

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 1879

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LOAN BILL.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will admit of the adoption of Resolutions from the Committee of Ways and Means on the same day as they shall have passed in such Committee; also, of the passing of a Loan Bill through all its stages in one day.

Mr. DICKSON said that the hon. member for North Brisbane had objected to this motion going as formal, and one of his (Mr. Dickson's) objections was that, at this stage of the session, he did not see the necessity for the suspension of the Standing Orders so as to pass the Bill through in one day. Hon. members would agree with him that there was every reason why no extraordinary expedition should be made to get the Bill through. The Loan Bill was to cover the expenses of the colony for three or four years, but there were many hon. members who had expected before it closed that the Colonial Treasurer would have made provision for some other urgent services on Supplementary Loan Estimates. If the loan was now closed there would be a reasonable probability that none of the works to which attention had been directed would be entertained or sanctioned during the next two or three years. Amongst those urgent services ranked the line which was proposed to be constructed to facilitate the shipment of coal for export. It was a pity, after the discussion which took place on it, and after the favourable opinion which the Treasurer the other day expressed towards such a service being provided, that he should now close his loan without introducing a vote to give some effect to the general opinion. If they were at the very end of the session he could understand the Treasurer taking the course of requesting the suspension of the Standing Orders so as to get the Bill through in one day. It was generally adopted on such occasions on account of the lateness of the session in the desire to get the debentures prepared with all despatch, but none of these reasons could be urged in the present case. There were many requirements of the colony which, if they were not applying to the English capitalists for two or three years, ought to be included in the Loan Bill, and which, in view of the favourable reception which the hon. gentleman himself gave to requests of this sort, would have justified him in making provision for them. He trusted, therefore, that the hon. gentleman would see his way to reconsider his position. They had heard no statement made that the Loan Bill, which embraced services for three or four years in advance, was of so comprehensive a character as to satisfy all the requirements of the colony for that period; and this being the case, he deemed it his duty to urge on

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 2 September, 1879.

Orphanages Bill—third reading.—Licensing Boards Bill—third reading.—Loan Bill.—Question.—Ways and Means.—Loan Bill.—Divisional Boards Bill—committee.

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

ORPHANAGES BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence by message in the usual form.

LICENSING BOARDS BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence by message in the usual form.

the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government that it would be wise to postpone the consideration of the Loan Bill until he had given further attention to those matters which might properly be included in it. The delay of a week or a fortnight would not prejudice the sale of the debentures; they would doubtless realise as good a price even after a month or two's delay; but, apart from that, this loan should be made as comprehensive as possible before it was finally closed, and inclusive of works which the Premier himself approved and which ought to be provided for.

The PREMIER said the hon. member seemed to think it was quite an exceptional thing for a Treasurer to ask the House to agree to a motion of this sort at this stage of the session. But did the hon. member quite forget that it was also an exceptional thing for a Treasurer to come down to the House and ask for a loan at this stage of the session? This was the first time such a thing had occurred. And when he (the Premier) proposed to interrupt the other business in order to secure the passing of his Loan Bill, he gave good reasons, which operated then and which operated now with sufficient force to warrant him in asking the House to suspend the Standing Orders. The hon. gentleman must be well aware that it was absolutely necessary for the Government to be in a position to put the debentures on the loan market as soon as possible: it was understood to be quite possible that the money the colony had on loan at the present time might be exhausted by the end of April. Last year's loan, for instance, was sanctioned by this House early in October, and, using all the expedition which the late Treasurer could command, it was April before he sold his debentures in London. Supposing he (Mr. McIlwraith) could not get the debentures quicker for despatch to London than the hon. gentleman did, it would be March before the debentures could be put on the market at home. What the hon. gentleman practically wished was, therefore, that the colony should be kept in a constant state of anxiety to know whether the loan would be raised at all. As a prudent man the hon. gentleman ought to see the necessity of having the Loan Bill passed at once. He (Mr. McIlwraith) did not intend to commence any of the works which had been sanctioned until he saw there was a good chance of getting the money at a reasonable figure, and the House would see at once that the Government ought to be invested at the earliest possible opportunity with the means of getting the money. He gave similar reasons for asking the House to suspend the Standing Orders as he gave when he asked them to consider the Loan Bill at such an unprecedented

time as he had done this year. The hon. gentleman gave as a reason why the Loan Bill should not be now passed, that there would not be an opportunity of adding anything to it if it was passed. There were two sides to that question, and it might be a very good reason from a Government point of view why the Loan Bill should be passed now. That was a suggestion that told as well one way as another. If the hon. gentleman had intimated what he or any of his friends proposed to put on the Supplementary Loan Estimates, there might be some reason for asking for delay. The only thing that had been suggested, however, was the line to South Brisbane. He (Mr. McIlwraith) could mention a dozen applications of a similar kind—in fact, he had had enough applications for sums to be placed on the Supplementary Loan Estimates for works that would require a moderate little loan for themselves. He wanted to avoid these difficulties, not believing there was any present necessity for the schemes suggested in the applications. The hon. gentleman was very unfair in his interpretations of the remarks he (Mr. McIlwraith) made to a deputation respecting the line from Oxley to South Brisbane, and had no right to say that he expected a sum would have been put upon the Loan Estimates for the purpose. Was there a single word in the remarks he made to the deputation that would justify the hon. gentleman in the interpretation he had used? He (Mr. McIlwraith) stated it would be a good line, and a line that would, no doubt, eventually be made, but he did not say that the Government would do it now; nor did he give the deputation a single expression of opinion that would lead them to hope or believe that the line would find its way to the Loan Estimates this year. He (Mr. McIlwraith) repeated that it was a very important matter that these debentures should be printed at once, and, until the Loan Bill passed that could not be done, as the hon. gentleman very well knew.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said the answer of the hon. gentleman would be very plausible if the Government had not declared that this was a Loan Bill to extend over at least three years. The hon. gentleman asked the House summarily to suspend their Standing Orders in order to close the discussion as to the requirements of the country for the next three years. Surely, closing discussion for so long a period should be done with a little more deliberation than the Government now proposed. If the ordinary course were taken, by the time they had arrived at a conclusion it might be found that it was not desirable to affirm that they would not borrow more money for three years. He saw a motion, for example, on the paper asking for a sum of money to be placed

on the Loan Estimates for a line to develop the coal traffic of the colony. What would be the use of such a motion if the Loan Bill were passed through all its stages to-day? Under these circumstances the Colonial Treasurer asked the House—by proposing the suspension of the Standing Orders—to prevent discussion upon that motion; for it was patent to every member that discussion would be useless when the Loan Bill was passed. It was a very serious step to take to attempt to pledge Parliament so long in advance; and to do it in such a summary way as was proposed was an improper course to take.

Mr. McLEAN said that the Premier had told them that one reason why he wished to pass this Loan Bill now was that he wished to avoid running the risk of having to increase the Loan Bill, and that there were no very urgent works to be undertaken at present. That meant to say to his (Mr. McLean's) constituents that for another three or four years they were to be deprived of all chance of railway communication with the metropolis—that they were to go on struggling and striving for the next three years to get sufficient money to pay the interest on the present loan;—it was, in fact, an intimation to them that the sooner they sold their land and cleared out of this colony the better. In the face of this, Government said there was no very urgent necessity for further provision for works; and he could not allow the Bill to pass without protesting, on behalf of his constituents, against the action Government were taking. When he himself introduced the subject of a survey to the Logan it was received by hon. members with a general approval, and some hon. members expressed their surprise that the work had not been undertaken sooner, which would connect the Logan with the metropolis. But what had happened? The survey commenced, and the Government stopped it, and the claims of the district, which was the second oldest settled district in the colony, having been settled immediately after the Darling Downs—those claims were entirely ignored and the people of the Logan were told there was no chance of their having railway communication with the metropolis for the next three years. He would not be doing his duty if he did not enter his emphatic protest against such usage of his district by the present Administration.

Mr. REA said the Bill should hardly be expected to pass through the House while the hon. members for the Darling Downs were not present. Surely it was not intended to rush the thing through in the absence of members who had not had a chance of reaching the House on account of the long distance they had to come? One of the arguments used by the Premier had been that it was necessary to get the debentures

printed and ready; but Government had sufficient supporters to pass this Bill in a fortnight, without rushing their motion before the House now. If the Government had shown some desire to give information to the country how they were going to raise the money to pay the taxation consequent on the loan, the country would be better satisfied. But the urgency which the hon. gentlemen on the Government benches saw most of was to get the money—that must be done, and everything else could go to the winds. It was the duty of every hon. member, and especially of those on the Opposition side of the House, to try by every means to obtain information from the Government as to how they were going to raise the interest on the loan, and on whom the extra taxation would fall. Without that information the country would not be satisfied, and, as far as he was concerned, he would do all in his power to insist upon delay until it was forthcoming.

Question put and passed.

QUESTION.

Mr. DICKSON, without notice, asked the Premier when he would be able to lay on the table, as promised by him on a previous occasion, the additional correspondence between the Colonial Treasurer and the Auditor-General, with reference to exchange?

The PREMIER replied that any correspondence the hon. gentleman liked to ask for would be supplied. He had promised to lay on the table the whole of the correspondence, and would do so. If the hon. gentleman desired to have it up to the present time, there would be no objection to it.

Mr. DICKSON would be satisfied if the correspondence were laid on the table in a complete form before the close of the session.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The PREMIER moved—

That towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty for the service of the years 1879-80, a sum not exceeding £3,053,000, to be raised by the sale of debentures secured upon the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, and bearing interest not exceeding 4 per centum per annum, be granted to defray the expenses of the execution of certain public works and for other purposes.

Mr. GRIFFITH protested against the passing of such a resolution at present. There was on the loan vote an item of £100,000 towards first expenditure of loan boards and shire councils, before the Bill authorising the formation of those local bodies was passed. Considering the way in which hon. members were leaving town, it was by no means certain that that Bill would become law this session, and it was,

to say the least, unusual to borrow money before it was known whether it would be wanted or not.

The PREMIER said that, as he had repeatedly remarked, he was in a great hurry to get the money, and that was the reason why he brought the Loan Estimates forward so early in the session. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) had given as his reason for delaying the Loan Bill, that there was an item of £100,000 on the vote to work a Bill which had not yet passed. That was not an uncommon occurrence, and he could point to numerous instances in which it had been done. He should be sorry if the Divisional Boards Bill did not pass; but he did not see what harm there could be in borrowing the money, because there would be an amount of £305,000 to meet for depreciation of debentures. He questioned whether the custom of Parliament was not wrong in not putting into the loan vote an amount to cover loss by such depreciation.

Mr. BAILEY said it was not possible that the Divisional Boards Bill would pass, for if it did the whole country would rise up in rebellion. The whole of the roads of the colony were in a state of ruin, and this was surely not the time to impose fresh taxation on the people in order to put in repair the roads which the Government had allowed to go to ruin. If the Government had placed £300,000 on the Estimates for the repairs of roads, and asked the people to take them over in a tolerably good state, the request might have been reasonable. To ask the Committee to agree to vote £100,000 to force such a measure down the throats of the people was to attempt to obtain money under false pretences.

Mr. DICKSON said he hoped the Premier did not intend to ask for this money for the purpose of paying the loss on depreciation of debentures?

The PREMIER protested against such words being put into his mouth. He had not said a word to lead the hon. gentleman to arrive at any such conclusion, for it was his belief that the Divisional Boards Bill would pass.

Mr. DICKSON said the Premier had said that, if the Bill did not pass, the item of £100,000 would help to cover the depreciation which would ensue on the sale of debentures. He had no desire to delay the business of the country, or to prevent the Colonial Treasurer from getting his loan with all reasonable expedition; but in a Loan Estimate of this character, embracing services for three or four years, adequate provision should be made for every work. He was firmly convinced that such adequate provision was not made for many of the services on the Loan Estimate, notably in that for harbours and rivers. On many of the items under that head the

Colonial Treasurer had had no professional opinion as to their exact cost, particularly as to the works at the Pioneer River, Ross' Creek, the Port Douglas jetty, and sundry other items. For all those extra provision ought to have been made on a Supplementary Loan Estimate. There was also one omission which he greatly regretted—namely, a sum for the completion of the Townsville jetty: an amount for that work ought to have been placed on the Supplementary Estimate. Whatever justification there might be for the removal of obstructions at Ross' Creek, it furnished none whatever for the abandonment of a work of such magnitude and permanent utility as the Townsville jetty.

Mr. ARCHER said he trusted the Premier had made up his mind to pass the Divisional Boards Bill, for without some such measure justice would never be done to the northern and outside districts so long as the Minister for Works had his office in Brisbane and could have pressure brought to bear upon him by almost daily deputations from the immediate neighbourhood. The Bill would be a great gain to the colony at large, by making people pay only for what was expended in their own districts. He should be glad to see the time come when the money raised in any particular district was spent within its boundaries.

Mr. BAILEY said the Government had adopted a new financial policy of borrowing money for one purpose and employing it for another. A nice instance of that occurred yesterday, when they broke up the trust lands of the Victoria Bridge, so that they might make up the deficiency out of the Consolidated Revenue. To-day there was another instance of an attempt to bribe the people of the colony to swallow an obnoxious measure with a bolus of £100,000, and they were told that if the people would not swallow the measure the money would come in very handy for something else. He had no doubt that the branch railways in the Loan Estimates would be treated in the same manner. It would be found that the trunk lines would cost a little more than was expected, and the branch lines, even if they got as far as being surveyed, which he doubted, would be lost sight of for ever, and the money voted for them would come in very handy for those railways out to the setting sun. By such a process of manipulation the Government would be able to square their accounts, and carry their financial policy to a successful termination.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN reported to the House that the Committee had come to a resolution, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The resolution was adopted, and leave given to bring in a Bill founded thereon.

