

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 1879

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QUESTION.

Mr. KATES asked the Premier—

Whether, in compliance with 48th section of the Audit Act, 1874, all Public Accountants have, through guarantee societies, provided Security to indemnify the State against losses occasioned by culpable neglect, want of fidelity, as well as dishonesty, on the part of such officers?

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) replied—

All Public Accountants are compelled to provide security through approved guarantee societies, in compliance with the requirements of the Audit Act. Some difficulty is, however, occasionally experienced in defining what officers in a department should be deemed public accountants under the Act, and in deciding upon the amount of the security which should be demanded accordingly.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. ARCHER—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copies of the recent Correspondence between the Government and the Acclimatisation Society, upon the subject of the withdrawal of the Grant in aid of the Society.

By Mr. BEOR—

1. That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the conduct of the Police Magistrate at Thornborough, Mr. W. M. Mowbray, in connection with certain charges brought against Mr. J. Hamilton, during the months of March and April, 1878.

2. That such Committee consist of Messrs. Morehead, O'Sullivan, Macdonald-Paterson, Archer, Groom, Meston, and the Mover, with power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during any adjournment of the House.

INDEFEASIBLE LEASES.

Mr. ARCHER moved—

1. That, in the opinion of this House, it is advisable, for the purpose of increasing the Revenue derived from the waste lands in the Unsettled Districts, to grant Indefeasible Leases in these districts as against an increase of rent.

2. That, in carrying out any such re-arrangement of Leases and Rents, it will be necessary to make careful provision for reserving such lands as may be wanted for selection or sale during the currency of such Leases.

In doing so, he said that in bringing forward an abstract motion of this kind the only excuse the mover could have was that he might be doing some good for future legislation. The question he had raised was one of such great importance that he doubted if any Ministry would venture to introduce it unless there had been a very strong expression of encouragement from both sides of the House in favour of it. He did not think there was anything which would affect the country more nearly than

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 4 September, 1879.

Petition.—Question.—Formal Motions.—Indefeasible Leases.—South Brisbane Railway.—Personal Explanation.—Gootchy to Gayndah Railway.—Grants to Societies.—Rescindment of Order.—Bankers' Books Evidence Bill.

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

PETITION.

Mr. TYREL presented a petition from representatives of the Border Agricultural, Pastoral, and Mining Association, praying that the usual subsidy for Schools of Art and kindred institutions might not be withdrawn.

Petition read and received.

the motion he had moved, and unless there was a disposition shown to treat the matter entirely without reference to back party cries—to look only at what would benefit the country, and place legislation on the basis which would be best for the colony—it would be hardly right to discuss it. He regretted that the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) was not present, as that hon. member had taken occasion lately, in another debate, to call him (Mr. Archer) a Minister without portfolio, in relation to the land question, stating that the motion had only been put on the paper after consultation with the Ministry on the subject. He (Mr. Archer) denied that there had been any such discussion with the Ministry. He had intended to introduce the subject when he first came down, and it was a matter on which he had addressed his constituents. He had all along insisted, before he came down to the House, that until some such measure as might be founded on the motion was brought forward, there would be no finality to those party cries which had led to so much evil in the colony. He denied again that he had had any conference with the Ministry. He had discussed the motion with the hon. member for the Leichhardt, and they had determined that it was a matter on which they should take the opinion of both sides of the House; he also showed the motion to two of the Ministers on the morning of the day on which he gave notice, and that was all the previous talk on the subject. His object now was to test the opinion of the House. In late debates a great deal had been said about the necessity for raising extra revenue from waste lands of the Crown in the unsettled districts. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) had, on more than one occasion, particularly alluded to it, chiefly in connection with the principle of the Railway Reserves Act, stating that that Act gave the Ministry of the day a certain power to treat with pastoral tenants of the Crown. Personally, he thought the Act would not assist, for even the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) would himself admit that when large areas were for sale it would be one of the greatest evils which could befall the colony that when those waste lands of the Crown were thrown open for sale they should really be sold. The capital of the colony was small enough for usual business purposes without having to invest in the purchase of large blocks of waste lands. The hon. member had also called attention to the evils a neighbouring colony had suffered from the fact of a large amount of capital being locked up in the purchase of Crown lands. There could consequently be, in that argument, no use in relying on the provisions of the Railway Reserves Act for a means

