry. The Government were not the servants of the House in that sense—they were the leaders of the House, and they were bound to put before the House the policy they believed in and were prepared to stand by. This proposition was a most serious one, involving, perhaps, a saving of £20,000 or £30,000 a-year, and such a change ought only to be introduced upon the responsibility of the Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he distinctly stated that he did not advocate the reduction, but that he would oppose it, and he should do so. It was nothing new for a Government to say that they were in the hands of a majority of the Committee. If a majority of the Committee carried this reduction the Government would faithfully abide by it, but it was no part of the duty of the Government to submit reductions that they themselves did not believe in.

That was a very different thing from submitting to the decision of a majority of the Committee.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not say the hon. gentleman advocated the reduction; what he said was, that his speech would lead them to suppose that he rather invited it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It amounts to the same thing.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not think so. The hon. member's speech was something the same as he made on the Land Bill of 1868—simply to worry it. He said he should vote against the reductions, but the House might do as they liked. He (Mr. Griffith) felt some difficulty as to how he should vote in this matter, seeing that the Government would not take up the position which was properly theirs. They ought to let the House know exactly what the effect of the proposed reductions would be—whether it would be worth fighting about, or result in the substantial saving to the country; and also whether it was desirable to permanently reduce the Civil list. He submitted that they were entitled to this information, and he could not form a decided opinion upon the question until they heard something more upon the subject.

Mr. STEVENSON thought the Colonial Secretary's statement was quite distinct as to the position of the Government with regard to the Estimates. He told the Committee that the Ministry intended to support the Estimates as far as they could, but, at the same time, they all knew that the Government must submit to the decision of the Committee. The leader of the Opposition objected to the Committee doing the work of the Government, and appeared to think that they should accept the Estimates as laid upon the table of the House; but if that were the case, he did not see what was the use of hon. members being there. It was their duty to discuss the Estimates and make what reductions they thought necessary. He did not think the hon. member knew so little about his own opinion, when he said he did not know how to vote on this question. He (Mr. Stevenson) quite agreed with the hon. member for Wide Bay, and should support his amendment. In these times they had all to curtail their expenditure and accommodate it to their income, as far as they possibly could; and he would point out that the Civil Service occupied a very nice position in these times. There were many persons engaged in mercantile and pastoral pursuits who in these times had no income at all, but were actually carrying on their business at a loss and living on their capital; and, if they were to keep the Civil Service in that position, what would be thought of it? He believed the Civil Servants of the country, who were sensible men, would not, in these times of depression, object to a fair reduction, such as had been proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay. He felt perfectly satisfied that sensible men in the Service would not object to cutting down their expenses in these depressed times, when they could buy the means of living at a much cheaper rate than they could in times of prosperity. The hon. member (Mr. King) had told them about there being good men at the heads of departments whom it would be very difficult to replace; but he did not think they were likely to lose any of the heads of departments through the reductions which were proposed.

Mr. REA said that, if the statement of the Colonial Secretary was to be relied upon, the Committee must come to the conclusion that the Governor's Speech and the Financial Statement were a hoax. He (Mr. Rea) had been looking to see what was laid down in that Speech as a chart to go by, and he found these words—

> "The depression in commerce and manufacturing industry which prevails in Europe having re-acted upon this colony, has aggravated the losses suffered by our producers through the late disastrous seasons, and must force upon us economy—*personal as well as national.*"

The first test of that chart was now put before the Committee, and yet the Colonial Secretary said he did not believe in th reductions proposed. If that was the case, they had been led astray by the Governor's Speech. In the Financial Statement it was even more elaborately stated what should be the guidance of the House in regard to financial matters. When that Speech was made they were told that most of the Government departments were over-manned; and they had not since been informed that any department was under-manned, but that they were to be maintained the same as in times of prosperity. There was no intention on the part of the Government to reduce high-class salaries, but only those of the small men who could not afford reductions. The information given from time to time as to the economy of the present Government had now been put to the test, and the Colonial Secretary had admitted that it was all a hoax, and that he had never intended to reduce the Civil expenditure. He would ask where the hardship was of the Civil Servants being asked to go back to the same salaries that they received in 1874? Were the men themselves better than they then were, or was the cost of living now higher than it was then? In Victoria they had been obliged to make reductions in the Civil Service, and, whilst referring to that colony, he must say that he differed from the hon. member for Maryborough, who recommended dismissals and not reductions, and who mentioned

what had been done in Victoria. In this colony there was a great difference, however; every five years showed a large increase of settled territory which involved additional officers, whilst in Victoria there was nothing of the kind. He should decidedly set his face against a continuation of the extravagant salaries which had been in force since 1874.

Mr. DICKSON said that the unfortunate suggestion made by the Colonial Secretary, that a test motion embodying a reduction *pro ratâ* should be put, had led to the present discussion. If the hon. gentleman had considered the propriety of reductions, it was his duty, or that of the Colonial Treasurer, to have been prepared with a statement showing that such reductions were desirable, and have brought down the Estimates in accordance with them. It was a very comprehensive matter, and one which must be treated by every member of the Committee as a matter rather of equity than of rigid economy. He could not see that any resolution of the character before them would be strictly just to all classes of the Civil Servants; nor that the resolution should be looked upon as a test question, because there were many gentlemen who, as the Colonial Secretary had remarked, had after many years' service gained what was called the blue ribbon of the Service. Some of them, it was true, had only been in that position for two or three years, and in equity they ought not to be treated on an equality with those who had occupied the same position for many years. The Under Secretary to the Treasury, for example, entered upon his office at a considerably less salary than was attached to it when his predecessor held it, and a reduction such as that proposed would therefore act unfairly to that gentleman, as compared with others who had been drawing considerable salaries for a very long time. It was still a matter of very great difficulty, and therefore the Treasurer should place before the Committee a statement that would show the increase to the revenue that would accrue by the proposed reductions. Members could hardly be expected to give a vote on such a matter, with a desire to see justice extended to all classes of Civil Servants, unless they had some such statement before them. He must take exception to one statement that had been made—namely, that the ordinary expenses of living had been very much reduced of late. He did not think there had been that reduction; house-rent had not been reduced to any great extent, and the ordinary necessaries of life had not been reduced. He would ask any member whether the ordinary expenses of living in the colony had been reduced during the last six months to an extent at all in proportion to the proposed reductions? He took it that all members of the Committee were in favour of rigid economy; but the Government should place sufficient data before them, so that they might have an opportunity of fairly considering the question of these reductions. If the Government did not approve of them it was their duty to insist upon the Estimates being carried out as nearly as possible in the form in which they were laid upon the table.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said he was glad to see that the feeling of a majority of the Committee was so favourable to the reduction of the salaries of the Civil Servants. There was no doubt that almost everyone in the colony was suffering from the present depression, and he considered that those who had what might be considered a permanent billet for some years to come should share the depression which was felt by others. There was only one thing that he objected to in the resolution of the hon. member for Wide Bay, and that was that, by making a reduction in a particular salary and making it a test question, they would cause a reduction to be made in every salary afterwards, and it would be found very difficult indeed to raise those salaries again in a few years. The effect of reducing every salary individually would be this—that the reduction would not be temporary, but permanent; therefore, a reduction, if made, should be a general one and on a sliding scale, and should affect the Civil Service for this year only. If all the salaries were to be reduced in accordance with the resolution, the Service would be endangered very seriously; but if a reduction was passed upon a general resolution, reducing them on a general scale for this year only, the effect would not be serious. There was nothing more dangerous to the Service than for the members of it to feel that in times of depression their salaries would be permanently reduced, as it would cause many in the Service to throw it up and seek for something more permanent. On that ground he considered it would be a misfortune that the amendment of the hon. member for Wide Bay should be carried in its present form.

Mr. THORN said he was not aware until that evening that a member of the Government had stated that the departments of the Civil Service were over-manned. If that was the case, he was surprised that the Government should have increased the hours of work. He intended to support the Government on this question, as he considered that the sliding scale suggested by the hon. member for Wide Bay would be a misfortune to the country if adopted. There were some Civil Servants very superior to others, and who had considerably more work to do. For instance, there was the Government Printer, who, since the number of members in the House

had been increased, had had much more work to do than before. That gentleman had to attend to his office both day and night—in fact, his very appearance would show that he was overworked. When there were only forty-three members in the House the session rarely lasted more than six months; but now, with fifty-five members, he believed they would have ten months session—or, rather, they would be in perpetual session, as they were in other places. In regard to the reductions of the prominent heads of departments, he was opposed to them, on the ground that those gentlemen were entrusted with very important duties; and he should support the Government, believing that £800 was not too much to be paid to the officer whose salary was under consideration. On looking over the Estimates, he observed that a good straight voter of the Government had had his salary raised; and it certainly seemed very extraordinary to him that, whilst the Government should have been sending away skilled mechanics who would, in the course of a few months, be required, they should have increased the salary of a man because he happened to be a good straight voter. He hoped the hon. Treasurer would explain why one man's salary was increased whilst so many other men had been dismissed.

Mr. AMHURST considered that the hon. gentleman, who, according to a statement recently made in the *Englishman*, had, whilst on his way from England, described to a fellow-passenger how he had pulled the wires and manipulated the elections whilst a Minister of the Crown here, should not now impute motives to members of the Government in accusing them of increasing the salary of what he termed a "straight voter."