LOAN BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Loan Bill, founded on the foregoing resolution, was introduced and read a first and second time.

The House then went into Committee to consider the Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

The PREMIER moved that clause 1—Power to raise money for certain purposes—as read, stand part of the Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he would take this opportunity to say a few words about the loan. He agreed with the hon. member for Ennggera (Mr. Dickson) in regretting the determination of the Government to discontinue so useful a public work as the Townsville jetty. After having spent nearly £70,000 upon it, and when the expenditure of about another £70,000, or less, would have made the work suitable for all the purposes for which it was originally designed, it was a great pity that the Government should have decided to discontinue its construction. If the work were to be left unfinished in that way the £70,000 already spent might as well have been thrown into the sea. No doubt it would eventually be completed; but through the action of the Government no further work could be done during the next three years. What a fine comment was their action upon the conduct of the hon. member for Townsville, now Minister for Works, when he with some other hon. members last year waited upon the then Treasurer and pointed out that that division of the colony was entitled to have £600,000 borrowed and spent within its boundaries before another farthing was spent in any other part of the colony! This was the way in which when he got into power he protected the interest of which he used to be the distinguished champion! Mr. Nisbet, in his last report on the Townsville jetty, said—

“Supposing 18 feet below low-water to be the depth to which it was decided to deepen the harbour, the channel of approach would require to be dredged to the same depth in a direction due north and south, for a distance of from 3,000 to 4,000 feet, and leading lights placed on shore to guide vessels through it at night. Practically, however, vessels would be able to steer for the harbour at high-water, in almost any direction, as the present depth, without dredging, at the place where the pier-heads are proposed to be fixed, would be 15 feet at high-water of lowest neap tides, and from 19 to 21 feet at high-water of spring tides. This is 1 foot more than the present available depth in the Brisbane River; but I do not think it would be advisable to terminate the jetty in less than 11 feet below low-water, as proposed.”

That was the proposed ultimate termination;—

“To complete the jetty on this plan to 3,960 feet—a work which could be most advan-

tageously carried out before the removal of the plant and temporary works now available for the purpose—and provide wharfage at outer end for coasting steamers, would require a sum of £49,000 beyond amounts already voted for this purpose.”

The expenditure of another £50,000 would therefore make this a magnificent harbour.

The PREMIER: It would not be a harbour.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it would not be a harbour in the sense of an enclosed basin, but it would make a jetty at which coasting steamers could lie and discharge. There was now a sufficient harbour for vessels to lie, but passengers and cargo had to traverse some two miles of somewhat rough water and cross a bar. If the work were completed, a fine revenue might be raised from the traffic over a jetty 3,960 feet in length, but if left unfinished the money spent would be absolutely thrown away, as not a farthing would be returned to the country. To leave the work in that state when another £50,000 would make it remunerative was very extraordinary economy. He was making those remarks because it had been rumoured in the Northern towns that the smallness of the votes for that division of the colony was owing to the action taken by himself and other hon. members on the Opposition side, and he was determined that such reports should not go uncontradicted. He would not allow it to be said in Townsville that any hon. member on that side would have prevented the Government from carrying out that work. There was another case of the same kind which he would refer to. The *Cooktown Herald* of 16th August, 1879, said—

“We are informed by a member of Parliament that our strictures lately passed upon the Government for not dealing out justice to the North were unwarranted, or, at all events, not deserved. The Government, we are assured, have been compelled to place upon the Estimates money for the Cook district in a general way to avoid the factious opposition of Mr. Griffith's party to anything shown to benefit the Cook district.”

The statement was evidently inspired by some member of the Government, or by some hon. member under the immediate inspiration of the Government, who communicated with the *Cooktown Herald*. That was the way the Opposition were treated in the country. It was evidently the excuse given by the Government for not placing more money upon the Estimates for the Cook district—or, rather, for putting it on “in a general way.” The statement was absolutely without foundation, as no factious opposition had been shown to anything relating to the Cook; and whatever hon. member might have been the author of the information, or whatever member of the Government might

have supplied it, the statement had not the slightest foundation in fact. Hon. members would be naturally curious to know what were the amounts put on the Estimates in a general way. The only items distinctly for the Cook were Port Douglas jetty, £10,000, and Endeavour River bridge, £10,000. Probably some part of the £20,000 for main roads to goldfields was intended for that division—perhaps the whole of it. If that amount were intended to be spent on the Cook district alone it would furnish an explanation of the article he had read. But the Minister for Works would not give that explanation when the House went into Committee of Supply; and surely the Government were not reduced to such tactics, and could get on without misrepresenting the Opposition. The information had evidently and plainly come from the Government, and this was a specimen of the way in which the Government had become deservedly unpopular in the northern part of the colony, notwithstanding the great things the Northern league were going to do when its head got into the Government. This was the way they endeavoured to turn the attack upon the Opposition. Such tactics needed only to be mentioned to be made plain. In spite of those statements the people of the Cook district would have sufficient sense to know that the Government had not been actuated by any such motives, but that they did not choose to do anything more for that district, because, having obedient members for that district, they did not consider it necessary. From the remarkable way in which the Government policy had been moulded that was probably the true reason, and the reason stated in the newspaper was entirely without foundation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said the hon. gentleman had made a very nice electioneering speech, but it was rather too soon—the election was too far away. He would only answer what the hon. gentleman said in connection with the Townsville jetty. It was a pity the hon. gentleman did not read the paragraph in Mr. Nisbet's report immediately following his quotation, as he would then have given the Committee fuller information. Mr. Nisbet, instead of saying that £49,000 would complete the works, said that it would require £105,000—more than twice what the hon. gentleman stated. The completion, as far as the work was originally designed, would be effected for £49,000, but that would not make a harbour. Whether Mr. Nisbet's design would be carried out or not he (Mr. Macrossan) could not say, but the amount originally voted had been more than doubled, and they were far from having a harbour or a completed jetty. The first sum was £35,000, and, if he was not mistaken, that sum was intended to

make the jetty—since then a sum as large had been voted, and still £49,000 was required. He was not quite so sure of the extreme generosity the Opposition would have exhibited had the sum of £50,000 for the jetty, and £390,000 for the Charters Towers extension, been asked for. Would the hon. member for North Brisbane have been willing to vote these sums? Hon. members knew the hon. gentleman too well to suppose it, and so did the people of Townsville.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the part of the report he read had reference to the completion of the jetty according to the original plan to a distance of 3,960 feet with a depth of eleven feet at low water where coasting steamers could discharge upon the jetty. That could be effected, according to Mr. Nisbet, for £49,000, rendering the present expenditure remunerative. He would now read the paragraph which followed:—

"The remainder of the works—which are not so dependent upon the present appliances and facilities for economical construction as the jetty proper above referred to—could be carried out as might appear desirable hereafter.

"I estimate that to extend jetty to 3,960 feet, erect half-tide breakwater on west side of enclosed space, dredge entrance channel to 18 feet below low-water by 300 feet wide, dredge (say) 20 acres of harbour space to same depth (exclusive of first cost of dredge plant), erect screw-pile jetty 700 feet long by 30 feet wide available for vessels on both sides, provide wharfage for coasting steamers near outer end of jetty, provide railways, sheds, lights, moorings, &c., complete, would require a sum of £105,000 in addition to amounts already voted for this work."

He did not speak of that work at all.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman forgot that without that additional work the jetty would not be used. To say that by finishing the work according to the original plan a revenue would be produced was absurd. It would take £100,000 to complete the jetty in such a manner that it would become reproductive. It was found cheaper to lighter goods from Hobson's Bay to Melbourne than to bring the steamer to the wharves, and the shipping accommodation at Townsville was now as good as at Melbourne. To spend money now in making a harbour at Townsville which would be a credit to the colony twenty or thirty years hence would be most imprudent. There were many better ways of spending borrowed money than on the Townsville jetty, and it was a great pity that the work was begun.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the general opinion in Townsville was, that if half the money had been spent on Koss' Creek the town would have been more benefited and the port improved. As to the statement of the hon. gentleman that the jetty would be used by vessels and a

revenue received from the traffic, his (Mr. Macrossan's) information led him to a different conclusion. He had been told in Townsville more than once—and lately by the A. S. N. Company and another firm—that shippers would never use the jetty, because it would be cheaper to use their own lighters and bring the goods to the stores on the wharves.

Mr. DICKSON said that many people in Townsville believed that the salvation of the port depended upon the jetty being extended. No doubt a certain number of traders desired that the obstructions in the creek should be removed, being apprehensive that as soon as the railway came to the jetty business would be established outside the town. Such an important work as the jetty having been commenced it was extremely unwise to allow it to fall into decay. A most efficient staff was at present engaged on the works, and if they were removed construction could not be so economically carried on at a future time. He deeply regretted that the Premier should have considered it his duty to discontinue a work of that character. He was of opinion, not only from Mr. Nisbet's report, but from inspection and from information supplied by men acquainted with those matters, that the jetty would be a great boon to Cleveland Bay. When carried out to the extent originally intended a very commodious harbour would be created; and when the railway was connected with it there would be every facility for the shipping of the port. When carried out temporarily to a sufficient depth of water for the purposes contemplated the desirability of further carrying the jetty out to the full extent might be considered. He had no doubt that the present outcry at Townsville, as alleged by the Minister for Works, for removal of the obstruction in Ross Creek in preference to continued construction of jetty, would, as soon as Ross Creek expenditure terminated, be again directed to extend the jetty as speedily as possible.

The Hon. G. THORN said he could not endorse the observations of the Premier and the Minister for Works. The Premier said that in Melbourne vessels were lightered in preference to going to the jetty. His experience, on the contrary, was that all the vessels went to the piers at Williamstown and Sandridge, and that it was cheaper to carry the goods to town by rail than by lighter. He might inform the Minister for Works that the A.S.N. Co. would take off all their smaller boats because they did not usually pay—the same as they had done at Ipswich. The A.S.N. Co. knew their own business perfectly well, and it would be a saving to them if they could get rid of all the little boat trade in the colony. He agreed with the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) that as soon as the

money was expended on Ross' Creek the Townsville people would want the jetty completed, and he considered that expenditure as thrown away. Townsville he looked upon as one of the most important places in the colony, and in five years' time, when the proposed railway was constructed, he predicted that it would be larger than Rockhampton. With regard to the vote for roads and buildings, it was not too late for the Colonial Treasurer now to eliminate them and propose an amount for the Townsville jetty. He strongly objected to the votes for roads and buildings, but presumed it was useless for him to move any amendment as he would be left in a minority. But he would ask whether it was too late to strike off the votes for bridges and buildings? There was, for instance, the vote for roads to goldfields, which he had been given to understand was all to be spent in the Cook district. If such were the case other districts would be led astray—Gympie, for instance, would expect a part, though it would probably get very little. He had heard that the whole amount was to be spent on the Port Douglas and Cooktown roads, to square that division of the colony. He had been told by the leading men of Townsville that they expected to get a large amount for roads, but if they did it would be in some unusual way. What would the people at Charters Towers and the Etheridge—and even Rockhampton and Port Curtis, where there were goldfields—say when they found that this general vote was to be spent in one district? Were he a Minister at the present time he should be only too glad to see the Opposition assisting to wipe out the whole amount for roads and buildings, and he hoped it was not too late to omit it now. There had been mistakes made in the past in borrowing money for roads and bridges, but it was time now they drew in their horns. He would recommend Ministers to teach the people to be more self-reliant. When he was in office the Cook district had a large amount for roads—as much as the two Moreton districts, and the money now down for it would be mainly for the benefit of the Chinese, from whom the colony got little. The Europeans in business there were mostly connected with New South Wales and spent their money out of the colony. He was not going to say a word against the Northern gold-miners, but it did seem anomalous that money should be borrowed for their roads, whilst the farming population of the colony was to be taxed for the same purpose. Under the Divisional Boards Bill miners got off free, although the mining industry could stand taxation better than any other; gold-mining was the only industry in the colony that was at present prosperous, he was sorry to say. He could not look upon it with the same unalloyed satisfaction as the

farming or pastoral industry, it not being so permanent, but miners could better afford taxation for their roads than farmers. The Stanley electorate seemed to be the only one amongst those supporting the Ministry which had not been "squared" on the Estimates, and he therefore presumed that the members for it were so unselfish that they went in for the general good of the colony. They were not so sharp as the extreme Northern members, otherwise they would have gone in for a fair share of the Loan. When he was in office he never favoured one district before another; if he did fail it was against his intention. Should any member move the omission of the items that he had indicated he should support him, for he objected to any more money being borrowed for unproductive works. If it was known in England that they still intended running in the old groove it would cause a material difference in the price at which the loan would be floated.