of deriving a large increase of income from the waste lands of the colony. The only way in which it could be done was in a wider and better method of letting the lands. In the early part of the session the hon. member for Maryborough also called on Government to say in what way they were going to raise extra revenue from the Crown tenants in the unsettled districts. He (Mr. Archer) was not surprised that that demand had never been answered, as he did not see how Government could do it; and the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) must have also come to a similar conclusion, because in a late speech he actually appealed to the squatting members of the Government side of the House, and told them it was their duty to come forward and offer an increased rental on the runs they held. He had not asked any other body to do the same thing—the reason why he asked the squatters to do it being that their rents were so low. The rentals of the runs were as much as could be paid for them. In the debates when the subject had come up there had been a constant cry for increased revenue from the western country, and it was an exceedingly dangerous cry to raise. Nothing was more likely to injure the country than when measures were taken which might tend in any way to repudiation—for that was what would happen if Government having once entered into a bargain up to which they should act should break it. They were not justified in getting what might prove to be only a temporary gain, but which necessitated the breaking of a bargain to obtain. He need not enter into the question of how dangerous it was for anyone to try and throw a doubt on the faith of the Government. They were all aware that the United States of America had paid high interest on their debt, not because they had not the capacity to pay it, but because a restless portion of the community were constantly crying out that they should pay off the interest on that debt with paper money. That cry had not been a less loss to them than £100,000,000 sterling, but since it had been decided that they were going to pay their interest in gold at once it was notorious they had been able to borrow money for the purpose of withdrawing their debentures, which would relieve them of an enormous amount of interest. Anything which Government might do to obtain a temporary advantage in connection with increasing their revenue from the pastoral tenants would be dearly paid for in the end. Under the Pastoral Leases Act, 1869, power was given to the House to resume any lands held by pastoral tenants by a 'six months' notice to be given in both Houses, and any Government would be able under that Act to resume at any time—there was no necessity for any other machinery—

the condition of the resumption, of course, being that it was for public purposes. Public purposes was, however, a wide term. It might mean throwing open for selection, which was undoubtedly a public purpose, and it might mean other things; but, whatever those public purposes, he could not see how it was possible to increase—having regard to the good faith of the Government—the rentals of the tenants of the unsettled western districts. The Government of the day leased the land on certain terms which gave the leaseholders no security; they might very properly then have granted indefeasible leases without in any way inconveniencing the public; but instead of doing so, and drawing an increased rental, the Government of the day preferred to do business in a slovenly and unbusiness-like manner. A small rental, it was urged, would be the means of encouraging settlement, but some members now said that having succeeded in obtaining the thing for which the Act was passed they were justified in breaking the bargain and demanding higher rents. That sentiment was one which would find no echo in the House. If the House would consent to do such a thing, what effect would it have on the flow of capital into the country? No one would invest capital in a country where the Government of the day could, at their own caprice, ignore what they had formerly done in order to secure a temporary benefit to the country—when they could review and alter a contract to their liking. Governments, like private individuals, ought to stick to their contracts, and if any change were made in the conditions under which tenants held their lands, it should not be compulsory, but open to the tenant to accept or reject it as he thought proper. It would be wrong to force them to accept even a benefit, unless they wished it. The question resolved itself into this: would the House continue what he considered a most unbusiness-like and wasteful manner of dealing with the Crown lands, or would they administer the most valuable property of the colony in the same manner as a judicious agent would administer property committed to his charge? Hitherto that property had been administered in a most injudicious manner, and everything possible had been done to depreciate its value, and to frighten away capital by not giving that certain hold upon it without which no person would invest upon it his capital and labour. Would the House continue the present wasteful method, or would they administer the public estate in such a way as to derive a larger revenue from it? Even in such a poor country as Scotland, the introduction of long leases, some sixty or seventy years ago, sent the country up at a bound in prosperity above all the other countries of Europe, solely because the people knew that they could invest their capital and