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he could not but think that there was a disposition on the part of some hon. members to carry the principle of retrenchment to its extreme. He never knew a principle that was rigidly carried to its extreme which answered the end expected of it, or gave satisfaction to any of the parties concerned. It had been pointed out by his hon. colleague, the member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson), that there were some officers in the Service who had been for many years at a stationary salary, and to say that gentlemen who had received increases during the last two or three years should stand on an equality with those officers would be an injustice to the former. A great deal too much was made of this retrenchment cry, and he trusted that he should not be accused of imputing improper motives when he said that some hon. members might be guided by a desire to yield to what was supposed to be a popular feeling. It was all very well for hon. members who were in the possession of means, and of private resources of various kinds, to say that the colony was suffering from depression, and that Civil Servants must be made to reduce their expenditure. It was all very well for the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles), and the hon. member for Normanby, to say that the Civil Servants must retrench, but they had not the purses those hon. members and others had. Again, the hon. member for Normanby said that the difference between Civil Servants and private individuals was this: that whilst the former had permanent incomes, the latter were doing business at a loss and were actually living on their private capital; all he could say was, happy for them they had capital to fall back upon. He was not going to join any party cry about Civil Servants being overpaid to please anybody. The great majority of the Civil Servants had not been in the habit of receiving such large salaries as would enable them to lay by money, or make any substantial investment that would enable them to fall back on their resources and tide over the present depression. He did not disguise from himself the fact that the colony was suffering a crisis almost unparalleled in its history, but the Civil Servants had not had the same advantages during the prosperous times of making accumulations as private citizens had; how could a man with £300, and from that to £450, a-year save anything? Was it considered that £300 a year was too much to enable a man to live decently? A man could not live in a decent house, not to say a comfortable one, and provide moderate comforts for himself and his family, pay for medical attendance, the necessary education of his daughters, and so on, on anything under £300 a year. To take even 5 per cent. from those salaries would be doing a grievous wrong. Many of the Civil Servants lived in the suburbs, and, concurrently with the proposal to reduce salaries, railway fares had been increased 150 per cent. It was not right to go in for retrenchment in this way while there were other ways open. He did not speak with a view of endeavouring to show that there was no reason for attempting to curtail expenditure, and that there was no method by which it could be done—it could be done. If hon. members would refer to page 23 of the Estimates, they would see that the total estimate for Volunteer purposes was something like £20,000.

The CHAIRMAN: It is my duty to inform the hon. member that when an item in a vote is proposed to be reduced, the hon. member can speak to that question only until it has been disposed of.

Mr. GRIFFITH understood that this was a test question. It was true that the item was a reduction by an amount of £120; but it was a test whether they should

save thousands or not, and therefore the hon. member might be allowed to speak to the general question.

Mr. RUTLEDGE was also under the impression that it was a test question, and he wished simply to show there were other ways of effecting retrenchment than that one proposed, and he should be prepared at the proper time to carry his ideas out. He took it for granted that the present resolution would be negatived; but there were other items which might be advantageously omitted. Civil Servants constituted a large proportion of the Volunteer Force, and he felt satisfied they would be prepared to give up their shows and parades for one or two years in order that their salaries might remain untouched. They should pause before applying the knife too freely to salaries already too slender. He was threatened by the hon. member for Rosewood with a very severe slating for standing up in defence of salaries at the present rates, but he trusted that hon. members would give him credit for fidelity to his opinions. Before ever he thought of representing the constituency of Enoggera he had always been under the impression that to apply the pruning knife too vigorously to salaries of not more than £300 a year would be a very cruel thing. He wished to know from the Government, before voting, whether, supposing the House came to a determination not to reduce salaries, the Government would effect retrenchment by dismissals from the Service? If the Government had to do one of two things—secure retrenchment by a general curtailment of salaries by 5 or 10 per cent., as the condition of retaining the present number of Civil Servants, or, failing that, dismiss a number so as to bring the expenditure down to what would be equal to a general reduction such as he had referred to—then he would be prepared to vote in favour of a general reduction of salaries. He should like to know whether it was the intention of the Government to effect retrenchment by either of those methods? The majority of Civil Servants had sufficient regard for the welfare of those dependent on the Government for their livelihood to submit to a temporary reduction rather than that any of their number should be thrown entirely out of employment. He asked the question because it had been intimated to him that it was the intention of the Government to retrench the expenditure on account of the Civil Service, although certainly he had not gathered that from the speech of the Colonial Secretary. If the Government did not intend to retrench by dismissals, he should give his vote in favour of maintaining the salaries as nearly as possible at the present amounts.

Mr. HILL said the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) had alluded to the intention of the Government in regard to these reductions; but this was not a Government movement at all—it was brought forward by the hon. member for Wide Bay, and the Colonial Secretary had told them that he intended to oppose it. They could hardly expect the Colonial Secretary to give any information as to whether he intended to effect reductions in that line as well. This much he knew: that it was a very hard thing to effect any reductions in the Civil Service. When a man got a billet in the Civil Service it seemed that he was there for the rest of his life, and it was very hard, indeed, to get him out. The Civil Service had a certain demoralising tendency, inasmuch as men who entered it seemed to lose their independence of character, and if one of them got discharged for incompetency, or anything else, a whole host of petitions came in. He had heard heads of departments say that they could not discharge a man without petitions and complaints being sent in, and members of Parliament coming to ask questions and wanting to know the reason why. It was different in private employment. If a master decided to dispense with a man's services the man accepted his position, and went away and sought for other employment. The Civil Service seemed to be a most desirable position for a man to be in, judging from the efforts made by persons to get there. He was prepared to support to a very great extent the amendment of the hon. member for Wide Bay, but he thought it would have been far better to have taken every salary *seriatim*, although it would certainly have taken a considerable time longer, because there were some men — he would particularly instance police magistrates in the western districts—who would suffer great hardship if their salaries of £300 a-year were cut down by 10 or 15 per cent. Even on that amount they only dragged out a bare existence, and how they could exist honestly, and keep their families respectable, had always been a matter of wonder to him. Many of those police magistrates ought never to have been appointed, and he agreed with the remark of the hon. member (Mr. King) that the work ought to have been done by the unpaid magistracy. They did it formerly. He (Mr. Hill) had done a great deal of work for the country in that way, and he did not know that it was done very much worse than by the present police magistrates, although, in the districts which he knew best, their work had always been satisfactorily discharged. Those officers having been appointed, it would be a great hardship and cruelty to lop them off in these bad times, when it would be impossible to find employment elsewhere. He happened to be in Melbourne on Black Wednesday, when there was a wholesale slaughter of the Civil Servants there, and he could say that a more cruel injustice

was never perpetrated in any part of Her Majesty's dominions. He had conversed with many of those discharged Civil Servants and others, and their unanimous opinion seemed to be that had the Berry Government done as was proposed to be done by the amendment before the Committee—namely, reduced their salaries by a certain fixed percentage, the entire Service would have been thoroughly satisfied. By their action on that occasion the Berry Government threw a black stain over the Administration of Victoria which it would take long years to get rid of. By reducing salaries the Committee would be showing an example of proper forethought to every man of business in this colony. The Government was nothing more or less than a large financial business; and every merchant, squatter, and business man had found it necessary to reduce his staff and cut down wages already. It was no pleasure to him to have to do that with his men; he had always enjoyed the times when he was paying big wages and employing as many men as he could, and he had always found that while paying high wages his profits were the largest. He hoped soon to be able to do so again; but, unfortunately, he could not see his way to it at present. As to the matter now before the Committee, the Government had placed it in their hands; they did not make it a party question, but allowed their own supporters to vote in whatever way they thought proper. He intended to avail himself of that liberty, and should go in for reducing the majority of the salaries, with a sincere hope that before the present Parliament was dissolved he should be one to help put them back into the position they now enjoyed.

Mr. NORTON said he had been an employer of labour for nearly thirty years, and had never on one occasion reduced the price of wages. Whenever he found it necessary to reduce expenditure he had done it by reducing the number of men employed. That, from what he could gather, seemed to be the policy of the Government with regard to the Civil Servants. When asked to stand for the constituency he had the honour to represent, his friends almost made it a condition that to obtain their assistance in his candidature he should give a general support to the present Government; but that was not a difficulty in his case, because it had always been his intention, if ever he found a seat here, to give them his cordial support whether in or out of office. They had been told by the Colonial Treasurer that by allowing salaries to go on as at present the expenditure would not be greater than the colony could bear—there would be no necessity to impose fresh taxation. In discussing this matter it should be remembered that, although Civil Servants enjoyed their full salaries in these hard times, yet that when times were prosperous and other people were making money fast, they did not share in the general prosperity. It would be very hard on men who had been in the receipt of regular salaries since 1873 to be reduced now without any notice whatever. Having given his reasons for supporting salaries as they now were, he would not occupy the time of the Committee longer, and would only say, in conclusion, that it was his intention to vote against the amendment.

Mr. KELLETT said he had listened carefully to the arguments on both sides of the question, and he came to the conclusion that it was a good thing the discussion had taken place before the Estimates had been further proceeded with, as it would save much time and trouble afterwards. An idea had got abroad, and was shared by some members of the Committee, that it was the wish of the Government that these reductions should take place. His belief was that, if such had been the case, they themselves would have come boldly before the Committee and have made the reductions themselves. He was astonished to think that men should believe them capable of such an underhand transaction. In a sweeping reduction like that proposed much harm would be done, and, in face of the large loan to be proposed and the extra work that would have to be done in consequence, it would be far better to keep the Civil Servants on at their present salaries than by reducing them to tell them they were not earning their money properly. Whenever he had occasion to reduce a man from £1 to 15s. a week, he always found that the man so reduced did not do 10s. worth of work, and that the best plan was to dismiss him altogether and engage another at 15s. There were many Civil Servants, such as police magistrates, who had been in the Service for many years on small salaries, and to reduce them by 15 per cent. would be to do them a real injustice. If the proposed reduction was made it would do great damage to the country, as it would make Civil Servants say that they would do as little work as possible. Instances might be found where salaries might be very properly reduced, but he was certain that the motion would be a step in the wrong direction. It was a thing that should not be done in the heat of the moment, for it was not because there was some depression at present that it was to be lasting. Those members who had stated that evening that all necessaries of life were reduced in price stated what was not exactly correct. There had been a reduction, certainly, in the price of meat, but wherever it was reduced he believed the butchers took it out in giving short weight.