Mr. BAILEY hoped that Ministers would give some information regarding the statement made in the newspaper paragraph quoted by the leader of the Opposition. The paragraph appeared in a Government paper, and the information contained in it was, he believed, supplied by Mr. Walsh, one of the members for the Cook. It stated that there were many items on the loan and general Estimates which might be termed ambiguous, but all these, it was said, were intended for the Cook district. It was of some consequence that the Committee should know which were really for that district. The Opposition had not the slightest intention of opposing them, but it was only fair that these things should be done fairly and openly, and that there should be an end to the mystery and ambiguity which had hitherto prevailed. Let the Opposition be told which items were for the benefit of the Cook and such items would be voted, but they did object to these ambiguous, secret arrangements. Why could not these things be done openly and straightforwardly? If the information that was asked for was not given they could only presume that the £62,650 down for roads and bridges was mainly intended for the Cook; and if that was so, let it be known. He thought, himself, that the people of the Cook would be sorry to have it thought that they were to snap up the whole of the vote. The road from Maryborough to Gympie was perfectly impassable, he believed. Here was a goldfield which had done more good to the colony than any other, and yet it could hardly be approached from any side, and, in consequence, freights had been doubled and quadrupled. The roads leading to it had been neglected for the last six months and had got quite out of order; the consequence was that these roads must be repaired;

still, it was impossible to say whether this vote was intended to be given to one district. If the Government wished this £62,000 to be expended in the Cook alone, let them say so, instead of smuggling it through in a secret and mysterious manner.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he noticed the absence of proper provision for water-supply, although in the Opening Speech it was made a prominent matter, paragraph 13 stating—

"The present mode of supplying the capital and its suburbs with water has proved totally inadequate for their increasing population. An engineer of experience has therefore been instructed by my Government to collect data, and report on the best means of augmenting the Supply and improving the quality of this necessary of life. The question of water supply, as effecting other centres of population in the colony, will also be submitted for your consideration."

All the money put on the Loan Estimates for water-supply for the next three years was a miserable sum of £18,250 for four specified places. Surely the Government had forgotten a great many of their promises, and had left undone most serious things which would have to be attended to. Were the Committee to understand that this was the only loan that would be required during the next three years? From the beginning of the session the Treasurer had told them that they ought to go in for a loan which would cover a period, and pledge themselves to borrow no more in the meantime. Was that intended to be done, for if it was not it would be purposeless to discuss the omissions? There was an item of £22,500 for a telegraph from Aramac to the Diamantina, upon which it would have been useless to take a division the other evening, the House being so small. Was it to be compared with the question of water-supply for the centres of population? An item which had never been heard of was placed on the loan, whilst others which were mentioned in the Opening Speech were omitted. When the Government sat in Opposition they were always talking about water-supply, and they mentioned it at the beginning of the session, but they omitted it in a loan which was avowedly intended to do for three years, and so prevented themselves or their successors from dealing with the matter during that period. It was a very serious matter. If the Government told them that they would not pledge themselves not to raise another loan before three years, then it would be more satisfactory; but to vote this money with the understanding that the honour of the colony was to be pledged not to borrow again, and without proper provision being made for water-supply, was very unsatisfactory.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had brought forward the same argument that he had urged against the loan in the previous discussions; and it was an argument that he would yet regret having used. He had made a pretty electioneering speech, because there was an indignation meeting to be held against the Government at Townsville to-morrow.

MR. GRIFFITH: I never heard of it.

The PREMIER said it was, then, one of those "undesigned coincidences." He was, however, perfectly prepared to take the responsibility of what the Government had done regarding the Townsville jetty. The starting of that work was a "gigantic job," which ought to make the Opposition ashamed. When in office they brought in the work, and gave the House distinctly to understand that £35,000 would finish it. The following year they found that the amount was not sufficient, and further provision to the extent of £10,000 was made in the Loan Estimate; but the House would not pass the vote unless an assurance was given that the amount would complete the work, and the assurance was given. Altogether, £75,000 had been spent upon it, and now the hon. gentleman, to curry favour with the Townsville people, said it was a pity that another £50,000 was not voted. It would be just as much wasted as the £75,000. At least £100,000 was required, and the colony was not in a position to stand such an amount, although he believed Townsville was a rising town. The hon. gentleman had asked whether he would give a guarantee that he would not ask for another loan within three years. How many times was he to answer that question, and what was the object of putting it so often? He had answered it twice, and would decline to answer it again. Then it was said he had forgotten to make provision for water-supply, as promised in the Opening Speech, but he would ask what the item—loans to municipalities, £200,000, was for? Did not the hon. gentleman hear him explain over and over again that this money would be spent chiefly on water-supply? He (the Premier) maintained there was adequate provision for such an object. The hon. gentleman said only £18,000 was provided for water-supply, but it was explained at the time what that meant? That amount was required to finish old votes for water-supply, but the loan of £200,000 to municipalities was a new thing, and would meet all requirements for the next three years, in the opinion of the Government.

MR. DICKSON said that had the Premier followed the usual practice, and made the provision for water-supply a special service on the Loan Estimates, the present discussion would have been avoided. After hearing the explanation that the £200,000 down for loans to muni-

cipalities was intended for water-supply and roads, he believed the provision was sufficient. As to the Townsville jetty, the hon. gentleman had said that the sum originally asked was entirely inadequate to complete the work, and that since then a larger provision had been obtained than was originally contemplated by Parliament. The reason was very simple. The first vote was taken on account, and on the representation of the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers, that it would be advisable to carry out the main extension with timber and that only a portion of the jetty should be of stone, the engineer being of opinion that if the larger portion were constructed in stone it would silt up. The engineer afterwards altered his estimate for the larger portion from timber to stone, and thereby the estimate was largely increased. That was a sufficient explanation why the original estimate was departed from. Notwithstanding the opinion of the Premier, he thought that the work having been commenced it ought to have been continued; it should be saved from destruction—from the state of decay into which it would fall if the staff were removed and operations were discontinued. In connection with the vote for water-supply, he would ask the Minister for Works if he had proceeded with the matter of a water-supply for Charters Towers, the money for which was voted last year? He trusted his question was not inopportune and that there was no indignation meeting to be held there. The money having been granted last year, and instructions given to the hydraulic engineer to make the survey, he should be glad to hear what steps had been taken.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had stated that he had departed from the usual procedure in excepting water-supply as a special item on the Loan Estimates, but the hon. gentleman ought to know the reason. Since the last loan a Local Government Act had been passed, and water-supply was one of the objects for which local bodies could borrow money, but they must themselves take certain action in the matter;—the only way in which money could be obtained under the Local Government Act for that purpose, and in which it could be put down on the Loan Estimates, was in the form that had been adopted. Moreover, if the hon. gentleman had listened to what was said he would have seen what the item of £200,000 was intended for. As to the Charters Towers water-supply, action would have to be taken by the people themselves, for circumstances were entirely different now. The Government had to act strictly according to the law now; and no matter whether the money was voted or not, he should insist upon the loan being secured and administered. The Charters

Towers works had been surveyed, and the next step remained to be taken by the people of Charters Towers themselves, and of Townsville, and other places. So long as he was Treasurer, the Local Government Act must be carried out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he might inform the hon. member for Enoggera that the vote passed for a water-supply for Charters Towers was totally inadequate, and that he did not think the Charters Towers people would borrow the sum required to supply water. As to the Townsville jetty, he had nothing to say against Mr. Nisbet or his staff, but it was his opinion that the money which had been spent on the jetty could have done more work than it had effected had the work been carried on by contract. He believed that jetties, as well as railways, could be built far cheaper by contract, and when they started the jetty again—as no doubt it would be—it would be on the contract system and not under Government; and he was certain the work would be done much more cheaply.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government had told him that he had a bad memory, because he had explained over and over again that this £200,000 would be available for water-supply; but he certainly never heard the hon. gentleman make that explanation, although he had heard him on the three occasions he spoke on the Loan Estimates. The first time he mentioned the item was on the 4th June, and all he then said was, enumerating the different items—loans to local bodies, £200,000. He did not give a single word of explanation on that occasion. The next time he referred to it was in his Financial Statement on the Loan Estimates, when he said—

“I thought at first it would be possible to start the Divisional Boards in the colony, for the purpose of local improvements, by lending to municipalities considerable amounts, and with that object £200,000 was put on my then contemplated Loan Estimates. On further consideration, however, I believe it would not be an unfair thing for the House to agree that the first advance to the road boards and shire councils, in the proportion contemplated by the Bill, should not be a loan but an actual subsidy by the Government. With that object this £100,000 has been put down, so that the starting of the Bill will be made a matter of as little inconvenience as possible to the settlers in the colony during the first year. The next item is loans to local bodies, £200,000. This is one of those items which depends so much on matters over which the Government have no control—that it is simply an estimate, and perhaps a very crude estimate. Under the Local Government Bill, although it is left to the discretion of the Treasurer to lend money, on all the conditions having been complied with by the municipal body asking for the loan; still, as a matter of fact, I believe that loans have always been

made on condition being complied with; and, I believe, to carry out the spirit of the Act, we require to do so still. I think I have not under-estimated, in this sum of £200,000, what is likely to be required during the next three years for loans to municipalities. In using the word “municipalities,” I mean municipalities as defined under the Local Government Act of 1878.”

He then passed on to water-supply.

The PREMIER: What did I say there?

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman said—

“The items under the head of water-supply are in a very unsatisfactory position at the present time, and I therefore wish to direct the attention of the House to them. The Government, without making any definite and specific arrangement for the payment of interest, have as a rule always built those waterworks; and when they are taken over by the municipalities, no provision being made for the payment of interest except the liability of the municipalities generally, the only chance of getting the interest seems to be by stopping the endowment. At the present time, Ipswich is desirous of postponing the consideration of payment of interest until some future time. Warwick has made, not the same application, but one which is quite as unreasonable in my view of the matter—it is this: they consider that the Government are bound to put up waterworks there of a certain character on the estimate made by the Government engineer some two years ago, which is not much more than half the amount actually required to complete the works; but they consider they are entitled to claim that interest should be paid only on the amount of the estimate which the engineer stated the works could be done for. The view I am bound to take of the question, as Treasurer, is that they are entitled to pay 5 per cent. on all the money borrowed. I consider that it is a matter of convenience to municipalities generally for the Government to build these works at their request, and I certainly hold that they are entitled to pay interest on the whole of the loan.”

The hon. gentleman did not say a word on that occasion to connect this item with water-supply, and when the item was moved in Committee of Supply not a word was said, so that the information he thought he had given on that point was only in his own imagination.

The PREMIER said one object of the Local Government Act was to lend moneys to municipalities to carry out works, and the only possible way in which a loan could be made to municipalities was under this Bill. He had put down £200,000 for that purpose, and yet the hon. member had the assurance to say that no provision had been made for water-supply. That was a curious way of proving a negative. He (the Premier) had said over and over again that water-supply was included in this £200,000, and the hon. member picked out different speeches in which he did not say so. He wished the hon. gentle-

man would state what was the object of wasting the time of the Committee in this way. He did not see any object to be gained by discussing the Townsville jetty and other items, every one of which would have been much better discussed when the Loan Estimates were under consideration. What the discussion had to do with the passing of the Loan Bill he could not see. It certainly would not have the effect of making the Government bring down Supplementary Estimates, as the hon. member seemed to think ought to be done; and if it was for the purpose of getting the kind of information asked for by the hon. member for Wide Bay they would have to wait a very long time.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman departed entirely from his previous position. He (Mr. Griffith) had pointed out that a most important promise in the Governor's Speech had not been performed—that there was nothing on the Estimates for water-supply beyond a few small items, and then the hon. gentleman said that he had explained over and over again that portion of this £200,000 would be available for water-supply. But he had shown that on the only occasions when the hon. gentleman mentioned the matter he made no such explanation. He (Mr. Griffith) had now got the information he asked for, and it was no use the hon. member getting up and saying that he had given the information over and over again when he had not done so—although, no doubt, he thought he did. As to wasting time, all he wanted was information. When the hon. gentleman was asked whether he intended to pledge the credit of the colony to borrow no more money for three years, he said he had answered that question twice already; but did anybody know how he had answered it? On one occasion he said he was going to do so, and, on another, that he would not do so if he could help it. That was a very indefinite position to be in. Were they, or were they not, to be pledged to borrow no more money for a certain time? Nobody knew; and his present impression was that the hon. gentleman did not intend to answer that question—that he intended to leave it open to do what he liked, according to the exigencies of the time. They were entitled to be told what were the present intentions of the Treasurer.

The PREMIER said he explained before, when the hon. member was present, that if he was forced as Treasurer, as he probably would be, to give a guarantee when he floated one portion of the loan that he would not float the balance for a certain time, he would be obliged to do so, but that he should not give such guarantee unless compelled to do so. He did not think the hon. gentleman could desire any better explanation than that. He did not

think any Treasurer in his senses would say he would not borrow for a certain time unless he was compelled to do so. He had previously referred to the position of Victoria, where a loan of five millions was authorised, and those who were negotiating the loan in London forced upon the Treasurer, when he floated three millions, the terms that he should not bring forward the balance of two millions for eighteen months. He would certainly not give any promise, as he said before, unless he was forced to do so.

Mr. Low said the whole point of the case resolved itself into this—that when the Treasurer wanted money he would borrow, and when he did not want it he would not borrow. Nothing could be plainer.

Mr. BAILEY asked for some information with reference to the sum of £62,650 put down for Roads and Bridges. Was it all to be spent in the Cook district, or how was it to be allocated?

The PREMIER said if the hon. member had taken the trouble to look at the original items he would have had no occasion to ask such a question at all. He would find that £30,000 was for the storage of water on main roads, £1,000 to complete the Goondiwindi bridge, £650 to complete the Tiara bridge—which the hon. member ought to know something about, £9,000 to complete the Fitzroy bridge, £2,000 for the Endeavour River bridge, and £20,000 for main roads to goldfields.

Mr. THORN wished to know how the £20,000 for main roads to goldfields was to be expended? Was any of it to be spent on the road to Gympie or Charters Towers, or was the Hodgkinson and Palmer to get the lot?