labour with the certainty that they would not be turned out before they received the interest of the money they had expended. Queensland possessed an enormous public estate, which had been persistently mismanaged for the sake of keeping up the cry as between the squatter and the rest of the community, by always holding over the former, *in terrorem*, the fact that they had no certain security that they would not be disturbed in their lands. By giving that security capital would be induced to flow into the country for the purpose of improving it. Under the present system squatters could offer no security which the banks would accept, and they had to go for money to the middle-man, for whose services they had to pay very heavily. By granting indefeasible leases of the runs, or of three-fourths of the runs, or of any portion that might be decided upon, not only might the State expect a higher rental—for most of the Crown tenants in the outside districts would gladly exchange their present tenure for an indefeasible lease—but it would induce capitalists to invest their money in the colony, and would give employment to an immense number of working men now unfortunately wandering about the country not knowing where to get a day's work. In addition to this, the colony would benefit through the Customs, and every branch of trade would share in the increased prosperity that would ensue. Instead of, as at present, labouring under a deficit, such a measure as he proposed would turn the deficit into a surplus, and the colony would be in a more prosperous position than any other in the Australian group. If all that was said of the western lands could be believed, there was there a more extensive area of first-class country than in any other colony; and if they could not under judicious legislation make good use of that land, it would simply show that the people of this colony were inferior to those of the other colonies. But he did not think that was the case, and believed they were perfectly capable of doing all that others had done, and if they got a fair chance—if the State, by which he meant the Government of the day, would simply consent to administer the estate of the colony in a business-like manner—they could not only retrieve Queensland from its present difficulties, but make it go further ahead than they now thought of. He had purposely avoided stating any opinion of his own as to how the matter could be carried out. Now that the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) was in his place, he would again disclaim having given the Government any intimation of his views on the subject before he gave notice of his motion. It was not his duty to state in what way the provisions of the motion could be best carried out—that was a question for the Government of the day.

He would only say that it was one of the greatest questions to which a Government could give its mind, and anyone who would solve it would confer a greater benefit on Queensland than by passing any other measure at the present time. There were great difficulties in the way of carrying out such a measure, even though it were the wish of both sides of the House that it ought to be passed. Even then it would be surrounded by such great difficulties as to cause the break-up of any Ministry that tried it. Ministries, however, were not constituted for the sole purpose of keeping their seats, but to pass such laws as would benefit the country; and if he were a Minister the danger of losing office would not prevent him (Mr. Archer) from trying to pass such a measure. The ways and means of doing it he should not discuss. The second part of the motion showed that it would be absolutely necessary, whatever was done in that way, that abundant reserves should be made for future settlement, future townships, railways, &c. It might be that these indefeasible leases ought to be accompanied by a clause depriving the Crown tenants of their right of pre-emption. But those were all matters of detail with which the Government of the day would have to deal. Even if they did not succeed in coming to some settlement of the matter now, and even if any Ministry attempting to do so would be in danger of losing their positions as Ministers for a time, yet he confidently believed that in a few years it would be recognised that had they passed such a measure they would have conferred enormous benefit on the colony. He had now, he thought, said sufficient to explain his meaning—which was this, that if such parts of the western lands as he had mentioned were reserved to meet the wants of settlement for the next fourteen or sixteen years, the Government should be empowered to grant indefeasible leases for the rest at an increased rental; and that such law, if passed, must not be compulsory, but permissive. Many squatters might prefer their present tenure and smaller rent, and Government ought not to repudiate its past actions and compel a lessee to take another tenure, though it might be for his own benefit. That was a matter respecting which the lessee ought to be allowed to use his own discretion. A measure of this kind, if made compulsory, would be an injustice, even though it conferred a benefit, to those who were compelled to accept it. The country was at present, as all knew, suffering from severe and long-continued depression, and it was hardly likely that just now the Crown tenants would be prepared to accept the more advantageous terms that might be held out to them, accompanied, as they would be, with higher