With the exception of meat, all necessaries of life were the same as they were twelve months ago. There was no doubt that there were some hon. members who were in disgrace with the outside people, and who thought that the present was an opportune time to get back into popularity by voting for reductions; but in his district there were less Civil Servants than in any other, so that he might be acquitted of any desire to gain popularity; and he certainly never should go in for the popular cry merely because it was popular.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the Committee appeared to be full of lecturers. They had had a lecture from the hon. member for Enoggera, and now one from the hon. member for Stanley, who had just told them that he would never go in for a popular cry. But the present was a popular cry, and would remain so until the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) succeeded in carrying his motion for disfranchising the Civil Servants. If they had been disfranchised the Committee would not have heard so much from the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge), who had more Civil Servants in his electorate than any other hon. member. He (Mr. Morehead) had a perfect right to say that the remarks of the hon. member were not made without having an eye to the persons he represented. It was coming to this: that the Civil Service was getting to be a burden that the State could not bear; and therefore the Committee should put it on such a footing that parents would see that the future of their children must not depend on the Civil Service. There was hardly a parent in the colony who did not look forward to getting, at some time or other, a billet for one of his children in the Public Service; and he sincerely trusted that the Civil Service would at no distant date be open only to those who had passed a competitive examination. The decreases proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay were not unfair to the Civil Servants; and if he was beaten on that point he should vote for a lesser decrease. It should be borne in mind that, if taken in detail, there was not a Civil Servant in the colony who had not a friend in that Committee; and, therefore, it would be very much better, not only for the Civil Servants themselves, but for members of the Committee, that the decreases should be made *in globo*. They should be on a fixed scale, so that members need not talk of the merits or demerits of every Civil Servant. He trusted that the Committee would set an example of economy that would be followed by those outside of the House. If they overpaid their Civil Servants they would lead to profligacy in other directions, which would very soon land them in ruin. The present were times when wise men would go in for retrenchment, and when the State should set its house in order to weather the storm. If the storm did not break no harm would be done by reductions, and they could set full sail and go on again. He trusted the Committee would treat this matter as a national one, and, with every favourable feeling towards the Civil Servants, he himself believed they would find in the end, if reductions were made, that they should be made in accordance with the proposition of the hon. member for Wide Bay. It had been stated that it would have been better to have dismissed the drones in the Service, and have kept down the Estimates by retaining only the good men at their present pay; but the fact was that if they dismissed men, however incompetent they might be, they would dismiss those who were bread-getters for others, and thus a hardship might be inflicted upon persons on whom no hon. member would wish to inflict hardship.

The PREMIER said he was glad to hear that the Government had at last got some assistance in carrying out a scheme of retrenchment, but he was quite satisfied the Government would not avail themselves of that assistance unless they were treated in a more straightforward manner than they had been treated by the leader of the Opposition. With regard to the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson), he had always been a defender of the Civil Servants, still every word that hon. member said that evening had been against the Government. The hon. member commenced his tirade against them by saying that the present debate would never have taken place had it not been for an unfortunate remark of the Colonial Secretary, that the question should be put as a test question—which was that the restriction of the salary proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay should, if carried, apply to all other officers in the same grade. But that suggestion was not made by the Colonial Secretary, but by the leader of the Opposition. The motion of the hon. member for Wide Bay was that there should be a reduction in salaries of from 15 to 5 per cent.; but it was pointed out, and very properly, by the Colonial Secretary that no hon. member could move such a general reduction in Committee; and it was then suggested that the hon. member should move a specific reduction, and that if it was carried that principle should be followed throughout for all officers of the same grade. That was the proper course to adopt, and he had advised his hon. colleague to recommend it. The leader of the Opposition had made a most remarkable speech, from which no one could gather whether he was going to vote for the reduction or not. The hon. member was "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds." He was waiting to see what the Government

would do, and, in fact, candidly told the Committee that he could not make up his mind. The hon. member also said that he could not support the resolution until he knew how much saving would be effected by it; but surely it was not to be expected that a Minister could carry such tables as those in his head. He (the Premier) had made a calculation of the saving that would be effected by reductions on the sliding scale proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay. At present there were officers in the Service receiving, in salaries of £200 and upwards, a sum of £165,340. That was exclusive of salaries paid from loan and from schedules, the latter of which could not be altered by the Committee, as they were passed by Act of Parliament. Should there be a reduction of 15 per cent. on all salaries of £500 and upwards, it would amount to a saving of £6,180—there being paid for such salaries £41,200. If 10 per cent. was deducted from salaries of from £300 to £500, it would amount to a saving of £7,365 on £73,655. For salaries between £200 and £300 there was paid £53,485, and a reduction of 5 per cent. on that sum would be £2,674. The total amount of reductions would be something like £16,219. In detail, there would be saved £6,180 from those receiving £500 a year and upwards, £7,365 from those receiving from £300 to £500, and from those receiving from £200 to £300, £2,674. Most members of the Committee must consider that if any reduction was made, even the present depression would not justify such a wholesale reduction as that proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay. He had made a calculation on another scale—namely, 10 per cent. on sums of £500 and upwards; $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on sums of £300 and up to £500, and 5 per cent. on sums between £200 and £300, and it worked out in this way: the 10 per cent. reduction represented £4,120, the $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. £5,523, and the 5 per cent. £2,674. That would amount to a gross reduction of £12,317; and, to show the effect of it, he would draw attention to the fact that it was just about double the amount which would be saved by the system introduced by the Government, of making voters put their own names on the roll. That alteration would save about £6,000, and the proposed reduction in salaries about double. That was all the information the hon. member for Brisbane had asked to enable him to make up his mind. The position of the Government with regard to the Estimates could not be mistaken; and the hon. member might make any surmises he liked. The Government were responsible for the Estimates they had brought down. When they framed them they considered that the amount was as small as they could carry on the Government Service with, and they intended to stand by them.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Opposition were entitled to know the opinion of the Government before they divulged theirs. Now they were told that the proposed reduction would save £16,219, and the hon. member suggested another way of saving £12,317. The Premier said the Government were prepared to stand by their Estimates, but it rather looked as though he would like the House to compel him not to stand by his Estimates. He (Mr. Griffith) had previously held a very strong opinion, which was not entirely dispelled. He did not at all see why hon. members on that side, and private members, should be the cat's paws to pull the chesnuts out of the fire because the Government themselves had not the courage to do it. If the Government were not prepared to lead them in these matters they were not fit to hold their positions, and he had declined, and should decline, to discuss such a matter seriously before knowing the opinion of the Government upon it. It was the duty of the Government to regulate the finances of the colony, and not the duty of private members. The Premier said he would stand by his Estimates, but did anyone suppose that he wished his Estimates should be stuck by? He ought to know better than private members what sum was necessary, but the hon. gentleman now, in fact, invited the Committee to make the reduction. He wished to have all the credit, but at the same time he had not the courage to do it himself. His (Mr. Griffith's) own opinion was—and he was not the least afraid to state it—that the salaries of a great many officers might very properly be reduced, but that to draw a hard-and-fast line of percentage of reduction would be unjust in very many instances. If the revenue of the country required to be increased by additional taxation, the tax should be imposed in a general and satisfactory manner, whether it was upon the general community or any portion of the community; but, in any case, it was a matter for the Government to determine in the first instance, and then submit a scheme to the House. In the meantime, if they proceeded by a hard-and-fast line to reduce all salaries, they would be doing a very grave injustice. He was prepared to vote for a reduction on many amounts, and he believed a greater saving than £16,000 could be effected without impairing the efficiency of the Service; but a hard-and-fast line of reduction would work not only injustice to the individual, but great harm to the interests of the public. If the Colonial Treasurer had the courage to propose an income tax generally he would find no difficulty in carrying it, but it was not fair to select one particular class of the community. This was a sample of the treatment the Civil Servants were to re-