Mr. Low said it appeared that the goldfields roads was to get all this money; but he thought he would have to trouble the Treasurer for some of it for the roads in his district. He wanted £3,000 or £4,000 of it.

Mr. DICKSON said the Treasurer had stated that he did not intend making any representation to the public creditor whereby he would be prevented from making application for another loan, and he was glad it was so, for he had no hesitation in saying that another loan would be required within two years if the Government proceeded with anything like the expedition that people interested in these services desired. The hon. gentleman opposite, when referring to the Townsville jetty, made some remarks which might lead to the belief that the original estimate of the Engineer of Harbour and Rivers had been largely exceeded; but, in justice to that officer and his department, he wished to point out that such was not the case. It appeared from the report of that gentleman that while £64,000 had been voted, only £53,000

had been expended up to the present time. It was only right that this should be stated, because the impression on his mind from what the hon. gentleman opposite said was, that Mr. Nisbet's estimate had fallen far short of the amount necessary to carry out the work to the limits of the original scheme. He hoped the Treasurer would give some information with regard to this £20,000 for goldfields. It was only reasonable to ask how the money was to be expended. He did not ask the exact amount proposed to be expended in each place, but for some approximate idea of the sums to be allocated to each district. The hon. gentleman must have had under consideration the requirements of this service or he would not have placed the amount on the Estimates.

Mr. THORN said it was the practice in all the colonies, when an amount like this was asked for, to place schedules in the hands of hon. members showing the details. There were several goldfields in the colony, and in his opinion the Etheridge was the best, and he should like to know what amount was to be devoted to the road to that field? Was the money to be all spent in places where the population consisted chiefly of Chinese—such as the Palmer district? He had been given to understand that it was all to go there, and although he should not object to a considerable sum being spent in that district; still, he thought they had a right to know where the money was to be expended. With regard to the Townsville jetty, he believed, if carried out as originally intended, it would be self-supporting. It was at one time contemplated that a railway should run from Townsville to the end of the jetty, and he was perfectly satisfied that such a railway would pay. One of the best paying lines in the colonies was the line from Melbourne to Hobson's Bay, and he was perfectly certain that this line would pay 4 per cent. when the jetty was completed to deep-water, as originally intended—in fact, he believed that large vessels from the eastern ports, even now, passed Cooktown and came down alongside this jetty. It would serve as a breakwater as well as a jetty; and seeing the great importance of the place, the large district at the back of it which would be opened up when the railway was extended through it, he thought that the least that district should get was this jetty. He hoped the Treasurer would give some information with regard to this £20,000 for goldfields, in order that goldfields members might really know where the money was to be expended.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he did not wish to say anything about the details of the Bill, but to make a few remarks on general principles connected with the loan. In the first place, he supposed the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government must be

congratulated upon having at last got his three-million loan; and he sincerely hoped he would make good use of it. But the hon. gentleman knew as well as he did that they could not go on living on loans for ever. An end must come to it some day; and, although they were talking very pleasantly now about loans in the future, it was his most decided opinion that unless they had a larger population and their resources were developed and production increased to a much greater extent than at the present time, they should not be justified in going on in this somewhat speculative way, and borrowing money for railways wherever they thought they might eventually pay, without providing immediate means for paying the interest on the money they borrowed. He was sure the time would eventually come when our credit would suffer, and he questioned very much whether the course of procedure during this session would not have a tendency in this direction, though he should be glad himself if the most sanguine expectations of the Treasurer were fulfilled, and that he would get a good price for his loan. He did not agree with the hon. gentleman in his explanation with regard to a promise being forced upon him. He thought it would be much better for the hon. gentleman not to expose himself to any temptation of the kind—that he had better not invite any questions of the kind, and give no promise, even if he were asked. The credit of the colony was based upon something much more firm and lasting than the promise of any Treasurer, and the amount they should receive for their loan would be independent entirely, in his opinion, of any statement which the hon. gentleman could make. He believed, from a financial point of view, it would be wiser for him to hold his tongue about these matters. He hoped, himself, that this loan would, as the hon. gentleman anticipated, last for three years. Under present circumstances, he was quite sure that they were not justified in incurring further liabilities during that period. He thought, therefore, the hon. gentleman had better be very cautious in inviting any questions of the kind referred to, and, even if they were asked, he should by all means let them go and not give a pledge not to borrow money for three years. He thought the present circumstances of the case would certainly justify them in maintaining something like a principle of that kind, but it was better for him to leave his own Government, and this Legislature, entirely untrammelled in that respect—to leave it to their own good sense and reason, and not let any statement of his influence the London money-market. He (Mr. Douglas) knew the sort of influences that were brought to bear on occasions of this kind, especially when they were asking for more money than they had been

accustomed to ask for. The probability was that some such pledge as this would be attempted to be exacted. He lifted up his voice against such a proceeding, because he thought that no Treasurer had a right to pledge the Legislature to a course of that sort.

The PREMIER said he must interrupt the hon. gentleman. He had been speaking for the last five minutes entirely on a misrepresentation of what he (the Premier) had said. He had never hinted at such a thing as the Treasurer giving a pledge; but what he said was that, in floating a loan of £3,000,000 in portions, it was quite possible that the Treasurer might be asked when he intended to float the balance, and that he might have to give an answer; but the hon. member had been making a long speech on the assumption that he (the Premier) intended to commit the country by some pledge on his part.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he was quite ready to accept the hon. member's explanation. He had been induced to make the remarks he had made in consequence of what had occurred in reference to the Victorian loan, as he considered that it was unwise of the Premier of that colony to have given such a pledge as he had done, as the result showed that the English capitalists were quite prepared to give a much larger sum than that gentleman had asked for. There was an application for a much larger number of debentures, and that showed that there were a certain number of people in England who were willing to subscribe for the loan at a certain price, and that there was a larger amount of money forthcoming than was required. The faith of the people of Great Britain, he was happy to say, was unshaken in the future of these colonies; and they believed even more than those who knew more of the details of our government were justified in believing. The remarks he had made were not directed to the details of the Bill, but rather to a matter of important principle. He had commenced by saying that he congratulated the hon. gentleman on carrying his loan in its integrity. That, however, was owing to the marked distinction between the two conflicting parties in the Houses. It was not altogether a matter of congratulation, as he was quite sure that the good sense of the colony did not agree with all the details of the loan; but the system of parties was such that they had been ruled by caucus as much on one side as on the other; and thus the majority of reasoning men in that Assembly had to succumb to the dictation of party, and the present Loan Bill was, as he submitted, the result of that dictation.

Mr. REA said that he could quite understand that the hon. member for Maryborough might have understood the Premier that he would not broach anything unless

the question was put to him; and he (Mr. Rea) believed that the hon. gentleman would not promise anything unless he was compelled to do so. The Premier should, however, give some information to the Committee as to what amount he intended to borrow at one time, and the largest amount he intended to lie at interest in the local bank at one time.

Mr. KATES said that, on behalf of his constituents, he protested against the Bill being passed until it was stated that the interest on the proposed trunk lines would be raised from increased rental on the runs specially benefited by such lines. He firmly believed that the million and a-quarter put down for those lines would swell up to three millions before they were completed. Hon. members would have seen by that morning's paper that the Custom House returns at Brisbane for the month of August showed a decrease of between £8,000 and £9,000, as compared with the corresponding month of last year. The deficiency in that respect was very great, and he believed that before the year was over there would be a deficiency from that source alone of something like £400,000. It therefore behoved them to be very careful in what they were doing. At present, he thought they were paying quite enough interest considering that they had a decreasing revenue.

Question—That clause 1, as read, stand part of the Bill—put and passed.

The remaining clauses, and the preamble, were passed without amendment.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House resumed, the Chairman reported the Bill without amendment, and the report was adopted.

The Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council with the usual message.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL— COMMITTEE.

Mr. SWANWICK presented a petition from certain Inhabitants of Bulimba, residing at Hemmant, against the Divisional Boards Bill, and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee of the Whole for the consideration of this Bill in detail.

On the question that the preamble be postponed,

Mr. DICKSON asked whether the Premier would give some information concerning the changes which his amendments would be likely to effect? The Bill had received a certain amount of criticism outside, particularly in the country districts, and it was, to a certain extent, viewed with disfavour. He need only refer to the number of petitions which had been presented to the House since the second reading against

the Bill, while there had not been a single one in its favour. It was desirable the views of the Government should be fully understood before they proceeded with the Bill, and it was with that object he spoke, and not to obstruct the motion before the Committee.

The PREMIER said it would be only fair to give the information asked for, and he had intended to give it when the first clause of the Bill was proposed. It had been a matter of great regret both to himself and other members of the Ministry that greater progress had not been made with the Bill. When it was before the House on its second reading, a desire was expressed by hon. members on both sides that the opinion of the country should be taken on a question that seemed at that time to be so intricate, and which he was perfectly satisfied was very little understood outside of the House. This accounted for the first part of the delay: the latter part was patent to every observer of the business of the House. The Government had not had an opportunity, which they were exceedingly anxious to have, to bring forward the Bill before the present time. He had watched with considerable interest comments on the Bill by the Press. He had noticed one fact, however, that the hon. gentleman did not refer to—viz., that the Bill had not been commented upon unfavourably in the outside districts, to which its provisions were peculiarly adapted. On the whole, in the outside districts the Bill had been favourably commented upon; the most unfavourable comments had been in the settled or farming districts. There, he admitted at once, the verdict against the Bill had been very unanimous; one out of ten, at least, only had been favourable to the Bill. But when the reasons why the Bill was condemned were examined, hon. members would no doubt come to a different conclusion than that the Government should take the popular verdict upon this occasion. It was not often he had seen comments upon a Bill before Parliament made by the newspaper Press where so much ignorance—he might say wilful ignorance—had been displayed as upon this Bill. At one time he thought of analysing the different reasons given at public meetings against the Bill, in order to expose them, and he had prepared a summary for that purpose; he would not, however, inflict it upon the House now, but would briefly refer to the main objections brought against the Bill. The first objection was the alleged gross unfairness of the rating clauses. Those rating clauses had never been fairly discussed at these meetings, and they were condemned upon some such statement as that which was made at Harrisville, the purport of which he would quote in order to show the kind of opposition that had been raised. There

the chairman had commented very strongly against the principles of the Bill. The speaker condemned it in very strong general terms. Amongst other imputations, and one which met with much applause, was that under the Bill a farmer who had a farm worth £500 would be taxed at £40 a-year, and quoted the clause to justify the statement. As every hon. member knew, that was not correct; but the meeting accepted it as a fact. Luckily, an hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) happened to be present at the meeting, and told them clearly that, instead of having to pay £40 a-year, the assessment would be only 5 per cent. on that sum, or 40s. The chairman ruled the hon. member out of order, but the hon. member overbore the opposition, and ultimately succeeded in convincing the meeting that the assessment clause of the Bill was not unfair. Another objection in several of the petitions was, that the Crown lessees in the House were making railways for themselves at the expense of the country, and were taxing farmers to make their own roads. Anyone looking over the Loan Bill just passed would see that the money had been pretty evenly distributed over the colony, and that the farmers had certainly not been neglected. It was hardly necessary to reply to the argument, for the existence of a class of persons opposed to the farmers—whose prosperity was so essentially important to the welfare of the colony—was impossible. To assert, therefore, that the Crown lessees wished to put down the farmers was to assert that which was simply nonsense. It had also been objected that the assessment in a Bill of this kind should not be made on improvements, and that they should not tax industry. That objection seemed very plausible, but if they did not tax improvements and industry what else could they tax?

Mr. GRIFFITH: The land.