rentals. Many western stations were held by people who had nothing but cattle, who were not in a position to at once increase their expenses by the very smallest fraction. Indeed, many of them were in such a position that when the next year's rents fell due they would have to resign, not only their country, but their cattle as well. At the present moment, therefore, such a measure would have no very startling effect; but he should not be surprised if, in the course of four or five years, when the crisis was over, and things had resumed their normal condition, the State could ask and obtain double the rents it now derived from its great western estate. In that event not only would the Treasury be relieved, but it would enable them to advance more rapidly in the improvement of the country by means of railways and other great public works. Besides this, it would go far towards destroying that bitter political cry in which the crier himself, often, did not believe. If it could be justly settled how long a person should hold land, and when he should resign it again for the benefit of the public, the cause of a great deal of bad blood and bad language would be stopped. Until that was done, class cries would not cease in the colony. Nothing could be done in this matter suddenly; but the House could say whether it was in favour of the measure or opposed to it. If opposed to it, the question fell to the ground at once. If, on the other hand, they concluded that it ought to be carried, it would lead to legislation which would prevent the lands of the colony from being thrown away. Of one thing he was perfectly satisfied, that if the House decided to accept his motion, and to base legislation upon it, they would confer a greater benefit upon the colony than they could by any measure that had yet been before them.

Mr. REA said he was surprised that this question had been shirked by the Government. They must have known it was coming on, and it was the duty of such a Government to have at once said whether they accepted it or not. They ought to have formulated the motion into a Bill, so that the House might know what in reality it was asked to give. The hon. member (Mr. Archer) had touched upon the matter in a most hazy manner, and had said that its acceptance should not be compulsory, but optional, with the squatter. The result of that option, if combined with increased rent, would be that no squatter would avail himself of it until he found that a railway was about to be projected in the direction of his station, when he would immediately apply for his indefeasible lease, and mulct both the State and the taxpayers of the full value of the fee-simple of the land. During an election speech of the hon. member, he (Mr. Rea) asked him what, supposing the Government required part of a run for a goldfield,

a railway, or a road, would be the effect of his motion of an indefeasible lease? His answer was that he supposed it would have to be done the same as though the line had gone through private freehold. To the question, "Where would the money come from to pay compensation?" the reply was, "out of revenue;" which, of course, meant from the taxpayers of the whole colony. The hon. member said that at present no man holding a station could get any advance on the security of his run; but there was hardly a run in the colony that was not in the hands of the banks already, and this was a bankers' question. It had been introduced solely for the purpose of improving the bankers' securities; and if the House granted such leases they would simply be adding so much to the securities the banks now held. Did the hon. member assert that if such leases were granted to-morrow the price of a fat bullock would be increased by sixpence? It would only give a higher price to the banker in case he wanted to force the occupant of a run to sell. A great deal had been said lately about the six months' tenures, but hon. members knew very well that the tenure was for twenty-one years with renewal, which was better than the tenure in any other Australian colony—accompanied with a pre-emptive right, which in no other colony would be asked for or given. Still the squatters were not satisfied, but asked for a present of the freehold. They had better come down and ask at once for a freehold right to the grass of the land they occupied. The hon. member spoke about necessary reserves, but if they granted indefeasible leases for twenty-one years, how could they predict what would be required during that term? Had such leases been granted when the Land Act came into force in 1869, as some hon. members wished, the very land through which the Clermont extension and the western railways would now go would have had to be paid for out of the public purse as compensation to the indefeasible leaseholder. It was simply preposterous to ask the House to define what land would be wanted twenty-one years hence. The result would be that the squatter, after paying ten or fifteen years' rental to the Government, would, in the case of a line going through his run or a goldfield breaking out in it, receive as compensation—his claim being adjudicated by his brother squatters—enough to cover the whole amount of rent he had paid to the Government—he would, in fact, have paid nothing for the grass and got something into his pocket besides. That was what was meant by the indefeasible leases which the House, by a side-wind, were asked to grant. The talk about abundant reserves was mere moonshine, as every run would have to be proclaimed a reserve to provide land that might possibly be wanted. The original