ceive. They were to be disfranchised, treated as a class unworthy of voting, put on the same footing with Chinamen and the like, their hours of work increased from six to seven, and at the same time their salaries reduced by about a tenth. Treatment of that kind did not tend to maintain the efficiency of the Service. He was prepared to go as far as most hon. members who were in favour of reduction, in the aggregate, not by applying a rule of thumb, but on a definite principle—taking into consideration merit, nature of office, condition of individual. The present proposal was, in reality, imposing a tax, and it was the duty of the Government to originate such tax, and not of any other person. He might be speaking under a misapprehension, but he understood the proposal was to reduce all salaries at certain rates of percentages, from 15 per cent. downwards; and that, if carried, the Government would propose for each salary afterwards the reduced amount; if wrong in that, he had been misled.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman was mistaken, as he had never said he would take a vote on one item as a test question. He said, if the motion was brought forward to reduce all salaries at the rates stated, and a majority of the Committee carried the resolution in a moderately full House, the Government would accept the decision. The hon. member had rather disingenuously tried to saddle the Colonial Treasurer with a scheme that he avowed he had nothing to do with. The Government did not propose to reduce the salaries of Civil Servants, and were prepared to stand by their Estimates. The Premier had only furnished certain data for the hon. gentleman, and he (Mr. Griffith) urged it was a proof that the Premier had something of the kind previously in his mind. But this information had been got during the recess for tea, simply to enable the hon. gentleman to make up his great mind, and now, in the depth of his ingratitude, he turned round and accused the Premier of having got the information to carry out some deep-laid scheme of reducing salary—a scheme which both he (Colonial Secretary) and the Premier, the only Ministers who had spoken, disavowed. Ministers brought in what Estimates they considered fair, and it would have been considered downright impudence—they would have been told they were assuming the powers of the Committee—had they brought down reduced Estimates. They would, in fact, have been setting at defiance the decision of the House last year. They brought in what they considered proper, and if the Committee chose to reduce the Estimates, the Government were powerless.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he could hardly express his surprise at the doctrines laid down by so experienced a member of the House as the Colonial Secretary. Because the House had been pleased to vote a set of Estimates in one year, were the Government of ensuing years bound to bring down their Estimates framed on a similar rate as to salaries? After years of experience, the hon. gentleman had hardly a conception of what Ministerial responsibilities meant. In his opening remarks he had led him (Mr. Douglas) to understand that this matter had been under the consideration of the Government, and he had no doubt it was. They all knew that it must have been fairly considered by the Government. They had made certain reductions as far as numbers were concerned, and the Committee were justified in assuming that they must have considered the question on general principles and as to details. They had evidently arrived at the conclusion announced to-night by the Colonial Treasurer, that it was not their function to decide upon this matter; but it was the function of the Committee to say whether these salaries should be perpetuated or not. What had been the argument originally made by the Colonial Secretary in favour of the position taken up by the Government? It was, that if they had made the reductions they would have anticipated the opinion of the House. He (Mr. Douglas) asserted that Government were the persons who should come to a decision first. A reduction of such importance, if carried against the express will of the Government, ought to amount to a vote of want of confidence. The whole scheme of the Government would thereby be disturbed; yet the hon. gentleman admitted that the Committee might do anything they liked, and that he would accept whatever the Committee decided. If he did accept anything of the kind, he (Mr. Douglas) submitted that he lacked in the pluck that ought to appertain to any Ministry. They ought to abide by their financial scheme, and know that if that scheme was seriously disturbed it was time for them to retire from their positions, as they were no longer the advisers of the House, the House having intimated that they held different opinions from them on a matter of vital importance. And he held that even a temporary reduction of the Civil Servants' salaries ought to be a matter of vital importance. They were placed there permanently as trusted officers of the Government, with something like a security that their salaries were on a fixed rate. He would admit that if he thought the depression at the present time was permanent—that values were permanently disturbed, and that they were entering upon a period of retrogression, they might fairly consider whether they should not revise their previous decision, and permanently reduce the salaries of the Civil Servants.

He would certainly admit that there were circumstances which would justify such a course of conduct; but they had not yet experienced the trial of the troublous times said to be in store for them. Let them, at any rate, take a little time to consider. If it was a fact that they were about to retrograde instead of to advance—a fact which he could not believe—he had greater faith in the stability of the country than to believe that there was any necessity to be actuated by these alarmist fears; but if it was a fact that they were about to retrograde, then as prudent men they must contemplate being prepared for the worst when it came. But there were no such signs yet, and they should not, in the first instance, visit vengeance upon a set of men who, on the whole, did the colony honourable service. He would admit that the Civil Service, as compared with the population, was very large, and that in some sense it was overgrown; but it must be remembered that they had taken upon themselves to govern a large scattered territory with a small population. They had undertaken to do many things which, under ordinary circumstances, would not devolve upon Government. Why should they complain of the size of the Civil Service which they had created? He did not say that the Government were complaining, but there had been complaints by the representatives of the people that the Service was overgrown; and that it was in consequence of the excessive patronage made use of by the Government. It had been one of the charges preferred by hon. gentlemen opposite against his hon. friend (Mr. Thorn)—that he had made use of his position merely for the purpose of patronage. No more unfounded statement had been made, and the Colonial Secretary knew it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he challenged the hon. gentleman to the proof of the accusation. The hon. gentleman, when he confronted him on the Opposition benches, used to take an unseemly advantage of him. He had never done so; but he should never hesitate to counteract the bad effect which such statements were likely to have unless contradicted by him. It ought not to be considered as a light matter that the hon. gentleman should be challenged to the proof for publicly making such a statement. He would have ample opportunities of substantiating his word; and, as he professed to be a true man and to speak the truth, he must tell him that he would have an opportunity to do so, and that, if he did not, he shrank from his duty and was a coward.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I may tell you, perhaps, of some appointments that you have made.

Mr. DOUGLAS would ask what Government had not made appointments? But the charge was that the Civil Service was overgrown in consequence of the undue patronage exercised by the late Government. He (Mr. Douglas) contradicted that, and said that the demands of the people were such that a number of appointments—undue as far as the population was concerned—were necessary. It was quite true that they could dispense if they liked with police magistrates, with many post and telegraph offices; but what would the people they represented say if that were done? They would say," Scattered as we are, we depend upon our lives for these little matters of civilisation; we claim as a right that a number of officers should be provided to do the work." And this was the reason why the Civil Service had become overgrown—a determination that they would not fall behind the civilisation which prevailed in the other countries. In this sense he would admit that the Service had overgrown, and that, if they had been prepared to sacrifice some of the privileges which many valued, they no doubt could reduce the Service; but they had no reason to be carried away by any such alarmist opinions, and ought at once to set aside the fears that they were now committed to a policy of retrogression. With regard to the particular question before the Committee, he should vote against it on the ground that it could not be accepted as a final deliverance on the subject. If it was to be discussed on its merits, it must be on something more than the basis which had been chosen; it must be by a distinct resolution such as had been indicated by the Government. When they came to deal with the amount involved, £168,000, he did not consider it too much, remembering what was done. Their estimated expenditure was £1,658,000. This sum of £168,000 was a mere tithe; it was about 10 per cent. of the total expenditure. Considering their large expenditure and the number of things they undertook, his astonishment was that the cost of governing was so small. He hoped that they might come to a conclusion on this point, on the amendment moved; and then if hon. members should think it their duty to follow the matter up, that they would give time for a little consideration, and formulate it in such a manner that the whole question could be disposed of and finally settled.

Mr. STEVENSON said the hon. gentleman who had just sat down said that the Ministry, if they allowed their Estimates to be tampered with, ought to accept it as a vote of want of confidence. He remembered, when he and other hon. members sat on the Opposition benches, that they used to twit the hon. gentleman for not taking cer-

tain matters as votes of want of confidence, and that the hon. gentleman got up and replied, in his usual high-falutin' style, that they should bring in a direct vote of want of confidence. What was the use of bringing these Estimates before the Committee if they were not to be discussed? If the Ministry expected to carry them as prepared, what was the use of bringing them before the House? The hon. gentleman had also said that the Civil Service was overgrown, and that he would have done a great many things if he had the courage to face his constituents.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I never said anything of the kind. I have always had the courage to face my constituents.

Mr. STEVENSON said he must take the hon. gentleman's denial. The hon. gentleman, however, said they could do a great many things, but what would their constituents think—which was equivalent to what he (Mr. Stevenson) had attributed to him. Want of courage was the cause of the signal failure of the hon. gentleman's career as a Minister, and had set the country on a ruinous course. The hon. gentleman "bunched" six railways because he had not the courage to bring them in one by one, and allow them to be considered on their merits by the House; and that was the reason why the present Government were committed to carry out two or three railways which most members considered to be a fraud upon the country. The leader of the Opposition and the hon. gentleman had both told them that the Committee were asked to tax the Civil Servants first, because of the bad times; but every other class in the community had already had to submit to a reduction of their income without legislation, and it was only proposed to do to the Civil Servants what had already been done to everyone else. It was not an income tax that was proposed. They were simply asking the Civil Servants to submit to what every man, woman, and child had already had to bear.

Mr. BAILEY said the unfortunate taxpayers had been left out of consideration. The rights of Civil Servants and the unpleasantries of party politics had been discussed, but these wretched taxpayers were not to be thought of. They had heard the hon. member for Enoggera saying that a Civil Servant could not be expected to live on £300 a year; but a wretched taxpayer, who supplied the means by which the Civil Service were paid, had to manage to live on a wage of £1 per week, and sometimes, perhaps, find that he could not get it. They were standing in the House, not as a party of men, but as the representatives of the taxpayers, and it was in their name that he had brought forward the amendment. Almost everyone in the colony was suffering from the depression. When the taxpayers were prosperous, their representatives were ready to raise the salaries of Civil Servants; it was only five or six years ago that they were increased 20 per cent. They had never objected to raise Civil Servants' salaries when they were able, and surely the Civil Servants had that little gratitude in them that, in bad times, they would swim with and not over the taxpayers. Let the Committee treat this matter not from a party point of view but as business men. They had all abstained from saying hard things about the Civil Servants, though they had been tempted to do so; these officers had their sympathies, but, at the same time, it was claimed that they were no better than any other class, and that they should share the same fates and troubles as the people in bad times, and share also in their prosperity. Could anything fairer be said? Again, was there anything excessive in the proposal that a man who, five years ago, received £600, should now receive £680; or that a man now getting £300 should be content with a little less? If there should be particular cases of hardship, there would not be the slightest difficulty in making them exceptions. He would be sorry if the taxpayers had not as good advocates in the House as the Civil Servants—as able as the two hon. members for Enoggera, for instance; but he appealed to the common sense of the country members, who represented the ordinary taxpayers, that they had an equal right to be considered. He had to thank the Colonial Secretary for the very fair way in which he had met the motion, by saying he would consent to the reduction if a majority of the Committee decided on it.