The PREMIER said that if they taxed the land without the improvements upon it the tax would not realise much, because without improvements on it land was next to valueless for purposes of taxation. They were bound to fall back upon the only basis for taxation, and that was property, in whatever shape it might be. Another objection was that the time had not arrived for a charge of this kind, because the classes to be taxed were unable to bear the extra burden to be put upon them. Surely, when the Government were no longer able to make all the roads and bridges of the colony out of general revenue was the proper time to devise some scheme for carrying them out on some other plan. A time like the present was therefore the most appropriate for introducing a Bill of this sort, because the Government were driven to the alternative either of making roads and bridges by taxing the general

public for the purpose, or to commit the making of them to the public with a subsidy from the general revenue. Another argument extensively used was that the Bill would have the effect of setting class against class—that it would set the farming class against the pastoral lessees. But the Bill was intended to include the pastoral lessees, as well as every other class of the community; they would come under its provisions quite as much as the farmers. The Bill was intended to supplement the Local Government Act—to apply to districts sparsely populated, for which the cumbrous machinery of that measure was unsuitable. It would be a matter of choice with the districts as to which Act they would come under. This expression “class against class” suggested another consideration which members of the Opposition had constantly kept out of view. Representatives of farming constituencies had put the case before their constituencies in one form only. They had said, “Will you choose to be taxed for your roads, or will you let the general Government make them for you?” To such a question there could, of course, be but one answer, and the farming constituencies naturally replied that they would prefer having their roads made by the general Government. But how was the general Government to do it? The time had come in the history of the colony when the general Government declined to take upon their shoulders the construction of local works. That principle was affirmed last year by the Local Government Act, and was now being again affirmed in this attempt to pass the Divisional Boards Bill. It was the same principle that applied to all municipalities in the colony. And here he would direct the attention of hon. members who represented municipalities to the injustice they were doing their constituents by not acknowledging the principles which underlay this Bill. Inhabitants of municipalities had to raise by local taxation one-third of the amount expended upon their roads and bridges, and the Government found the remaining two-thirds. Why should not that principle be applied to the farming communities as well as to the inhabitants of towns? Surely it was the absence of a Bill of this kind that ought to set class against class, because the farmers were more favoured in this direction than the inhabitants in municipalities. He was satisfied that when the Bill was thoroughly understood municipalities would insist that the same measure measured out to them should be meted out to the country districts. A most extravagant objection to the Bill was made in a petition which came from a district represented by the hon. member for Moreton—namely, that they had purchased the lands of the colony on the

faith that the Government were to make their roads and bridges. That was a statement that required no argument in refutation. They got the lands of the colony at exceptionally low rates, especially the selectors; but it had certainly never been acknowledged, even indirectly, by any Government that the lands were sold with the condition that the roads and bridges upon them should be made by the Government—indeed, the general tenour of debate on land Bills was that the land was being parted with on too easy terms. Having, as he thought, met the principal objections that had been urged against the Bill, he would now refer to the amendments he proposed to make in it. Those amendments would in no way infringe the principles of the measure. They were in the nature of concessions to what he considered the reasonable objections brought against the measure on its second reading. Some of the alterations he did not consider improvements, but had introduced them to meet objections; but most of them were improvements. The first had been made to meet the objection that the Government reserved to itself the power of starting these boards in every part of the colony. By introducing the words “inhabitant, householders, or” before “ratepayers,” the right to petition for a board in any part of the colony was made more definite, as there could be no ratepayers before the Bill came into operation. The next alteration was made to give the inhabitants of any district, if they chose to exercise it, the right to elect the members of the board, instead of leaving the Government to nominate them. A new clause was proposed to follow clause 14, showing who would be electors before a valuation was made. After clause 17 it was proposed to insert a new clause to provide that, if within sixty days after such proclamation any number not less than twenty of the inhabitant householders of the division should by petition pray that the first board might be elected by the residents thereof, it should be lawful for the Governor in Council to order that the first board of such division should be elected in the manner prescribed by this Act. The Government did not look upon the right of appointing the members of the boards as any great privilege, and if any provision could be made for electing a first board he saw no objection to the change. A proposed new clause to follow clause 19 provided that each candidate might appoint one person to be scrutineer at the examination of the ballot-papers, and every person so appointed scrutineer should upon his appointment make and subscribe a solemn declaration in the presence of the presiding officer. That would meet the objection that no scrutineers had been provided in the

original Bill. The next alteration was the insertion of the words "some other voter for the same division or of" in clause 28, because a justice of the peace might not be found without trouble. The voter would probably have some confidential friend, and the secrecy upon which so much stress had been laid would be secured. The next alteration was in clause 29. By the preceding clause, ballot-papers were to be returned to returning officers by post; and clause 29 provided that, in certain cases, duplicate ballot-papers might be issued, provided that the voter made a declaration, if required to do so. The words, "if required to do so," would be struck out, making the declaration compulsory. Clause 41 would be omitted as not belonging properly to the Bill. That objection had been raised by the hon. member for North Brisbane, who also pointed out that, although clause 42 provided for the election of auditor, no mode of election was prescribed. That defect would be remedied by the insertion of the words, "cast by the ratepayers then in attendance." On the declaration of the result of the election of members the electors would proceed to elect auditors. The proposed insertion of the words "by proclamation" in clause 51 would define more clearly the particular works with the construction of which the boards would not be entrusted. According to clause 54, as it stood at present, a change of tenants might involve the closing of a licensed house, but the proposed addition of the words, "to any person for premises not then licensed" would obviate the difficulty. It was proposed to alter the valuation clause—57—to make it more simple and leave less scope to the imagination of the valuator. The new clause provided that

The board shall from time to time make a valuation of all rateable property within the division and the rates made by the board for the purposes of this Act shall be made upon such valuation which shall remain in force until a fresh valuation shall have been made. And in every such valuation the property rateable shall be computed at its net annual value that is to say—

- In the case of houses buildings and other perishable property at an amount equal to and not exceeding two-thirds the rent at which the same might reasonably be expected to let from year to year
- In the case of land and other hereditaments at an amount equal to and not exceeding nine-tenths such rent
- And in the case of Crown lands occupied for pastoral purposes only at an amount equal to and not exceeding the annual rent thereof

Except as aforesaid no rateable property shall be computed as of an annual value of less than five pounds per centum upon the fair capital value of the fee-simple thereof

Provided that no land held as a homestead or conditional selection shall be computed as of a capital value greater than the selection price thereof.

A provision of that sort would be very fair and liberal towards what was called improved property. Clause 60 of the Bill provided that the rate struck by the board should be not more than 1s. nor less than 6d. in the pound. He did not put much value on the fixing of a minimum, nor consider that it would be attended with any advantages. In the Municipalities Act the minimum was 4d., and he should not object to the minimum in this Bill being reduced to 4d., or, upon good reason shown, struck out altogether. Some alterations in the schedule would be necessitated by the alterations in the Bill itself. He had now gone over the various amendments he intended to propose. They were every one consistent with the original Bill, though some of them were in the shape of concessions to ensure the passing of the measure. Before sitting down he wished to direct the attention of the Committee to the serious position of the Bill—it was a link in the chain of the Government policy, and a very important link. A failure to pass the Bill would necessitate some provision being made for the roads and bridges of the colony. It was quite evident that they could not be neglected, and it was equally evident that the feeling of the House was against making the expenditure on roads and bridges a general charge upon the colony. It must be localised, and the sooner the better. This was considered an opportune time to introduce the change, and the Government had done everything they could to make the burden press as lightly as possible at first, to start the system. He had always been strongly opposed to the Government borrowing money for the purpose of making roads and bridges. He had opposed the principle very strongly when several Ministries had brought forward such proposals, and he should not have liked to have had to propose such a vote. There was, however, a justification for bringing forward a vote to start an important Bill of this kind, which would have a very beneficial effect in introducing self-government into this colony. The Bill must be passed to enable the Government to utilise the amount of £100,000 voted. That money was not to be spent for roads and bridges, but to enable the Government to bring this measure into operation. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Opposition had raised the question of how was this money to be allocated among the different boards? He thought himself that the Government had legal authority to allocate the money. Under the 17th clause of the Audit Act they were empowered to allocate certain portions granted on loan to the different municipal bodies, and it would be quite

easy to frame a fair system of allocation, by which a district would receive in proportion to the amount that it had raised or was likely to raise by assessment. No difficulty would arise in that way, and he was quite sure that the money would be not left entirely as so much Government money to be used exactly as they liked. He had compared the mode of assessment with the mode in the other colonies, and did not think there was a mode that dealt more liberally with improvements than the one adopted. It was much more liberal than Victoria, a good deal more so than New Zealand, and more liberal than England. Of course, hon. members must see that the lower the assessment was made on good property, the higher it must fall on some others. He was satisfied that when it was compared with a simple land-tax, which was advocated by some persons, all the reasons that could be assigned for that tax would fail. A land-tax could not be raised in the colony; it would hurt the Government, prevent very much the sale of land, hinder settlement, and fail in raising the revenue anticipated by those who said it was the only legitimate kind of taxation.

Mr. BAILEY said it was not the people of the towns but the people of the country who could tell where the shoe pinched, and appreciate the merits and demerits of the Bill. He took a very different objection to the one named by the Premier. He went back to the last general election, when the party now in power were returned upon two pledges, and only two, that he could remember. One was that they would advocate a large loan, and the other that there should be no increased taxation. They had got a large loan that afternoon, but now it was the turn of the Opposition to take a very firm stand, and make the Government carry out their other pledge, that there should be no taxation. He was firmly of opinion that this question should go before the country for its decision, before an abnormal tax was placed upon the people—a tax which was sought to be imposed, not only without the consent of the people but against their wish. They had expressed their detestation of the Bill. The table of the House had been covered with petitions against the Bill from farmers and settlers who were shrewd enough to understand the measure and to know where it might possibly lead to; they had objected to the Bill, and he would warn the Government that if he had to stand alone he would divide upon every clause. The Premier had told the Committee that there should be no great objection to the rating clauses, because the mode of assessment was rather more fair than before. He had a very great objection to them, because, though it had been stated over and over again in the Press and by

Ministers that there was a certain minimum taxation which could not be hardly felt, they could not tell what the maximum taxation would be. There was practically no limit to the taxation upon the farmer, except the amount that might be required for his roads. As to the subsidy, they knew very well that it was merely temporary to induce the people to take the load fairly on their backs, and when it was once fairly there they would get the full benefit of it. In four or five years hence there would be no subsidy. This minimum of 5 per cent. upon the fair capital value of the fee-simple might be 15, 20, or 30 per cent. The only limited tax was that for the pastoral lessee: there was to be a hard-and-fast line for him that it should not exceed the annual rent, which they all knew was a mere bagatelle, and that the tax upon it would be something infinitesimal. They knew, also, that where the pastoral lessees chiefly were the roads were all main roads, and the Government proposed that the farmers should not only construct their own roads, but that they should then be taxed for the highways of the west. The farmers were not able to bear this—at the present time no class was able to bear additional taxation. When the present Government went to the country they said to the people, "You have suffered under an extravagant Government, and the consequence will be that fresh taxation will be put upon you if you return them. We are coming to the rescue. We are going to save the country, and we will not ask you for any taxes." And now, forsooth, in the first session they brought, as the keystone of their policy, class-legislation, and increased taxation on the very people who were least able to bear it. He would admit that in Victoria there was some tax like this allowed, but the people there had suffered so much that they were driven to the last step to which farmers had recourse—they were forming defence leagues, and it was now quite time that the farmers and selectors of this colony did the same. Their interests could only be protected in the same way; scattered as they were, and with hardly any Press representation, they were insulted in the House, and told that they were too ignorant to understand a Bill to tax them. The Premier brought in a petition even from his own electorate, but he did not then say it was a petition from certain ignorant electors of Mulgrave against the Divisional Boards Bill—he presented it very quietly—it was not even read, and was quietly put out of sight. The hon. gentleman said nothing that evening in regard to that petition. How could he expect the farmers to know such a measure when he could not instruct his own constituents as to its merits? The farmers knew very well that the subsidy

was a mere bait to induce them to take this responsibility; but they were not willing to do so. As a Parliament the House had asked them to do so, and they had refused. Were they compelled to accept a measure which they repudiated, hated, and told the House they could not bear, especially in a time of great depression like the present? At the present moment there were thousands of acres of land, belonging to those whom it was proposed to tax, under water; their crops were destroyed, and yet Government wished to put an extra tax upon them. It was an absurdity. One could hardly believe that the Minister of a free country would dare to bring in a Bill of this kind to tax men who were already over-taxed. He believed that farmers paid more than their share of taxation; but what benefit did they derive? Not for them were schools of art and the luxuries of civilization. They had to lead a hard life of toil almost cut off from civilization, and these were the men who were selected for more taxation—men who paid their share of taxation and received the least in return. Something had been said about the stupidity of some people who thought they had purchased land under certain conditions, that roads should be made to enable them to have access to it. He saw nothing wrong in that. Those people were quite right, for what was the use of land which was inaccessible? Hitherto selectors had bought land with the knowledge that at some time or other roads would be made to enable them to reach the nearest town or market; and he saw nothing extraordinary in selectors expecting that this should be done. He should object to the Bill at every clause, and should use all the forms of the House to prevent its passing. The Government had no right to introduce it, seeing the pledges they had made at the general election. If the country were willing to accept the tax, if the farmers offered no objection to it, he should have less to say, but in the face of the determined opposition of the very people it was intended to tax every member who represented farmers was bound to set his face against the Bill in the most decided manner possible. If it was a link in their policy—if it was the keystone of the Government policy—then all the more shame for them. The keystone of their election policy was quite different—it was not to increase taxation. But they all knew that this would lead to something else—that if the farmers were taxed this year the miners would be taxed next year, and perhaps the only class who would escape taxation were the pastoral tenants.

Mr. KING thought the hon. member who had just spoken had forgotten that the effect of expenditure on roads was to in-

crease the value of property in the districts through which they passed. At the present time the roads were made at the expense of every man in the colony, while, unfortunately, a majority of the people had no land at all, so that those who had no land at all were taxed to improve the property of those who had. The object of the Bill was to redress that decided injustice. It did not redress it completely, because owners of property were only asked to provide one-third of the amount to be expended on roads, and they received an endowment out of the general revenue which was contributed by those who were not property owners; so that the redress of this grievance, which was a very real one, was only to be gradual. He thought the hon. member for Wide Bay, holding the views he did, would have paid some consideration to those unfortunate individuals who had not even land under water, and who were obliged at the present time to pay heavy taxation for the purpose of increasing the value of the property of those who were more fortunate than themselves. As far as it went he thought the Bill was a very decided step in the right direction. He did not find fault with it for being too gradual. It was not easy to get out of a false system all at once, and more mischief might be done by a violent change than by having it gradual; and as this Bill only threw one-third of the cost of making roads on the owners of property, he did not think anything more moderate could be expected.