project was made worse by the acceptance of such leases being made optional: like Irish reciprocity, the advantage was all on one side. The squatter would not pay another sixpence because he would not ask for an indefeasible lease until he wanted to sell his run, and then he would say, "I value the indefeasible lease for twenty-one years at £3,000, say;"—so that, by means of optional indefeasible leases, the squatter would get the money into his pocket and pay nothing to the State. The hon. member was wise in not going further into particulars, because, the more the project was known the greater was seen to be the imposition upon the taxpayers. Instead of going to Scotland for his illustrations, the hon. member should have told the House what the Parliaments of New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand would say if asked to grant such leases. The man who proposed such a thing there would be thought fit for a lunatic asylum; yet the proposition was made here, in a colony that had treated Crown tenants with greater favour and generosity than any other colony in the South Pacific. The hon. member told the House what splendid improvements would be made, and how much more labour would be employed, if such leases were granted; but what did they find by past experience? When the price of wool and fat cattle rose, after 1870, and the Crown tenants, in the words of the Colonial Secretary, were getting disgustingly rich, what did they do? They set to fencing in their runs, got rid of all the white men they could spare, put on boundary-riders, and imported South Sea labour. That was the result of their increased prosperity, and that would be the result of granting indefeasible leases. There would not be a white man between here and the setting-sun that could possibly be spared, and the traffic on the railways would consist of the carriage of wool to port once a year. The hon. member said that anyone solving the question would be deserving of great praise. He (Mr. Rea) had gone into the subject in all its details ten years ago, and held a statement of his views printed May 29, 1869. To the hon. member, Mr. Archer, then a member of Parliament, he sent a copy, and the hon. member expressed his high approval. On being asked to try and get his brother squatters to adopt it the hon. member said that a number of pig-headed—or an even stronger term than that—squatters would not assent to it. Now that the hon. member had got a western run he seemed to have forgotten all about that project. The idea was to make the squatters mutually assure one another. He expressed his views thus:—

"The rent of each run and the rent of each district having thus been settled on their own

relative merits, on something like a tangible basis, and without loss to the Treasury, I now come to the great question of the sort of lease to be granted to the squatter; and this I hold should be as firm and binding on both sides as a lease between two private individuals—that is, that anything taken away from the squatter, for essential public purposes, he shall be paid full value for, in cash, as compensation. But as to this compensation, my plan is that the Government shall not compensate him, but that his brother squatters shall, and that by a mutual insurance fund to be paid to the Government at the same time each year as the rent is paid, but to be charged expressly as an insurance fund, and to be disbursed only for compensation to those who have had part of their runs taken from them. This compensation to be in every way full, satisfactory, and sufficient, not only for improvements, but for the market value estimated of blocks or half-blocks of land to be taken from him, as well, also, for the inconvenience and trouble he may be put to; for I have no notion that one man should be half ruined while the others go scot-free. The squatter to appoint one appraiser, the Government the other, the two to appoint an umpire; the money to be paid within six months.”