Mr. HENDREN found it difficult to decide one way or the other; but, on the whole, he would rather see an income tax proposed at once than that this tax should be put on the low salaried Civil Servants. The majority of them were married, and had families to provide for, and were supposed to keep up a decent appearance; while those Civil Servants who had the large salaries had, as a rule, been in the Service a long while and had responsibilities on their shoulders of considerable importance. It was hardly likely the Ministry would submit to any reduction of their Estimates unless the opinion of the Committee was very decided that they should do so, for, had the Ministry decided to adopt a system of general reduction, they would have commenced with reductions of salaries instead of dismissals. He objected to commencing reductions of the low salaries of £200 a year. £300 a year would be quite low enough, and then at the rate proposed by the Premier. Fifteen or 20 per cent. re-

duction was rather too heavy, and the money saved by that percentage would in the end prove a loss to the colony by causing good men to leave the Service. As a rule, those who served the State for long periods should receive an increase —not suffer a decrease—their responsibility increasing the longer they remained. An hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) had asked the Colonial Secretary whether, if the reductions were made this year, there would be an undertaking to restore the amounts next year if it was prosperous; and he also would like to know whether such increases would, or would not, be made? At any rate, he would not be one to vote for any reduction of salaries of £200 a-year or under. If the Committee started at £300 he might vote for a reduction then at a sliding scale of 5, $7\frac{1}{2}$, and 10 per cent.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN intended to oppose this reduction, and in opposing it he would not be accused as the hon. members for Enoggera were — unfairly — of pandering to the Civil Servants. He had a motion on this paper for their disfranchisement, and that did not look much like it; at any rate, he cared very little what they said—his vote was not influenced by anyone inside or outside the House. It would be unjust to make the proposed reduction, for this simple reason—that by so doing one class of taxpayers of this colony would be pointed at as paying an extra tax. When the hon. member for Wide Bay talked about the taxpayers who lived on a pound a week, he seemed to be under the impression that the employés of the State paid no taxes at all. He did not expect to throw much new light on the matter; but it had been said that the Under Secretary to the Treasury was receiving a salary of £100 less than any of the under secretaries of the other departments. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) presumed he would be still further reduced on the same scale as the rest—namely, 15 or 20 per cent. This would be very hard. There might be a thousand other instances of a similar nature of which they did not know. There was also the case put by the hon. member for the Gregory—that of the police magistrates at £300 a-year. How would the reduction affect those men already reduced—for instance, police officers? Then they had passed some items the previous night: would the reduction apply to those items the Committee had already passed? He was aware that reduction was a very awkward and unthankful game, and the members of the Ministry would have to pay the piper, but he did not concur in a reduction of the Civil Servants' salaries.

Mr. PERSSE, like the hon. member for Stanley, would begin at the end of the story and would vote against the amendment. One reason of the many he would give was, that it would be unjust and unfair to treat these men in the manner proposed. Take, for instance, the salary under discussion, that of the Under Colonial Secretary, which it was proposed to reduce by £120. They would deprive him of £120 at a moment's notice, which in itself was unfair. An Under Colonial Secretary might have been living up to his salary, and at one fell swoop to have that sum taken away would not be fair to a man who had been living and bringing up his family, perhaps, to a certain standard. The hon. member (Mr. Bailey) said the taxpayers had to pay for all these salaries. Were not the Civil Servants taxpayers? Did they not pay as much towards the taxes as anybody else? He had also referred to the working man who had only £1 per week, but that working man got his £1 a week and his rations, and the Civil Servants helped to pay for those rations. Besides, the hon. member's working man lived in the bush and had no position to keep up. These gentlemen had been paying into a fund for a certain number of years; suppose they wished to retire to-morrow, they would retire at the rate of £800 a-year; but take £120 off that and they would then retire at £680. Having paid into the fund so long, supposing a man retired, would he do so on £400 a-year or on £340? What inducement was there for any man to go into the Service? The promotion was slow, and he appeared to be liable to be raised up and dropped down, or suddenly have his salary reduced. Had they heard of any of the banks reducing the salaries of their managers or their clerks, men who had not half the responsibility that an under secretary had? They had not heard anything about the salaries of bankers or their clerks being reduced, but as a fact they were much better paid than the Civil Servants, and there was not a manager in the city who did not get three times as large a salary as the Under Secretary. Let the salaries stop at the same rate, but, if it was necessary, reduce the number of servants. He had not found by his own experience that there was any advantage in reducing a man's wages, for supposing he paid a man 15s. or 20s. a-week, and reduced him to 10s., he did not do his work and was worth nothing after the reduction, and it was better to knock him off. They had given the Civil Servants an extra hour a-day, and it was not fair, consequently, to want to reduce their pay. There was not a harder worked class of men in the colony. If they wanted to improve the Service, let them have competitive examinations, and let promotions go by merit; then they would not have every man bowing and scraping to the Ministry of the day, and asking for promotion; but if there was a vacancy, let competitive examinations be

introduced, and let every man take his stand upon his merit.

Mr. SWANWICK, as an old Civil Servant, considered he ought to say something. This was a most unjust proposition, that members of the Civil Service throughout the colony should have their salaries reduced, and he did not see why, when there were men in the Service who were not wanted, they should not be put out. It had been said that when the country was prosperous there had never been any difficulty in adding to the salaries of the Civil Servants. He could say that during the last sixteen years the salaries of the Civil Servants had been added to only once or twice. He would remind hon. members, especially the hon. member for Wide Bay, that when maize was selling at 8s. a bushel and everything was going on in a rosy way for the farmers, the Civil Servants did not participate in that prosperity. Good men were worth good pay; and, if a man was not worth good pay, the best thing was to get rid of him altogether. Most business men worked on that principle; and the Committee could not do better than follow their example. He could heartily endorse the remarks that fell from the hon. member for Fassifern about the under secretaries. If the Under Colonial Treasurer, for instance, had devoted all his time to the work of managing a bank he would have been in receipt of a much larger salary than that which he obtained now. The Under Secretary for Lands, who, he believed, was a skilled professional gentleman, if he had devoted the whole of his time to civil engineering, would be now in receipt of a much larger salary than that which he obtained from the Government. If the amendment were to pass, great injustice would be done to officers, especially in the Telegraph Department. It would also be unjust to that important body of men to whom he once had the honour to belong—namely, the teachers of the colony. He knew from long experience that most of those men did very good work, and he should take shame to himself if he had sat silent and allowed such an amendment as this to pass without his protest being entered against it. "Live and let live" was a very good maxim; and they should remember that, whilst it was easy to cut down salaries, they could not do it without inflicting a very cruel injustice, not only on a large body of deserving men, but to their wives and families; and he thought they ought to have further time for reflection before arriving at that conclusion. He could understand the ex-Premier speaking in contemptuous terms as to what was £168,000, seeing that that hon. gentleman was at the head of the Government which forced upon the colony such gigantic frauds as the Maryborough and Gympie Railway, and the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway. He (Mr. Swanwick) was not in favour of reducing the salaries, but of reducing the staff. Every man ought to have as much work as he could conveniently do, and good men should have good pay.

Mr. HILL said he considered that ample time had been devoted to the subject—it had been discussed fully and freely. He did not like the manner in which the leader of the Opposition had thrown out insinuations against the Government, and his pretty little simile about the monkey and the cat's-paw. He wondered which capacity that hon. gentleman occupied—the cat's-paw or the monkey; for he had certainly tried to introduce hot-blood and party feelings into what was purely a business matter, and which he (Mr. Hill) was prepared to treat as such. Retrenchment was necessary, but it was not popular. It had been suggested that retrenchment might be effected by reducing the number of Civil Servants; he agreed with that, but feared it was utterly impracticable at present. If dismissals were made on that ground the insinuation would be always hurled against the Minister of the day that it was done for party purposes. As to the remark of the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) that they were spreading alarmist notions, he thought an amendment like this showed that they were provident—that like prudent mariners they saw the storm coming on and shortened sail. It would be just as easy to raise salaries as to lower them, and he should be one of the first, he hoped in a very short time, to advocate their being placed on the present or even a higher footing. He should vote for the amendment.

Mr. KINGSFORD said he was of opinion that hon. members ought to think twice before deciding to support the amendment. If their own pockets had been touched not a word would have been said about reductions, and if they were to put themselves in the place of the Civil Servants in imagination they would hesitate before bringing desolation into households, and turning deserving men out into the cold world when other employment was almost impossible to be obtained. So important an amendment ought not to be put after so short a discussion; but, if it was, he should vote against it.

Mr. BEATTIE said he, too, should vote against the amendment, because it would be doing an act of injustice to many deserving men, especially to men holding office in the interior. He did not believe in the assertions that the Civil Service was either over-manned or over-paid. For instance, the revenue obtained through the Customs Department amounted to £600,000 a year, and the cost of collecting it, along a seaboard of 1,100 miles, was only

£34,000, or less than 5 per cent. He would like to see the mercantile firm that could conduct so large a business at so small a cost. The Estimates did not show that the departments were over-manned, unless there was a large number of supernumeraries in each office who were paid out of contingencies. In the Colonial Secretary's Office, where something like £200,000 or £300,000 a year had to be looked after—would anyone say there were too many officers there? The same might be said of the Customs Department—although he certainly did object to the item for contingencies, and should have something to say about it at the proper time. Taking the principal Customs officers at the various ports of the colony, the landing-waiters, would anyone say that £350 a year was too much to pay them? These men could, by the slightest direliction of duty, or neglect of attention to their duty, rob the country of thousands of pounds in one day. He had always considered that they were paid too little, as the colony had to depend upon them for the collection of the revenue. In other departments, also, where responsibility rested on the shoulders of officers, they ought to receive fair remuneration. He did not intend—although there were individual cases in which he should vote for reductions—to support any wholesale system of reduction in the shape of 10 or 15 per cent. on the salaries as placed on the Estimates. In looking over the various departments he did not think that the number of officers was excessive, and he presumed that the Government having retrenchment in view had made the necessary inquiries before framing their Estimates, therefore the Government ought to stand by them. He intended to vote against the motion.