Mr. THORN said he did not think he should have risen to speak had it not been for the remarks of the last speaker. He might say that to-night was the first occasion he had looked through the Bill, and he had come to the conclusion that that hon. member and other mining members were the authors of the measure, because on turning to the 56th clause hon. members would find that the mining community got off scot-free. Why should the machinery of gold-miners escape free, while that of sugar-planters was heavily taxed? Take the case of Yengarie, he valued it at £100,000—say £200,000; the charge upon that would be about £1,000 a year under the Bill, whereas gold-miners that were turning out far more—ten times as much—would get off scot-free. This showed that the Bill provided for a class tax—that while it taxed the farmers and settlers who were the backbone of the colony, miners would escape altogether, and pastoral lessees very nearly so. He had watched the progress of the Shire Councils Bill in Victoria, and he could say that from the day it came into operation commenced the aggregation of holdings and the consequent depopulation of the colony, by driving people out of it. He contended that Queensland was not ripe for such a

measure, and would not be until all the land in it was alienated. He was anxious to see the Treasurer's revenue expectations for the present financial year realised, but he could assure him that if this Bill passed they would not be, because it would result in putting an end to all land buying. He was anxious that the Government should withdraw the Bill. They ought to let it go, seeing that it was an iniquitous measure, which imposed taxation upon the very people who were least able to bear it. The people were already sufficiently taxed in various ways.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no intention of discussing the principles of the Bill, which were fully debated on the second reading, but as the hon. member for Wide Bay had expressed his intention to obstruct the Bill, and given a reason for doing so which was not true, he thought it better to state what the policy of the Government was at the last election. The hon. member said their policy was to go in for a big loan, and that there was to be no increase of taxation. That was not what the members of the Government went in for at the last general election. What they went in for was a three-million loan and no increase of taxation upon the working man; that if taxation were necessary it should fall upon the holders of property and those who were benefited by the expenditure of public money. That was the principle of the Bill—it was the principle upon which the Government were elected; and if the hon. member for Wide Bay went in for obstruction upon a different principle to that he was not justified in doing so. That hon. member had been thoroughly answered by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King), and he (Mr. Macrossan) did not intend to answer anything else he had said. As for the great discovery the hon. member for Northern Downs had made about the Bill excluding miners from taxation, if he looked at the Local Government Act he would see that they were taxed, and that measure was not prepared by miners.

Mr. THORN said that, according to the Bill, mining machinery was to be allowed to go scot-free, whereas farming machinery was to be taxed. The hon. member for Normanby told them a few evenings ago that in the outside districts they wanted no roads, and that they would go free, whilst the whole burden would fall on the southern part of the colony, which was most densely populated. He contended that the Bill would not only prevent more settlement on the land, but would have the effect of driving across the border into New South Wales the settlers now located in the southern districts of the colony.

Mr. REA denied that the statement made by the hon. member for Wide Bay (Mr.

Bailey), although it was contradicted by the Minister for Works, was incorrect, as if hon. members referred to the addresses of the Premier, they would see that that hon. gentleman stated that the way in which additional taxation would be avoided would be by abolishing useless offices; although the policy of the present Government, up to the present time, had been to do away only with small officers and not to touch the highly paid officers. He protested against the Bill, as the only people who would suffer by it would be the townspeople and selectors, who would be taxed to death—in fact, the Bill was like all other measures introduced by the Government—a Squatters' Bill—a Bill to tax the townspeople and to relieve the squatters, who would have all their own roads and bridges made out of loan. So far from the Bill being likely to be a relief to owners of land in coast districts, he believed that no man in his senses would think of taking up land when the first thing that met him would be the taxation proposed by this Bill.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) thought it was quite necessary that a measure of this kind should be passed, and as a representative of a town and the district around it he believed that the settled districts all over the colony were quite willing to pay a certain sum for making and maintaining their roads. The people in his district, however, although willing to have their lands taxed for such a purpose, objected to have their improvements taxed. If a system was proposed by the Government of taxing people all over the colony on the acreage they owned he would support it, as it would be more simple and cheaper in its collection, and would realise as great a revenue as the mode now suggested;—all that would be necessary would be for the farmers and pastoral tenants every year to send down to the proper officer the money due by them. He believed that a penny an acre all round would be quite as good as taxing improvements, and a much more simple plan. It had been said that the pastoral tenants did not want roads, and that therefore they should not be taxed; but they required dams, and those works would be quite as useful to them as roads to the farmers. The Minister for Works told them that the policy of the Government was not to tax any working men; but farmers were the hardest working men in the community, and were not so well off as the labourer who received 7s. a day. A farmer, with 200 acres of land at 1d. per acre, would have to pay 16s. 8d. a-year; and if the squatter, with 4,000 acres of land, was taxed at the same rate, he would pay £166 a-year; but by the present Bill it was proposed that the squatter should only pay a very small proportion indeed of what he

ought to be called on to pay. Unless the Government expressed their willingness to adopt the proposition he made, he should join the hon. member for Wide Bay, and oppose every clause of the Bill.

Mr. SHEAFFE said he could mention one fact in connection with farming to show how farmers—and he had himself been a farmer for some years—would be benefited by the Bill. In the district in which he had lived the roads were worse than any he had seen here and were almost impassable, but the farmers were all taxed and the proceeds applied to the improvement of the roads. The consequence was that in a few years there were good roads all through the district. He was quite sure that if the Bill passed the farmers in this colony would be greatly benefited by it.

Mr. BAILEY pointed out that there was no analogy between a thickly-populated district like that referred to by the hon. member and the farming districts in this colony. To expect the farmers here to make thousands of miles of roads was a sheer impossibility, and they would only be wasting their energies and their means in attempting such a thing. Yet if they did not pay according to the 5th clause of the Bill, they were to suffer all such things as bodies corporate might by law do to them. The amendment of the Premier simply meant that the farms would become the property of the boards in a very short time, and the nominal owners would, in fact, become lessees under another name. He moved that the Chairman leave the chair and report no progress.

Mr. THORN desired to know from the Minister for Works how he proposed to make the roads to the different goldfields? In the past large sums of money had been voted, and within a few days, sometimes, the whole of the money was found to have been wanted, owing to the heavy rainfall. This was especially the case in the northern parts of the colony, and knowing it to be so he could only assume the Minister for Works would come down year after year and ask for money. Miners were better able to pay for their roads than any other class; it was the only industry which flourished at the present time. They should pursue the system adopted in New South Wales and South Australia, and only borrow money for reproductive works. If the pastoral lessees and gold-miners were to be taxed rateably with the farmers, he would have no objection to the Bill; indeed, he would go heart and soul with the Government. As it was, there was an unholy alliance existing between the pastoral lessees and the mining community to ruin the settled districts of the colony. He warned Government that if they persisted in this Bill there were reprisals in store for them of which they were little aware.

Mr. Low, as representing a squatting district of some 80,000 square miles, had heard nothing but that squatters had to pay for their roads. For example, he would himself have to pay about £60, and the whole district would be taxed to four times the amount of money which had even been expended on roads and bridges in it.

Mr. KATES did not entirely agree with the hon. member for Wide Bay. The large landowners would also be taxed; but where the hardship was, that where the small farmer with 100 acres would be taxed about £8 each, the large landowner would pay but £3. The principle of the Bill was right, but the Treasurer would find it a failure, on account of the scarcity of population in the colony.

Mr. GRIMES supported the motion of the hon. member for Wide Bay. The Ministry could not have chosen a more inappropriate time to bring in the Bill. The colony was depressed by long drought, and the classes the Bill would most affect had actually had to scrape and contrive to get the money in any way for the March rents. They were no better off now, while the amount of money collected under the Bill would in most cases only pay the expenses of the boards. Farmers and residents in the settled districts did not object to local Government, but they did object that they should have to pay money which ought to be expended on their roads and bridges to assist in the payment of interest for railways to enable squatters to bring down their wool. It would be very hard upon the farmer, after he had bought his land and spent his money in improving it, to have to pay a tax upon the result of his labour. The petitions against the Bill that had been presented by hon. members on both sides of the House showed plainly the feeling of the country upon it; and on that ground hon. members would be quite justified in doing all they could to prevent its becoming law.

Mr. HORWITZ referred to the hardships the farmers already had to put up with, and referred to an order issued yesterday by the Commissioner for Railways, making bran and maize-meal manufactured in the colony subject to the first-class tariff, and increasing its cost of carriage from Warwick to Brisbane from 25s. to £2 a-ton. The cost of getting stores by rail from Ipswich to Warwick had been nearly doubled; and in the end they would be compelled to resort to bullock-teams again. Such being the case, it would be ridiculous to make roads—for the Southern and Western Railway was only a road—for the sole benefit of the pastoral lessees, who were taxed hardly anything for them. If the squatters were entitled to have roads made for them at the expense of the country, so were the farmers; and if one had to pay for them so should the others. If the Premier would put on a general

land-tax he would vote for the Bill; if not he felt bound to vote against it.

Mr. KATES referred also to the increase in the railway tariff for the carriage of bran and maize-meal manufactured in the colony, and hoped it had been done without the sanction of the Minister for Works. It ought to be rescinded at once, because the extra sum charged would not fall upon the miller but upon the farmer. The increase would be a serious loss to individuals and would be no gain to the State, because through its operation the Darling Downs farmers and millers would be utterly unable to compete with the Adelaide article.

Mr. THORN said he should like to see the measure discussed in a full Committee, and suggested that, as a number of members were absent, and as the Toowoomba Show opened to-morrow, the Premier should consent to an adjournment of the House till Tuesday, in order chiefly to enable hon. members to visit the Show.

The PREMIER said as the hon. member (Mr. Thorn) had confessed that he had not read a Bill which had been before the House since the 20th May, his absence would not be seriously felt.

Mr. THORN said the Premier should remember that the Bill had undergone a complete change of front. A clause had been inserted which would relieve pastoral tenants from paying any assessment at all. The hon. member for Normanby had stated that no roads were required in the outside districts, therefore no rates would be levied there. Miners would also go scot-free, and all the burden would fall upon the real settlers of the colony. The maximum rate might be as high as 16 or 20 per cent., and he was quite sure that the farmers could not exist under such a burden.

Mr. GARRICK said the Bill was quite at variance with the principles upon which the colony had hitherto acted. Large sums of money had been spent on immigration, and special inducements in the shape of cheap land had been held out to bring about the settlement of a farming class. But it was quite useless to settle an agricultural population on the land and make markets for their produce unless facilities of carriage were given—the chain was snapped in one of its most important links. When the Premier argued that the farmers' holdings would be improved by the making of these roads, he forgot that the farmer was a freeholder not desiring to increase the value of his holding for the purpose of selling it. The taxation proposed must come out of the margin between the cost of production and the market price of his produce, in the same way as a tax on the growers of wool would come out of the difference between the cost of production and the price in the market. The Premier

said the Bill was a link in his policy; and, as far as the settled districts were concerned, it seemed to be a very unfair link. The amount which had hitherto been voted year after year for roads was wiped off, and the farmers told that they must make their own roads; while £1,200,000 was to be spent in making roads for the western districts. Where was the difference between farm roads and the western railways? Any argument that applied to one applied also to the other.

The PREMIER said a majority of the House had decided that there should be no general taxation for the purpose of making local improvements. It was quite clear that no general taxation could be imposed for that purpose during this session, so that the hon. member (Mr. Garrick) was seeking to drive the Government to the alternative of saying that the farmers should have no roads.

Mr. ARCHER said one great difference between roads and railways was that there was nothing to pay for travelling by road. He would have no objection to Government making roads if they put a sufficient toll upon those who used them to pay the cost of construction. There had been a great deal of talk about the hardships the measure would entail. Perhaps there might be some hardships in the case of the Moreton farmers, but farmers in the outside districts would be gainers by the new law. He found by a report laid on the table of the House at the request of the hon. member for Rockhampton, that in three consecutive years the sums of £52,000, £61,000, and £63,000 were voted for the Moreton districts, and in exactly the same years the sums of £12,000, £3,000, and £7,000 were voted for the Port Curtis district. It was not fair that the richer portions of the colony should tax the poorer for their benefit. The people who lived near Brisbane had the advantage of being able to interview the Minister for Works, and if the Bill was not passed he hoped the Works Department would be shifted to Rockhampton to give the people there a chance. The truth was that the Bill was as fair as it could be, and all farmers out of the Moreton districts would be gainers and not losers by it. He was certain that the farmers of Blackall would be benefited, as £7,000 was not their fair proportion, when £63,000 was set down for the Moreton districts.

Mr. THORN said the hon. member should recollect that the settlers in the Moreton districts paid more for their land than the settlers in the Port Curtis district and contributed more to the revenue. He considered the Bill so important that an appeal should be made to the country before it was passed; the House should be a true reflex of the country before the measure was made law. He knew cases

where holdings had depreciated 60 per cent. in consequence of the Bill.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the lively opposition of the last speaker must be traceable to some motive, and he believed he had discovered it when he found that the hon. member was owner of 47,000 acres of land. With regard to the Bill he acknowledged that at the beginning he was not impressed by the part which taxed improvements, but the more he examined the matter and considered the way the money voted for road improvements was laid out, the more he liked the Bill, particularly since the few good alterations, which would make it a great deal clearer, were brought forward. He did not look upon it as real taxation that a man should pay taxes to improve his property. It had been stated that members generally, sitting on the Ministerial side, had said at their election that they would be no parties to taxation, but he and his colleague both declared that they would go in for taxing land; especially the land of absentees. Between four and five million acres of alienated land were in the hands of absentees, and if it was only to get at them he should support the Bill. All that they did increased the holdings of these people. On the Darling Downs the price of land, before the railway was made, was five shillings per acre, but at present it was worth from £3 to £10 per acre—and from his own experience, too. The amount of money wasted in this colony was enormous; but since the present Government had called for tenders for work of this kind, he had been told that as much work was done for £100 as was previously done for £600. If the people were taxed to do their own work they would do only what was required, and the money would be expended economically and to the best advantage. With regard to the constitution of the councils, he would not in any case have more than six members, and there should be some nominated members to represent the Government. Notwithstanding all the money that had been spent and wasted on roads in this colony, complaints about bad roads were as numerous as ever, and they would continue until some measure of this kind was passed. There were not the same objections now to the Bill as there were some time ago, and the reason was that the people were beginning to understand it. He was one of the first members of the House who attempted to explain its provisions to the public. He did so at a meeting at Harrisville, and, although at the commencement the people were dead against the Bill, after he explained its provisions they were quite in favour of it, and scores said it was the very thing they wanted.