The only difficulty he then discerned, and still discerned, was that a squatter deeply involved in a bank might go to the Ministry of the day and ask them to put a railway or road through his run, or proclaim a reserve in it, so that he might get compensation;—

“But, to prevent the abuse of this, and to prevent a squatter from resorting to this as a means of raising money by getting a Ministerial friend to proclaim a part of his run wanted for public use, I would require that the Executive should at the beginning of or during each session of Parliament lay before the Assembly a list of such blocks of country or parts of blocks required for public use, and what they are wanted for, during the coming year, the assent of both Houses being necessary; and then within six months the land to be open to the public. This apparent delay of six months is nothing new, for under all the old Acts a squatter was entitled to twelve months’ notice before having any part of his run resumed. The search for gold and gold-digging would be temporarily unprotected against; but when a goldfield reserve was proclaimed, his compensation by the arbitrators would at once follow.”

There was a plan fully stated to meet the end proposed by the hon. member, whose memory it seemed to have escaped on the present occasion. To his (Mr. Rea’s) mind this was one of the most treacherous projects ever broached, because the squatter would pay nothing until he wanted to sell, and then he would be able to get his indefeasible lease, and say, “This is as good as freehold to you; you have a lease of twenty-one years, renewable, and if it is touched for any purpose you will get full compensation, to be awarded by the

Treasury.” While the Ministry were afraid to take their stand, the House was asked to commit the country, bit by bit, to a project of a most insidious character.

Mr. NORTON said, while fully admitting the force of the arguments brought forward by the hon. member for Blackall, he would remind the House that there were settled as well as unsettled districts in the colony. In the interest of a large number of his constituents he should feel bound to oppose the motion. The distinction between the settled and the unsettled districts was merely one of law, and could only be defined by the advantages of one and the disadvantages of the other. The line of division was of a very arbitrary nature, and had no reference whatever to the capabilities of the country on either side. Hitherto the course of legislation had always tended to decrease the value of the runs in the settled districts and to increase the value of those in the unsettled districts. The effect of the Act of 1868 was to allow lessees in the settled districts to retain half their runs while they paid for the half the same amount as they had previously paid for the whole. In 1869 another Bill was passed which gave a tenure of twenty-one years to the pastoral tenants in the unsettled districts, which, although not indefeasible, placed them in an infinitely better position than they had before occupied. Again, by the Act of 1876, occupiers of land in the settled districts were compelled to pay not less than £2 per mile for the leases of their runs; and, in addition to that, the leases were put up to auction, so that the former lessees had to contend with any competition that might be brought to bear against them; the term was reduced to five years, and the tenure was made as insecure as it could possibly be under any lease whatever by the fact that the whole of the land taken up was subjected at any time, by proclamation, to selection. Last night the leader of the Opposition had referred to the annual value of a run. In the case of the settled districts, the rent of runs represented in many cases a good deal more than the value, because any portion, or the whole, might be taken away, even after the leaseholder had paid his rent. A proposal was now made to confer a further advantage upon the unsettled districts by giving tenants indefeasible leases for a certain term, thereby putting them in a better position than they had occupied at any previous time. By the Act of 1876 runs in the settled districts were reduced to almost a nominal value—in fact, what little value they might have had was taken away by the insecure tenure and the difficulties tenants had to contend with in the shape of selection. Having to buy their leases at