Mr. REA said that after all the lamentation about the destitution of Civil Servants, if these reductions were made, one almost wondered how the Civil Servants had managed to live in 1872. All he asked for was that salaries should be reduced to the same as they were in 1872. It was rather unfortunate that the first reduction had not began on salaries of £300 a-year, as, then, members who commenced the lamentation on the destitution of Civil Servants would not have said a word; but when it was proposed to reduce salaries of men receiving £16 a week, a cry of injustice was raised. It had been asked whether reductions had been made by any companies; and, in reply to that, he would mention that the A.S.N. Company, although they were supposed to be doing a good business, had found it necessary to reduce the salaries of their officers. He thought that they should go on item by item through the Estimates, and thus be enabled to examine every item as it came before them.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there was still some misunderstanding about the matter. Supposing the vote was carried and they came to the next vote, he wished to know whether the Government intended to put it as it stood or to make the reduction before moving it. If this was a test question, and was carried, they would, he supposed, reduce the next amount in the same way.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had explained the question three times before that evening: the Premier had not said he would take this as a test vote. His hon. colleague might have said in his speech that he had recommended him (Mr. Palmer) to do so, but he (Mr. Palmer) never said he would do so. What he said was that, if the hon. member for Wide Bay put his motion in the form he originally put it—namely, that there should be a reduction of 15 per cent. on all salaries of £500 and upwards; of 10 per cent. on salaries of £300 and up to £500; and of 5 per cent. on salaries of £200 and up to £300, he would take it as a test vote, but that he would not take a solitary vote in the Colonial Secretary's Office as a test vote. If the Government were beaten on that vote they would fight the next, and so on; but if the Committee decided on the whole question as originally proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay, the Government would take it as a test vote. He did not think the Government would be beaten, and they had better go to a division at once. He wished to call the attention of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley to a remark made by him to which he (Mr. Palmer) took exception. He understood the hon. member to say that officers might rob the Government of thousands of pounds if they were not trustworthy men; but there was not a man in the Service who could do such a thing.

Mr. BEATTIE explained that what he said was that, if the landing-waiters were not trustworthy and neglected their duties, they might put the country to a loss of thousands of pounds.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he might have misunderstood the hon. member, but the book-keeping of the colony was so well kept that it was impossible for a man, either wilfully or through direliction of duty, to rob the Government of a thousand pounds.

Mr. BEATTIE said he had not referred to the question of book-keeping at all, but only to duties on goods which passed through the hands of landing waiters. He said also that he believed the men now in the Customs were good and capable officers, and that it was unfair to ask that their salaries should be reduced, as their duties were of such a character that by the slightest neglect on their part the country might lose thousands of pounds. As to the system of book-keeping, he was satisfied

it was perfect, and that every officer in the service was trustworthy.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Committee now knew that this was not a test question, but up to a quarter of an hour ago hon. members on both sides supposed it was one; had that not been the case all the present debate would have been saved. Some hon. members had referred to the question being made a party question by him, but he (Mr. Griffith) had no idea of any such thing. He considered that the Government should have taken the matter in hand themselves, and, if they approved of a reduction, have done what was done by the Government in 1870 when they announced in the Speech from the throne that it was their intention to introduce a Bill to tax all salaries of Civil Servants at the rate of 5 per cent., preserving their rights under the Civil Service Act; that was the way in which they should have dealt with the matter. He intended to vote against the reduction of 15 per cent. If the Government came down and said that the state of the public finance required contributions from the salaries of the Civil Servants, he should support such a proposition; but he would not at any time be one to relieve the Government of any responsibility.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that the Government did not want the hon. member to relieve them of any responsibility, and he had never been asked to do such a thing. He would again tell the hon. member that the Government did not want to reduce the salaries of the Civil Servants, and that they were going to vote against the reductions.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that he only wished that the leader of the Opposition had remained long enough in office to have had the responsibility of retrenching the Civil Service expenditure. The hon. member showed a very unpatriotic spirit in the way in which he had met the Government that night, and would have done much better if, instead of exercising his ingenuity to harass and annoy the Government, he had offered them his assistance. That would certainly have been a new *rôle* to the hon. member altogether, as he generally did the stabbing in the back and assassin business behind the scene, instead of making an open onslaught on his opponents. It would have been much better, if, instead of allowing the colony to be stranded on a lee shore, the hon. member had come forward to assist the Government. He (Mr. Morehead) should assist the hon. member for Wide Bay to carry his motion, and should be prepared to sit night after night to give assistance in reducing the Civil Service expenditure of the Government of the colony.

Mr. DICKSON said he must do the Colonial Secretary the justice to say that he had understood him all along that he would not take this question as a test question; but the whole subject had become rather complicated. The confusion began by the Treasurer expressing a hope that some practical scheme of retrenchment would be the outcome of the debate. However, he was glad to learn that the Colonial Secretary remained firm to his first position, and he (Mr. Dickson) intended to support the Government in their Estimates in full in regard to the salaries of the various officers. To his mind the consideration of the whole subject was confused by the remarks from the Ministerial side. There seemed to be a desire on the part of the Government to see retrenchment introduced by a division on this question.

Mr. GRIMES was disappointed with the remarks heard from the Treasury benches. The Ministry commenced the session by professing a policy of retrenchment and economy. Men had been dismissed from the railway workshops, road parties had been knocked off, an attempt was made to compel the agriculturists to make their own roads; but now the Government had forsaken their policy of retrenchment and economy, or, at all events, did not speak out boldly as they should have, considering their professions at the beginning of the session. Then he advocated similar reductions to those now proposed, and, though he had listened to all the speeches made on the subject, he had heard nothing to cause him to alter his opinion. All incomes derived from the producing interests of the country had been reduced at least 25 per cent., and it was not hard to expect the incomes of the Civil Servants should be reduced to some extent. Prices current would show that nearly all the necessities of life had been reduced 10, 15, or 20 per cent., and drapery, he had been told, had fallen in prices. When the salaries of Civil Servants were increased, it was argued that the cost of living had increased, and now that the cost of living had decreased it was only fair that the salaries should be reduced in some measure. No doubt, in some cases, Civil Servants were not fairly paid, and to remedy that there should be a general readjustment of salaries by the heads of the departments, or perhaps it could be done as well by a commission. He should support the reduction proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay, and he should heartily support a corresponding increase when prosperous times came again to the colony.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said it might seem stepping from the sublime to the ridiculous to refer to the argument used again and again by hon. members, that the cost of living was 25 per cent. less than it was a year ago. No doubt maize, and some other farm produce, was cheaper, and those who kept horses and large establishments might be benefited to some extent; but articles which all required, more or less, were not cheaper. Tea was the same price, sugar

was the same price, and butter was no less than 2s. a pound. With regard to clothing, if a man went in for shoddy he might make a saving of 20 per cent., but there was no reduction on the price of good clothing whether masculine or feminine—it was the same price as it used to be, if worth anything. The only article upon which there was a reduction was animal food. Meat was a halfpenny per pound less than a year ago, although the butchers were able to buy the cattle for half the price they paid before. Those hon. members, therefore, who said that there was a great reduction, affirmed what was not in accordance with fact and talked at random. The Committee should have facts to deal with in a matter which was of vital importance to a large section of the community. The argument about making hay while the sun shines did not apply, as Civil Servants did not belong to the class able to take advantage of good times; and he would never be a party by his vote to depriving the families of Civil Servants of what they had a right to expect at the hands of the Committee: to do so would be a very gross breach of faith.

Mr. PATERSON said the subject matter of the debate had been entirely changed by what had fallen from the different members of the Cabinet. One thing said by the Colonial Secretary had struck him as being slightly inconsistent. The hon. gentleman said, if the Government had brought up Estimates different from those placed in the hands of hon. members they would have trenched on the functions of the Committee. But the Government had not thought they were trenching on the functions of the Committee when they made reductions in the Estimates with regard to the Rockhampton and Ipswich workshops. It came with a very bad grace from hon. members who put their feet down so firmly with regard to the wage-earning class to now stand forward and advocate a general and sweeping reduction in the salaries of Civil Servants, whether good or bad, in other departments of the Civil Service. To his mind, the way in which the question had been treated was puerile and childish in the highest degree. Many hon. members had, no doubt, read Mr. Brassey's work in reference to trades-unionism. Mr. Brassey pointed out the bad effects of trades-unionism on trade and commerce of the world generally, and upon some branches of industry in Britain in particular; he saw clearly that the fundamental error was the rule laid down by the unions, that the skilled mechanic should be paid the same as the duffing mechanic; and he claimed that the masters should have the right to define between them, and pay them accordingly. The motion of the hon. member for Wide Bay had very much of the special levelling character that marked the spirit of trades-unionism. It did not discriminate, but proposed to make a sweeping reduction of so much per cent. upon all the salaries, disregarding the fact that many of the Civil Servants in different departments were very poorly paid. They were in many cases trying to rear large families on £200 and £250 a year without getting into debt, and it was to their credit, and to the credit of their better halves, if they were able to do it. But some were also deeply in debt, and what was to become of them if this motion was passed? He had been assured that it would bring ruin upon 33 per cent. of the Civil Servants, some of whom had mortgaged their salaries twelve months in advance. To return to the point he started from: this spirit of trade-unionism was present in the Chamber among those hon. members who advocated the reduction, with the difference that it was inverted—trades-unionism said that no difference should be made between the quality of labour; those hon. members asked the Committee to make a universal indiscriminating reduction of salary. The spirit was, conversely, the same. Reference had been made to the dealings of masters with servants; but in this case who was in the position of employer? He held, with very great respect with those who differed from him, that the Cabinet was in that position. The Government had brought down Estimates, and said they were prepared to stick to them; but it would almost appear as though the hon. member for Wide Bay was in league with the Government. The hon. member for the Mitchell had desired hon. members of the Opposition to assist the Government in the proposed reductions. But the Government stated that they were going to stand by their Estimates, and yet the hon. member for Mitchell had stated he would vote against them. The hon. member said he was in favour of retrenchment on salaries of all Civil Servants—good, bad, and indifferent—in order that those dependent upon them should not suffer by dismissals advocated by some hon. members. He would like to know why that hon. member did not use the same terms of advocacy when the question of the Rockhampton and Ipswich workshops' dismissals was before the House, because in that case, also, there were wives and families to be considered. It seemed that they were to have a special compassion and sympathy for those who were designated Civil Servants, and not for the wage-earners of the workshops. He believed that they would meet the desire of the whole population if they on this occasion supported the Government and did not disturb the Estimates.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he believed all great men had been inconsistent, and therefore he would plead guilty to the