Mr. PERSSE could bear out the statement of the hon. member, that at the meeting referred to the people were very much opposed

to the Bill—in fact, the meeting was called to ask their members to oppose the Bill in the House, because, from the extraordinary explanation of the chairman, they could not understand it. It was something like the explanation of the hon. member for Northern Downs, who had tried to make him (Mr. Persse) understand that under the Bill he would be taxed to the extent of £78 a-year—that he would have to pay 10 per cent., whereas he found in the Bill it was only 5 per cent. The hon. member also explained to a constituent of his (Mr. Persse's), who held 13,000 acres of land, that he would have to pay £300 a-year. Was it not enough to make people rampant about the Bill when it was explained in that way? How the hon. member arrived at his calculation he did not know. When he (Mr. Persse) first read the Bill he thought it was not suited to the requirements of the colony, but after careful consideration, and comparing it with the Local Government Bill introduced by the last Government, he found it was 50 per cent. in advance in every direction. He had been fourteen years resident on the Logan, and he had never yet been able to induce any Minister for Works to spend a farthing on the roads in his neighbourhood; but if he paid £75 a year, and they got twice that amount from the Government, he would take good care to see to his roads. Again, how was it possible for members for such districts as Fassifern and the Logan to stand the constant worry and torment of people waiting on them and writing to them day after day and week after week about the state of their roads? He would require to employ a secretary to answer his correspondence alone.

Mr. THORN said he would like the hon. members for Fassifern and Stanley to test the opinion of their constituents by an appeal to the ballot-box before they supported this measure.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said, in reply to the hon. member's challenge, that he would be willing to contest any election with him, provided there was anything like fair voting. From his knowledge of the hon. member, he would, if such a contest occurred, watch the hon. member very closely.

Mr. PERSSE regretted there was no clause in the Bill to give power to boards to close roads where it was proved that they were unnecessary; as, for instance, where two roads ran parallel to the same point. In such a case, if the bye-road could be blocked with advantage, the local board should have the power to do it.

Mr. GRIMES pointed out that as the hon. member for Fassifern was a large conditional selector he could not be rated at more than 8 per cent. on the capital value of the fee-simple thereof at the time of selection, and would thus reap the benefit

of his neighbours, who had bought land at a high rate under the old New South Wales system.

Mr. GARRICK, referring to the remarks of the hon. member for Blackall, said that there was a vast distinction between railroads and ordinary roads, inasmuch as whilst a freight was charged on the former, it represented not only the use of a good road but of the haulage power on it. That hon. member had also drawn attention to the money expended on roads in the southern districts as compared with that expended in the north; but he had not stated what proportion the population in the two divisions of the colony bore to each other or what was received in the form of revenue from the Customs.

Mr. ARCHER said that, as regarded Customs, duty was often paid at Brisbane on goods intended for the northern districts, and therefore he would leave that question alone; but as regarded the money expended on roads, he found by returns that in 1878-9 the total expenditure on roads in the whole colony was £97,000, of which £63,000 was expended on the Moretons, thus leaving £34,000 for the rest of the colony. He could not give the number of inhabitants, but he was quite sure that the Moretons did not contain two-thirds of the whole population of the colony.

Mr. THORN said that if the money expended out of revenue alone was calculated, it would be found that the Moretons, with their population of 78,000, or one-third that of the whole colony, did not receive more than their fair share of the expenditure on roads.

Mr. REA explained that when he moved for the return from which the quotation was made it was with the object of showing the comparative expenditure in the Central and Southern districts, but the results he now deduced from those figures were very different to those of the hon. member for Blackall. He was glad some light had been thrown on the nomination system, and anyone would understand from what the hon. member for Stanley had said why he was so much in favour of it.

Mr. THORN again urged the desirability of adjourning over the Toowoomba Show, until next Tuesday. If that were done he was prepared to let the Bill glide after taking a vote on it.

Mr. GARRICK pointed out that the return from which the hon. member for Blackall had quoted differed from the figures relating to the same subject which appeared in the Auditor-General's Report. The amount set down there was £102,000 for the expenditure on roads and bridges all over the colony—not £97,000; and the amount for the Moretons was £44,000. This was about the right proportion, as those districts had a population of about 80,000.

Mr. ARCHER said he had taken the figures supplied in the return asked for by the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea).

Question—That the Chairman leave the chair—put.

The Committee divided—

AYES, 16.

Messrs. McLean, Bailey, Dickson, Griffith, Rea, Thorn, Garrick, Hendren, Rutledge, Meston, Macfarlane (Ipswich), Beattie, Kates, Grimes, Horwitz, and Kingsford.

NOES, 25.

Messrs. McIlwraith, A. H. Palmer, Baynes, King, Macrossan, Perkins, Cooper, Morehead, Norton, Hill, O'Sullivan, Beor, Kellett, Lalor, H. W. Palmer, Stevenson, Amhurst, Sheaffe, Low, Stevens, Persse, Swanwick, Hamilton, Archer, and Douglas.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Mr. BAILEY moved that the Chairman do leave the Chair.

Question put, and the Committee divided with the same result as before:—Ayes, 16; Noes, 26

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had voted against no progress, because he was anxious that some progress should be made. Without in all respects approving of the Bill, he was perfectly alive to the fact that some form of local Government really applicable to the colony was required. This was an approach to it, and if the Local Government Act could not be put into operation, they were bound to try it somewhat in this form. He understood there were some important amendments to be moved from this side, involving matters of principle which would tend to modify the operation of the Bill. It was only right, at this stage of the session, to endeavour to make what progress they could with the measure. He did not intend to take any part in any course of systematic obstruction, but he hoped it was not intended to proceed from beginning to end with such an important measure to-night. Some progress, at all events, should be made with it.

The PREMIER said an impression seemed to be abroad that this measure would be much more coercive, especially to the farming community, than the Local Government Act. He did not think it would be, but the Government distinctly pledged themselves not to allow the Divisional Boards Bill to interfere with the Local Government Act. If any district expressed a desire to go under the Local Government Act they would take no steps to press upon them the Divisional Boards Bill. But they meant to adhere to the principle introduced last year, for which nearly every member who now opposed this Bill spoke and voted. The Government would give

precedence to the Local Government Act, and he would much rather see it accepted by districts than the measure now under consideration.

Mr. BAILEY objected to a measure being passed against the expressed wish of the people, and he thought the Local Government Act had been on the statute-book long enough, for if the people wished to take advantage of it they could have done so. They were here as the representatives of the people, and not to tax them whether they would or not. It was an outrageous thing for a Government elected as the present one had been to attempt to override the expressed wish of the country by passing a measure which it hated and detested.

The PREMIER said it was time such bunkum ceased, as it had taken up the time of the Committee too long. The hon. member said the country had declared that it would have no self-government. When the people so declared, the alternative put before them was—"Have the roads at your own expense, or at the expense of the Government;" and they uniformly and sensibly said they would have them at the expense of the Government. The question now was, whether they would have roads by means of local government or go without altogether. There were no means, and there would be none while the present party were in power, by which roads and bridges would be made out of general taxation.

Mr. REA said the bunkum was exhibited by the Government, who, after passing a Loan Bill for three millions in one evening, were not satisfied. If hon. members did their duty, they would sit until next year to prevent the passing of a Bill under such circumstances.

Mr. Low said the hon. member (Mr. Bailey) spoke as though he was the mouth-piece of the whole colony. He never heard such arrant nonsense in his life.

Mr. GRIMES said it appeared that an unjust measure was to be forced on the people, with the alternative that if they did not accept it not a single penny would be spent from the Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. BAILEY said if the Bill were rushed through it would only have to be re-committed, and he hoped the Government would allow it to be postponed. If Bills were to be forced through in that way, the Opposition might as well stop at home and let the Government do as they chose.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he found that the Government by their conduct in this matter would render local government in the colony impossible for a considerable time to come. When the last Government introduced the Local Government Act they were sincerely earnest in desiring to introduce self-government as far as practicable, and had the present Government gone to work in a

rational manner and endeavoured to put it in force they might have succeeded. At the present time they had succeeded in arousing throughout the colony a strong feeling of opposition to the principle of local Government which did not previously exist. The Premier said his Bill differed from the Local Government Act in some respects—which was true; and it differed for the worse as far as his (Mr. Griffith's) judgment went. In avoiding the fault of cumbersomeness, which he alleged as a defect in the present Act, the Premier had made his Bill unintelligible. It would be his (Mr. Griffith's) duty at the proper time to point out that the Bill was inconsistent and unintelligible, and could not be worked without great difficulties arising. The Premier said they must choose between two alternatives—this Bill or no roads; but he must know that the people would ultimately rule, and that though he might pass a measure contrary to their will they would eventually have their way. By this attempted arbitrary action the Government would render local government impossible for years to come, which would be a disaster to the colony. He was impressed with the necessity for local government, but it should be introduced in the same manner as other reforms. There should be no attempt to thrust it upon the people all at once. The Premier had not attempted to show that the Bill would be introduced in sparsely-populated districts, such as the Warrego. He might get a few people to meet once or twice every six months to appoint a road inspector, but as for real local government there would be none. The hon. gentleman was setting himself against the people of the country and raising difficulties in the way of getting local government introduced. Both sides were agreed that local government was necessary: if it was not introduced now the difficulty would get greater every day, and the Government or their successors would be placed in an embarrassing position. That, however, was no reason for passing a bad Bill, or a Bill without due consideration. He should like, and would be willing to see, some progress made that evening, but he did not suppose the Government wished to pass the Bill through at that sitting. The people were so dissatisfied with it that it should not be passed in one night: it was not a measure which should be passed in one night.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had intimated that he was willing to make some progress, but that was the first time, after listening for four hours to a most desultory discussion, that the Government had heard his authoritative opinion that some business should be done. As to the hon. gentleman's statement, that if it had not been for the action of the Government

local government would not have been unpopular, he would ask what was the hon. gentleman's action? When the late Government were in power, instead of putting the Local Government Act in force as they might have done, they never did anything to make the constituencies understand the value of the Act; they squandered money upon the roads and bridges, and made it impossible to bring the principle of the Act into force. The late Government did everything they could to nullify the Act, and then the hon. gentleman turned round and said it was the fault of the present Government, who, however, had done everything they could to bring the principle into operation. The hon. gentleman also said that both sides desired local government, but he had a strong suspicion last year that the hon. gentleman was forced on by public opinion, and that he and his party would not put the Act into operation. His anticipations had been realised, and the action of the Opposition in regard to the Bill showed that they did not want to see local government. If the hon. gentleman had counselled his followers four hours ago to proceed to business they might by the present time have got through half the Bill. The hon. gentleman asked whether they intended to go through the Bill that night? His answer was that they should do four hours' work for the time that had been wasted. He would admit that they could get valuable hints and assistance from the hon. gentleman, but if he would not give them they must do without them; they must, however, make substantial progress with the measure before they stopped. Unless this Bill were passed—and he did not say this by way of a threat—the country would not get roads, and if the farmers who had expressed an adverse opinion regarding the Bill knew this they would form a different opinion. He had seen no intelligent expression of opinion against the Bill. He had seen a good many opinions put into petitions which could not be characterised otherwise than as most contemptible. Every petition had had some member of the Opposition at the bottom of it, making suggestions.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Premier would get more business done if he confined himself to his Bill instead of attacking the Opposition. With regard to the Premier's statement that he was going on for three or four hours with the Bill, he (Mr. Griffith) would not assist for that length of time, because he was physically unable to do it. He had never shirked work, but he was not prepared to ruin his health to oblige the Government in assisting to pass the Bill and make it intelligible. It was not intelligible, as he would show by a few references. No one could possibly understand the 4th section; and there was nothing in the Bill that had any relation to

it. The Bill was either compulsory or not; if it was intended to be compulsory, this clause about petitions was idle. The clause was simply copied, and had no reference to anything else in the Act. The Bill was, in fact, a clumsy digest of the Local Government Act. Then the 6th clause provided that every male person whose name was entered in the rate-book of any division should be qualified to act as a member of the board of such division. Where were they going to get the first men? There would be no ratepayers until the first board had struck a rate, and there could not be a board without ratepayers. Clause 7 provided that all persons in the Government Service were to be excluded from the local boards. All publicans were also to be excluded—in fact, the people who were most likely to be able to assist in starting a divisional board were excluded. Further on similar difficulties arose, and these must be corrected or the Bill would not work at all. He believed, as a matter of policy, if the Opposition wanted to make the Government unpopular, the simplest course would be to sit still and let them pass the Bill. But he did not desire anything of the kind. He looked a little ahead, and would like to see good legislation and laws placed upon their statute-book that would be of some use to the country, and that, at least, would be workable. However, if the Government did not care, he could not help it. He had done his duty, and had said all he intended to say this evening.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if the hon. gentleman had prevented the obstruction that had been shown by his own side of the House to the Bill there would have been some reason in his remarks, but after four hours being taken up by his followers, or his leaders—he did not know which, for the hon. member for Wide Bay seemed much more like the leader of the Opposition to-night than the hon. member for North Brisbane—he said if the hon. member called it discussing the Bill when they spent four hours in obstructing the postponement of the preamble, it was the most extraordinary way of discussing a Bill he ever heard of. The idea of a Government, who had a majority at their backs, submitting to the dictation of the hon. member for Wide Bay was most absurd. It was the duty of the leader of the Opposition, if he had any control at all over the members of his party, to make an effort to restrain their opposition within proper bounds and not allow them to obstruct, for obstruction's sake, for four hours. This was the first time ever he had heard of the postponement of the preamble of a Bill being obstructed; and how the hon. gentleman could divide, as he did, with the hon. member for Wide