auction every five years, owners had been obliged to cease making improvements, and the result had been, not only disadvantageous to them, but also to the working classes in the district. The consequence was that men who usually found employment in fencing and other works went about the country seeking for employment, the profits of the storekeepers were reduced, and all those who before had derived advantage from the stations in the settled districts were to a great extent injured by the change. He had hoped that during this session some measure would have been enacted to modify to some extent the ill-effect of the Act of 1876. There did not appear to be any probability of anything of the kind now taking place; but he trusted that when the House met next year some steps would be taken in the matter by the Government. It would be unbecoming of him, a new member of the House, to declare what his intentions were, but it would be necessary for some member of the House connected with the country districts to introduce a measure of the nature referred to; if the Government would not bring it forward, and if any other member who had more experience would do so, he should have his assistance and support. To show the inequality of the rents of runs which came under this Act, he would give the House some particulars that had been supplied to him by residents in his district. There was a run of 260 square miles, the rent upon which was £520 a-year; and of these 260 square miles 150 were unavailable. He knew a good deal of the country, and had no hesitation in saying that there was a very large quantity of the 260 miles which was not only utterly useless but worse than useless, because in this unavailable country cattle would always wander, and would become a source of continual annoyance to the runholders in the neighbourhood. There was another run which carried 16,000 cattle, and the rent upon it was £560 a-year, whilst for another run in the same neighbourhood, which was not fully stocked, but the full capabilities of which were 4,000 head, the rent was £500 a-year. The inequalities of rent under this Act were most extraordinary. There was another run which was fully stocked with 4,000 head, the rent on which was £400, whilst in the same neighbourhood there was a run which carried 9,000 head, and the rent upon it was £280: and they might go through the whole of the settled districts and find out similar extraordinary inequalities. He believed that the right system by which these runs should be leased was by appraisement on their actual carrying capabilities. He referred to these matters simply because he thought it was advisable, when a motion of this kind was before the House, that the different position in which

the settled districts had been placed, and that in which it was proposed to place the unsettled districts, should be pointed out. He would again ask why should they legislate for one part of the colony only, and why should a large portion of the colony be sacrificed for the benefit of the greater part? The interests of the pastoral lessees in the settled districts should not be made subservient to the lessees of the outside districts. In this case the improvement was proposed at the wrong end. It was obvious if they increased the value of runs in the unsettled districts they proportionately reduced the value of runs in the settled districts. He had pointed out already that the value of the latter had already decreased almost to the lowest; but if they went on increasing the tenure and value of runs in the outside districts, the effect would be that the capital available for pastoral pursuits would be drawn from the settled districts, or, rather, would be diverted from the settled to the unsettled districts, and in the proportion that it was so directed the former districts would suffer. He did not wish to oppose the motion in itself, but when amendments of this nature were made they should be applied to those districts where the value of pastoral holdings was already much depreciated by the action of the House; and as this was not proposed, he felt bound to oppose the motion in the interests of many of his constituents.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he also felt bound to oppose the motion, although he gave the hon. member for Blackall every credit for bringing it forward with a desire to do good, not only to those who would be primarily affected by it, but to the whole colony. As the representative, however, of a pastoral district, he maintained, to commence with, that an indefeasible lease was a mistake so far as the squatter himself was concerned; and he doubted very much whether any Government or the Crown would consent to such a thing becoming law. Conceding that point, though, the resolution was too vague; it meant absolutely nothing. In the first part it said that it was advisable, for the purpose of increasing the revenue from waste lands in the unsettled districts, to grant indefeasible leases there as against the increase of rent. The hon. member proposed nothing in that part except a new Land Bill; but they had had enough Land Acts—their statute-book was crammed full with them. Then the resolution went on to state that in carrying out any such re-arrangement it would be necessary to make careful provision for reserving such lands as might be wanted for selection or sale during the currency of the leases. Such a thing was impossible. If the proposition were passed it would be perfectly impossible that any Government,