charge. What he did say, however, was, that he was the first member of the Committee who suggested that if the matter was to be dealt with in a logical, proper, and economical manner, they would dismiss the drones and keep the salaries of the working members as they were; but he felt it his duty to point out that if they dismissed a certain portion of the Civil Servants at the present time when everything was very depressed, they might do a very great injustice to those who were depending upon those Civil Servants for bread. That might be said to be the sympathetic way, and not the hard way that the hon. member for Rockhampton would have dealt with them. Possibly it was not the hard way in which the hon. member would have dealt with them; but they had heard from that hon. member a statement that would relieve the Government and this Committee from a great difficulty. He had told them there were a large number of Civil Servants whom he would employ at larger salaries than they were getting.

Mr. PATERSON: I did not say anything of the kind. I said there were gentlemen in the Civil Service whom I should be glad to employ if I could.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman, with the legal mind which he possessed, had the power of distorting what he had said. Of course, he accepted his denial, but what he really said was that he would employ a large number of these Civil Servants at a higher salary. Then he went on to the second-rate servants. If he was in a position, he would take all the first-class men, but would leave the State with a large number of men, who, according to his statement, were deeply in debt—the salaries of some being pledged to sixteen or eighteen months, and he argued that it would be a great hardship if these men's salaries were further decreased. The sooner these men died the better for themselves and their creditors—it would be best to give them the happy despatch. If there were a large number of men in this hopeless state of debt, let them get out of it by going into the Insolvent Court, and that would be giving employment to the lawyers. Possibly that was the hon. member's object when he brought forward the matter. He (Mr. Morehead) knew there were some members of the Civil Service who were in debt, but he did not know there were so many as the hon. member had led them to believe. Then the Committee had a nice speech from the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge), the chief representative of Civil Servants. He gave an address on the necessaries of life of Civil Servants, and mentioned butter. Butter was not a necessity, and a man might very well do without it, especially if it cost two shillings a pound. The hon. member did not, however, go into the matter thoroughly, for he did not state how many pounds of butter a Civil Servant consumed in a week. He also went into various matters of domestic economy to show that the member for Oxley was wrong; but the member for Oxley's statement was absolutely and perfectly true, and he was probably in a better position to give the true state of affairs than the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge). The hon. member had a very polite way of calling hon. members liars, asserting that the statements made by hon. members on the Government side "were not in accordance with facts;"—of course, with his legal mind he might twist that into something else than the imputation of a lie, but he (Mr. Morehead) took it in that sense. The hon. member had also told them that goods were cheaper in consequence of goods being purchased in the insolvent estates; but what did that prove? Simply that the times were so bad that the Insolvent Court was more filled than had been heard of before. Did that not show that trade was bad? Did it not bear out the statement of the hon. member for Oxley? His own opinion was, that the whole thing started from the Civil Servants having votes, which was a mistake—a misfortune. There were some members in the House who would be absolutely afraid to face their constituents if these reductions were carried. The sooner the Committee faced the difficulty the better. If the Civil Servants were to rule the roast, and if those who voted their salaries were to be their servants, let it be so. He should be very sorry to sit in the House as the representative of Civil Servants, and sincerely trusted that the hon. member's (Mr. O'Sullivan's) Bill might be passed to deprive them of the right to vote. The hon. member for Rockhampton, in preferring his charge of inconsistency, had pointed out that he (Mr. Morehead) had asked the leader of the Opposition to assist the Government in passing the Estimates. He did not ask him to do so. What he said was, that when times were troublous it was the duty of the Opposition—it would be more in accordance with the high and honourable office that the leader of the Opposition held—to assist the Government instead of harassing and humbugging them as he had done that evening. He had no sympathy with the leader of the Opposition or the Government in their present Estimates. There were some items down on the Estimates which he should most strongly support being struck off altogether. This had not been made a party question; the Colonial Secretary had told the Committee over and over again that he could not bring down reduced Estimates in this respect, and had given sufficient reasons. He hoped the amendment would be pressed

to a division, for it would have a large amount of support. If some members, on his (Mr. Morehead's) side, whose tongues were now tied, were to speak out they would agree that the Civil Servants did want a little reduction. In mercy to the Civil Servants — he felt in a merciful humour that evening—he hoped that the reduction would be taken *in globo*. No matter how contemptible an office a Civil Servant might hold, he had always got some friend in the Committee, or had a friend who could obtain support for him. If the reductions were taken in detail they would never be got through; and it would therefore be better to take them *in globo*, with the exception of certain departments which he intended to assist in having struck off altogether.

Mr. SIMPSON said that at an early stage of the debate he had stated that he should support moderate *pro ratâ* reductions; and if the matter came to a division in this form—in the form of a general reduction—he should vote for it. As he took the amendment, however, before the Committee, it simply meant a reduction of 15 per cent. upon one salary; and if that were so, he should vote against it.

Mr. BAILEY said that at the last general election the people fairly committed themselves to a policy of retrenchment in direct opposition to a policy which they had considered extravagant; and when he came to Brisbane it was with a determination to support a Government which was sincerely in favour of retrenchment, but he soon found that the present was not a Government of retrenchment except in a certain injurious way. They had come now to the Estimates, and he had taken the earliest opportunity of seeing whether the present was a Government of retrenchment. Independent of party, and as the representative of a tax-paying community amongst which there were few Civil Servants, he had brought forward his amendment, and he believed the taxpayers of the colony would back him up. He would concede that the Government were bound, to a certain extent, to stick to their Estimates as introduced; and that they had acted very fairly that evening. In moving his amendment he had not been in collusion with the Government or his own party, and he believed that the reduction he had proposed was very moderate. A good deal had been said about the means of living of Civil Servants, but the means of the taxpayers, who paid their salaries, were much reduced; in many instances they were reduced one-half, and this being the case the salaries of Civil Servants should also be reduced, but he had not proposed that the reduction should be in the same proportion. He had proposed a reduction which was not of a very large amount; it would not hurt any Civil Servant, and there was the sure prospect that when prosperity returned the salaries would be placed on the same footing again. He had never objected to pay a good wage for a good day's work, but under the present circumstances, when the revenue was decreasing monthly, they should be false to their trusts, they should be knaves, if they despised the signs of times and kept up the same rate of extravagant expenditure. The salaries now asked to be reduced were salaries which were raised to their present pitch in times of prosperity. His proposition was that the highest should be reduced for a time by 15 per cent., that the next highest should be 10 per cent. less, and the lowest $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; and at the same time he avoided taking any percentage off the smallest salaries, where they would find the real workers: it was not the gentlemen who strolled out of their offices daily and did four hours' newspaper reading who were the workers. The real workers were the small salaried men, and these he had omitted from his scheme of reduction. He did hope that the Committee would agree to his proposal as a moderate measure of retrenchment. It was not the policy of the Government of retrenchment; it might not be the policy of the Opposition; but it was the policy which the country demanded.

Mr. BEOR did not know where the Committee were. The Colonial Secretary had challenged a test vote, and the member for Wide Bay had moved the reduction of a single salary. He would like to see a test vote put himself to decide whether there was to be a universal reduction or not. The leader of the Opposition made a mistake in saying that his side of the House had only just discovered that the position the Colonial Secretary took was, that he would not give way to a general reduction because of the reduction of a single vote. He (Mr. Beor) would support either a test vote, or, that this particular item should be reduced with a view of reducing all others proportionately. The colony could not afford to pay the present salaries, for the revenue, which for 1877-78 was £1,559,000, was only estimated to be £1,460,000 for 1878-79, which was nearly a reduction of 10 per cent. Everybody except the Civil Servants was suffering a far heavier reduction of income than was now proposed to put on them. Why should the Service, therefore, be exempt from the distress falling on the whole colony? Indeed, he almost regretted they had not a Civil Servant in the House to speak for the Service; for, if they were men with the feelings of men, they would say they would bear their proportion of the present distress. He could not conceive any body of men standing aloof when the life-blood of the people was

being drawn from the colony. The Service ought to be content to take their share of the evil times, and he was sure they would be.

Mr. REA was understood to say that the speech of the last hon. member was a proof that this was not a party question. Every hon. member should give his vote on his individual opinion. He disagreed with his hon. colleague who had made a quotation from "Brassey," because, if he had regarded the whole of the officers in the Colonial Secretary's Department and the salaries they received, he would have seen that the charge of trades-unionism would not apply, for there were salaries of £800, £400, £350, and £200; therefore there was no dead level, all through, as would be in a trades union.