Bay, after the speech they had heard from him as to his views on obstruction a week or two ago, he was at a loss to imagine. The divisions had shown that a considerable majority of the House were in favour of the Bill. He denied that it had been shown in any way, or that it could be shown, as had been stated, the people of the colony were against the Bill. Who were the people of the colony? It was something like the three tailors of Tooley street, thinking they were the people of England. A few farmers met together in one or two districts, and knowing nothing of the Bill, but being misled by the remarks of members in that House who had never read it and did not understand it, they opposed it. But he denied *in toto* that that was the voice of the country. What proportion did the farmers of the country bear to the male adults of the country? Were they to have no voice from those men who were most concerned in this Bill, who had to bear the burden of taxation to keep the roads of the colony in order? Were they to hear nothing of the taxation of the labourers, or the tradesmen, or the shopkeepers, or the merchants, or of any other class in the colony except the farmers, or landholders, or selectors in East and West Moreton and one or two places on the coast? Where had there been a large meeting in any part of the colony to protest against the Bill? Had not almost the whole of the Press that understood the question at all been in favour of it?—and how had the voice of the country been shown against it, except in the case of a few farmers, the greater proportion of whom he was sure never saw the Bill or heard of it, except in a mangled form after having passed through the medium of some party who was opposed to it without really understanding it. The hon. member for Northern Downs had talked about the enormous taxation under the Bill, and if that hon. member had not wilfully set himself out not to understand it, all he (Mr. Palmer) could say was that he could not have much brains left. That hon. member had told the hon. member for Fassifern, and other gentlemen outside the House, that the taxation under the Bill would be something enormous—that a person who held 13,000 acres of freehold land would have to pay £300 a-year, when the extreme amount would be only £30. When such statements as that were made by members of the House they need not be astonished at farmers not understanding the Bill. He agreed with the Premier that if the Bill was properly understood they would have the farmers of the colony petitioning in a body in favour of it; and, if it did not pass this session, it would pass next session flying. When it was passed and the farmers understood it they would be the first to acquiesce in it;

and when they got the management of their own roads £1 spent by them would go as far as £3 spent by Government road-parties. They would be a great deal more careful about spending money, and it would not be squandered in the way it had been on roads and bridges in East and West Moreton, where absolutely large bridges, to say nothing of culverts, had been built over insignificant little streams that could be hopped across and did not run once in three years. That was the case all over the country. The hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith), in replying to the remarks of the Premier, said the Government of which he was a member had not time to bring the Local Government Bill into operation, and at the same time he supplied the reason why they did not do so. It was because they had a general election on their hands, and they were not game to put it in force because they thought it would be unpopular. The hon. gentleman gave the answer in the same breath that he gave the excuse. With regard to the position of the present Government in connection with that Bill, they were prepared to take action as far back as March last. The districts were then mapped out and every preparation made to put that Bill in force in the more thickly populated districts of the colony; but they deferred taking action because they had this Bill before the House, which they considered much more suitable for the sparsely-populated districts. He entirely denied that it was impossible to carry out the provisions of this Bill in the sparsely-populated districts. They might take the extreme western districts—the Warrego, the Mitchell, and the Gregory—and he maintained that it would be just as easy to put it in force there as in any of the districts of East or West Moreton, and that it would be better carried out and more ably worked there than in those districts. They had heard it said that the Bill was a class measure, setting class against class, but how could it possibly set one class against another when every class in the colony would be taxed under its provisions? The hon. member for Northern Downs had referred to miners being excluded from taxation, but if he referred to the Local Government Bill he would see that the clauses in this Bill bearing on that were precisely the same. The exemptions were the same, and that Bill was passed under the auspices of hon. members opposite, although they were warned that it would not answer the purpose for which it was intended, and it had proved so. The hon. gentleman had condescended to point out some of the objections to the Bill in detail, and said that there could be no assessment made, because there were no ratepayers until the Bill came into operation. But if the hon. member had looked at the amend-

ments that had been printed and circulated by the Premier he would have seen that that was provided for by inserting "inhabitant, householder, or"—

Mr. GRIFFITH: That has nothing to do with it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it had everything to do with it. Then there was a new clause to follow clause 14—

At every election held in any division before a valuation of all the rateable property has been made therein in the manner hereinafter prescribed all persons named on any electoral roll for the Legislative Assembly for the time being in respect of a freehold leasehold or household qualification situated within such division shall be and be deemed voters for the same.

Did that meet the case?

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman would not admit that anything would meet it to-night. Then, they were told as another reason why they should not proceed with the Bill that the hon. gentleman's health would not stand it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not give any such absurd reason. He said his health would not allow him to remain in the House this evening; but that was no reason why the Government should not go on.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman gave that as a reason why the Government should not go on with the Bill, after it had been blocked at the very outset by the Opposition obstructing the postponement of the preamble without the slightest arguments having been brought forward—nothing but assertions. He hoped the Premier would not give way; that he would teach the Opposition—a minority of the House—that when the will of the majority was clearly expressed that they meant to do business, if they sat till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, he would do so in order to get on with business. If the Bill had been dealt with in any practical way the House would have been adjourned before now, and he was astonished that hon. members opposite should be led away by the hon. member for Wide Bay, whose district would be more benefited by the passing of this Bill than any district in the colony. If the obstruction had come from the hon. members for East and West Moreton he should not have been so much astonished, because, on examining the tables before them, they found that nearly two-thirds of the whole of the money granted had been spent in those districts—that while £65,000 had been spent in those districts, £35,000 had been spent in the rest of the colony. He could understand members representing those electorates objecting to the loss of this money. He could not understand the hon. member for Wide Bay—which was a district that

had never received its fair proportion of the money voted for the roads and bridges of the colony—obstructing the Bill, and he did not believe that anyone in that hon. member's electorate, on coming to understand the meaning of the Bill would at all thank the hon. member for his opposition to it. When arguments were brought forward by hon. members opposite he had no doubt his hon. friend, the Premier, would be willing to discuss them; but he was at a loss to know how blocking a Bill, by opposing the postponement of the preamble, could be called discussing it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that as so many petitions had been presented against the Bill, it was only natural and usual that hon. members should speak on the question of the postponement of the preamble with a view to bring forward objections which had been raised against the Bill.

Mr. BAILEY renewed his objections to the Bill.

Mr. Low said that if the leader of the Opposition or the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) had told the Committee that they intended to block every clause of the Bill, such a statement might have been received with some interest and consideration; but when such a windbag as the hon. member for Wide Bay held out such a threat, he (Mr. Low) would sit there until doomsday before he would give in.

Mr. BAYNES said that he considered the Bill the most statesmanlike measure that had yet been introduced by any Government. The hon. member for Wide Bay should be the last to oppose it, as the lands in the Burnett district had been used to make the railway from Maryborough to Gympie. He was very glad, indeed, that the Burnett was now separated from the electorate which was represented by that hon. member.

Mr. GRIMES pointed out that by the Bill the improvements made by conditional and homestead selectors were not to be taxed, whereas in the case of farmers their improvements would be taxed, and that he considered was manifestly unfair.

The PREMIER said he should be quite prepared to discuss that question at the proper time, but not before the preamble of the Bill was postponed.

Mr. REA wished for time to compare the thirty amendments which the Premier had to propose with the original.

Mr. BAILEY wished to know how far the Premier proposed to go? As far as the 6th clause there would be no particular discussion required, but that clause opened up a wide subject.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he was not anxious to obstruct, and considering the large amount of business Government had got through in the day, and that business generally was more advanced than it had probably been at

a similar time in any previous session, and as hon. gentlemen on that side when in Opposition invariably insisted on going home about ten o'clock, perhaps it was not too much if the present Opposition took a similar attitude. He was, however, anxious to go on with convenient speed; he sought to come to a decision, and the leader of the Opposition had referred to numerous defects in detail which required remedy. This did not appear to be an occasion for him to take advantage of the forms of the House to obstruct, and some progress might be made.

Question—That the preamble be postponed—put and passed.

Clause 1 passed with a verbal amendment.

On clause 2—Governor may constitute division—may unite or subdivide such division,

The PREMIER, in reply to the hon. member for the Logan, said it was the intention of Government to bring the whole of the colony under the operation of this and the Local Government Act. And, in reply to the hon. member for Oxley, he said that he could not state what detailed divisions there would be under the Bill.

Mr. GRIMES said that at the time of the second reading of the Bill it was understood the Premier had said he would define the shire districts by the electoral districts. That would be impossible in some cases.

The PREMIER said he had not stated the division should correspond with the electoral districts: what he had said was that the division should be co-terminus with the electoral district, but there might be half-a-dozen divisions in one electorate.

Mr. BAYNES said he had never supposed for a moment that the Burnett district could be included in one division. If so, the measure would be quite unworkable.

Mr. McLEAN said that one of his main objections to the Bill would be removed if the divisional boards were not to be, as he had always understood, the same as the electoral districts.

Mr. PERSSE said he should have opposed the Bill had such been the case, for the Fassifern district could not possibly be worked by one board.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the light now thrown by the Premier on the working of the Bill placed it in a more advantageous point of view.

Question put and passed; and clause 3 passed as printed.

On clause 4—Petitions to be signed by not less than one-third of the inhabitants—

Mr. BEOR said it was unnecessary, and moved that it be struck out.

Mr. McLEAN said the clause would not be necessary, as the whole colony must

come under either the Local Government Act or this measure.

The PREMIER said the clause referred to the formation of divisions and sub-divisions, and would be useful as an expression of opinion on those points, and also as to whether they would like to come under the Local Government Act or the Divisional Boards Act.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the clause had been taken from a South Australian Act that had worked well for years.

The PREMIER said that the receipt of such petitions by the Government would be a guide to them as to where the boundaries should be fixed.

Clause, after amendment, adopted; and clause 5 passed with a verbal amendment.

On clause 6 a discussion ensued on the question of adjournment.

On the motion of the PREMIER, an addition was then made to the clause providing that any person whose name appeared in the electoral roll in respect to freehold, leasehold, or household property in any division should be qualified as a member of the divisional board.

After another discussion on the question of adjourning,

Clause 6, as amended, put and passed.

The PREMIER moved clause 7—Disqualifications—

Mr. DICKSON protested against persons holding offices of profit under the Government, or holders of publicans' licenses, being disqualified from being members of Divisional Boards.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the objection came well from a member of the Government which passed the Local Government Act, in the 34th clause of which it was provided that any person holding an office of profit under the Crown should be disqualified as a councillor or auditor.

Clause passed, with a verbal amendment.

Clause 8 passed as read.

Mr. DOUGLAS moved that the Chairman leave the chair.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY thought the hon. member should give some guarantee that the obstruction would not be repeated to-morrow before he asked the Premier to adjourn the debate.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he could only speak for himself; and, so far as he was concerned, he would endeavour to use his influence towards a fair discussion of the Bill.

Question—That the Chairman leave the chair—put.

The Committee divided—Ayes, 6; Noes, 20.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr. GRIMES moved that the Chairman leave the chair and report progress.

Mr. MOREHEAD moved that the Chairman do not leave the chair.

The PREMIER considered the Government should have some say in the matter, as if they made no more progress than they had done that night the Bill would take three weeks to pass through Committee.

Question put, and the Committee divided. Ayes, 6; Noes, 19.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

On clause 9—One-third of the board to retire annually—

Mr. BEOR moved an amendment with the view of rendering the terms of the motion more precise.

Mr. DICKSON said, while he had every confidence in the ability of the hon. member for Bowen to draw up a clause, he should like to hear what the Government had to say about it. As the Government were under the disadvantage of not having their legal adviser in the Chamber, they might have postponed the subject until the Committee could have the benefit of the opinion of the leader of the Opposition. He would ask the Premier to name some point in the Bill at which he would stop.

The PREMIER said that when the Committee got to the end of the 24th clause he should consider that fair progress had been made. He considered the amendment of the hon. member for Bowen was an improvement, and as such he accepted it.

Amendment agreed to, and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 passed as printed.

A new clause was inserted after clause 14—providing that at every election held in any division before a valuation of all the rateable property had been made, all persons named on any electoral roll for the Legislative Assembly for the time being, in respect of a freehold, leasehold, or household qualification, situated within such division, be deemed voters.

Clause 15 passed as printed, and clause 16 with verbal amendments.

On the motion of the PREMIER, a new clause—providing for the election of the first board for a division if petitioned for—passed, to follow clause 16.

Clauses 17, 18, and 19 passed with verbal amendment.

On the motion of the PREMIER, a new clause—providing for the appointment of scrutineers—was passed to follow clause 19.

Clauses 20 to 24—put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again at a later hour of the day.

The House adjourned at 2 o'clock, a.m.
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