Mr. SIMPSON intended to move that this salary of £800 be reduced by 10 per cent., on the distinct understanding that it should be taken as a test; and, further, that all salaries between £350 and £500 be reduced by $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and all salaries from £200 to £350 by 5 per cent. Could it be put as a test question?

The CHAIRMAN: It cannot; the other items are not before the Committee.

Mr. SIMPSON said that if this salary were reduced 10 per cent. it could be formally accepted as a test question, and, virtually, it would then be a test. It would be binding on all those who voted for it to vote for proportionate reductions in other cases.

Mr. BAILEY considered he had taken the sense of the Committee, and he found his proposition did not receive the support which he had hoped it would. He was therefore willing to withdraw his amendment in favour of the one proposed by the hon. member for Dalby. Although he was not altogether satisfied with it, yet it seemed the only one there was a possibility of carrying. He believed an understanding had been come to that this amendment should be deemed a test vote, and that the reduction proposed here would be carried out in other salaries of the same class.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN submitted that it could not be put to the Committee as a test question. A test question must be put by the Speaker.

Mr. SIMPSON repeated that he proposed the amendment on the distinct understanding that it was binding on those who supported it to reduce subsequent salaries proportionately. He moved that the item of £800 be reduced by £80.

After some further discussion,

Mr. GRIFFITH wished to know what course the Ministry intended to pursue, as he should vote against the amendment if it was a test question; but if the item was to be taken on the merits, he should not bind himself to vote in any particular way.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had already repeated, four times, what position the Government held If a majority of the Committee decided that the salaries from £200 upwards should be reduced *pro ratâ*, they would take the decision as a test vote; but he denied that any private member had a right to get up and bind the Committee down to any particular course. The Government did not, however, give way one inch, on the Estimates.

Mr. GRIFFITH, therefore, understood that the Committee voted on this one item and nothing else.

Mr. SIMPSON said, if that was the case he would ask to withdraw his amendment. Unless it was taken as a test question, that all salaries were to be reduced, he did not wish to press it. He did not wish to commence with one salary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY objected against one vote being cut down and none others. It must be done altogether *pro ratâ*, or not at all.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he clearly understood from the Colonial Secretary that, if this amendment was passed, he should take it as an expression of the Committee that all salaries should be cut down *pro ratâ*, and that every other salary should be discussed at the reduced rate.

The PREMIER said the remark of the Colonial Secretary was, that he declined to accept a test vote on one salary, because it only represented the highest grade. If the Committee took the next item of £400, and another at £250, they would include the three grades of the Service, and it would be taken as a test whether salaries should be reduced, respectively, 10 per cent., $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and 5 per cent.

Mr. GRIFFITH said this was an entirely new departure. It meant that if hon. members were strong enough to carry this, they were strong enough to carry all the other reductions. This particular reduction would be carried on its merits, but not as a test question, and if it was carried it did not follow that all other salaries above £700 would be subject to a 10 per cent. reduction.

Mr. MILES said the Government had far better have taken his first suggestion, and considered each item *seriatim*. The confusion that had arisen was entirely the fault of the Government. He would move that the item be reduced by £100.

Question—That the item of £800 be reduced by £100—put.

The Committee divided—

AYES, 12.

Messrs. Dickson, Griffith, McLean, Paterson, Miles, Mackay, Rea, Garrick, Bailey, Rutledge, Beattie, and Macfarlane (Ipswich).

NOES, 31.

Messrs. Thorn, McIlwraith, Macrossan, Perkins, Cooper, Weld-Blundell, King, Meston, Swanwick, Stubley, Persse, Hendren, Sheaffe, Davenport, Groom, Grimes, Hill, Kingsford, Stevenson, Baynes, Simpson, H. W. Palmer, Amhurst, Beor, Lalor, O'Sullivan, Low, Stevens, Norton, Palmer, and Kellett.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Question put—That the item be reduced by £80—

Mr. GRIFFITH said he voted with the "Ayes" on the last division, because it was a motion to test the propriety of making a particular reduction. If the present motion was to be taken as a test applying to all other salaries of a similar amount he should vote with the "Noes."

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he had been charged with inconsistency for voting with the "ayes" on the last division, but his object in doing so was to vindicate the principle of taking each item *seriatim*. He should oppose to the last the adoption of a fixed rule whereby all salaries should be subjected to a uniform reduction.

Mr. BEOR (who was met by cries of "Divide" and "Question") said the leader of the Opposition had not put the question fairly. The test question was not that, if this motion was carried, all salaries of the same kind would be reduced in a like proportion: the proposal was, that if this salary was reduced by £80, and the salary on the next scale was reduced in the proportion proposed, and the salary in the third grade also reduced according to the scale, it would be taken as a test vote. The question was to be decided, not by a single vote, but by three distinct votes.

Mr. MOREHEAD (who was also received with cries of "Question" and "Divide") said he intended to be heard, and he thought it most unbecoming on the part of the Government to attempt to cry down one of their most consistent supporters, the hon. member for Bowen.

Question—That the item be reduced by £80—put.

The Committee divided—

AYES, 23.

Messrs. Meston, Rea, Cooper, Baynes, Weld-Blundell, Bailey, Sheaffe, Macfarlane (Ipswich), Simpson, Hendren, Beor, H. Palmer, Morehead, Grimes, Mackay, Stevenson, Stevens, Hill, Garrick, Low, Groom, Horwitz, and Davenport.

NOES, 22.

Messrs. Thorn, Griffith, Kellett, Dickson, McIlwraith, McLean, Perkins, Macrossan, Paterson, Stubley, King, Swanwick, Beattie, Amhurst, Lalor, Persse, Kingsford, O'Sullivan, Miles, Palmer, Norton, and Rutledge.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

On the question—That the sum of £3,045 be voted for the Colonial Secretary's Department—

Mr. SIMPSON moved that the item of £400 for Assistant Under Colonial Secretary be reduced by £30, or 7½ per cent.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, as this was a question of reducing small salaries, he hoped the division would not be the same as the last.

Question—That the item be reduced by £30—put.

The Committee divided—

AYES, 22.

Messrs. Rea, Meston, Cooper, Morehead, Garrick, Stevens, Low, Stevenson, Mackay, Weld-Blundell, H. Palmer, Beor, Simpson, Hendren, Baynes, Grimes, Bailey, Sheaffe, Groom, Horwitz, Hill, and Davenport.

NOES, 22.

Messrs. Griffith, McLean, Paterson, McIlwraith, Dickson, Perkins, Miles, Rutledge, King, Macrossan, Thorn, Stubley, Kellett, Lalor, Swanwick, Kingsford, O'Sullivan, Persse, Palmer, Norton, Amhurst, and Beattie.

The CHAIRMAN said that the numbers being equal, he should, in order to leave the matter open for future consideration, give his casting vote with the "Noes."

Question resolved in the negative.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the Chairman leave the Chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the last division proved nothing, whilst the one preceding it had proved something. He wished to draw attention to the conduct of the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) in reference to the divisions, as a more disgraceful exhibition he (Mr. Morehead) had never seen. The hon. member had spoken in favour of retrenchment, and had even asked him and others to assist him in the work of retrenchment, and yet had by his last vote consented to impose additional burdens on the people. Such conduct was disgraceful. He trusted the Government would take the expression of opinion given that evening as an indication that a large number of hon. members were determined to go in for retrenchment. Upon what principle hon. members voted in one direction upon one occasion, and in another upon a similar one, he did not know. Of course, the Chairman had a right to give a casting-vote, though he might, if he liked, have used it in a way to lessen the burdens on the people; but that was a matter for himself to consider, and not for him (Mr. Morehead) to comment upon. The Chairman had left things as they were with regard to the £400, but he trusted, when the subject was again under consideration, a majority would bear out the opinion given by a majority to-night. He would, in conclusion, draw the atten-

tion of the country to the action of the hon. member (Mr. Miles), whose word was not worth a shilling.

Mr. SIMPSON said the hon. member (Mr. Miles) had strenuously advocated the reduction of those salaries, and the only possible explanation of his extraordinary inconsistency was that he had obstinately voted with the "Noes" because he (Mr. Simpson) had moved the reduction.

Mr. MILES said his object was to get the items moved *seriatim*, so that they might reduce the high salaries and allow the low ones to remain. He did not care who moved the reduction, nor did he care for the opinion of the members for the Mitchell and Dalby. The item they had been discussing was £400 for the Assistant Under Colonial Secretary. He had voted for it on its merits, and hon. members would find that the chief clerk of the Works Department was put down for £100 more. He did not see why there should be a difference of £100 a year between the two, and to deal with such questions as that he wished the items to be taken *seriatim*.

Mr. DICKSON said Monday would not be a favourable day to obtain a large attendance of members; and he hoped the Colonial Treasurer would find it convenient to take an expression of opinion on this subject on some other day.

Mr. STEVENSON was understood to say that in the early part of the evening the hon. member (Mr. Miles) said he wished to reduce the salaries of all Civil Servants 20 per cent. The hon. member said this, and then voted against his convictions. After that he (Mr. Stevenson), like the hon. member for the Mitchell, would not consider the hon. member's word worth a shilling.

Mr. MILES denied having made such a statement, and said that the hon. member for Wide Bay would admit that he (Mr. Miles) had asked him several times to withdraw his motion.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member asked him yesterday, outside the Queensland Club, whether he would support him in reducing all salaries, and he told him he would do so. If he wanted the items moved *seriatim*, it was only necessary to make the demand; that subterfuge, therefore, fell to the ground.

Mr. HENDREN said that it had been stated that he voted contrary to the remarks he addressed to the House, but such was not the case.

Mr. MILES said it was the test question, and the going in for wholesale reductions, that he objected to.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-eight minutes past 11.