no matter how wise they might be, or any Minister for Lands, could point out by himself or by his subordinates the land which should be reserved. It would lead to an immense deal of trouble, and possibly a great deal of corruption, to attempt to do so. He held, and possibly might be considered a heretic for doing so, being looked upon by many as an ultra-squatter, that the squatter was to a certain extent a tenant on sufferance—that he simply held his land until it was wanted for some other purpose than grazing. He objected to the squatter being turned out of his holding unless something better was to be done with his land; he objected to one squatter being dispossessed to put another in his place; but so soon as the land was wanted for agricultural purposes or other forms of settlement the squatter should go, and therefore he was opposed to indefeasible leases. He would also point out to the hon. member for Blackall what the effect would be if the resolution were embodied in a Bill. He took it that the holders of the indefeasible leases would hold their runs until the leases ran out, and after that—the deluge! The people would say, “These lands have been locked up by Act of Parliament against our will. This is the Paradise which we have been longing for;” and when the leases expired the pastoral tenant would be swept away. The pastoral tenants would have, in place of a state of uncertainty—which was a bad one to be in—a state of horrible certainty, which was much worse for the individual and the country. When the land was required for the people they should have it, and it was a very great error on the part of any Legislature, under the guise of an indefeasible lease, to lock up land which might possibly in years to come be of more use to the State than grazing sheep and cattle. He doubted very much whether an indefeasible lease could be granted; if it did become law it would be without a parallel in the annals of the Australian colonies, and holding that opinion he should vote against the resolution. In the first place, the resolution was too vague, containing no defined policy—it was an abstract question; and he would vote against such a question in the same way that he would against a Bill embodying the resolution, if it was ever brought before the House. He agreed, also, to a considerable extent, with the last speaker: if indefeasible leases were granted he did not see why the settled districts should be shut out. He did not see why, because an arbitrary line had been laid down, the unsettled districts should receive more benefit in any future law than the settled districts, which had not been fairly treated by the Legislature. He would not delay the House much longer. Besides holding that indefeasible leases would be not only an

evil to the State, but a great one to the squatter, he was of opinion that if the hon. member for Blackall had really intended to have ventilated the subject he should have done it at an earlier period of the session. It was no time at the end of a session to bring forward a sweeping proposition, which sought to bring in a new order of things altogether. It should have been done earlier, for then it might have received more consideration—but very little more, he hoped, because, if adopted, it would inflict a terrible injury, not only upon the country, but the squatters themselves.

Mr. BAYNES regretted that the Minister for Lands was not in his seat when one of the most important questions that had been brought before the House was under discussion. He did not believe that any good effect would come from the motion this session, but it was a question which must be brought before the House next session if the present Government wished to retain the unprecedented support they now had. It would be their duty to introduce a comprehensive measure for the amendment of their land laws. Not only the land laws affecting the unsettled districts, but those affecting the settled ones, required altering. He could quite understand the hon. member for Mitchell opposing the motion, for he could see that the insecurity of tenure of the Western squatter was their security; but they had something more to study than the hon. member and his colleagues. They had to study the benefit of the country—they were not to be governed by a “sub-section,” and he trusted that the Government would look beyond the “sub-section” and see that the country would very much benefit by following up the member for Blackall’s arguments. If he thought any good would result from the resolution this session he would give other arguments equally as good as the hon. member had stated. He asked the question of the Minister for Lands whether it was his intention to bring forward a comprehensive scheme for the amendment of the Land Act?—and he could assure the Government that they would not have his support next session if some such measure was not introduced. He was aware it was too late to do anything this session—they had had too much legislation this year, in proof of which he might point to last night’s work; but he would repeat that if the Government wished to keep the support that had been accorded to them they must recognise the necessity of bringing forward a measure to meet, not only the views of the hon. member for Blackall, but many other members—the majority of the House, he believed. Some few months ago, the Premier spoke of “close settlement,” which he (Mr. Baynes) took to mean the settlement of the western lands. The hon. member for Gregory must expect

to meet settlers on the road when he had a railway running within 500 or 600 miles of his station—that was inevitable. He supposed there was no Government department which had been more neglected than the Lands. They had had no less than four Ministers of Lands during the past fifteen months, and of these the hon. member for Maryborough was the most unfortunate. It showed how this important question was neglected when they found that not only the Minister for Lands, but two ex-Ministers, the members for Logan and Moreton, were absent when it was introduced; those two hon. members should have been present to follow the mover. Returning to the main question, there must be re-appraisalment of runs. The members for Gregory and Normanby could not expect to have railways within 500 or 600 miles of their stations without a re-appraisalment of runs. To do justice to the country there must be re-appraisalment of the western runs, and if the Government did not see proper to do that, and to introduce a comprehensive scheme for the amendment of the land laws generally, they would not have his support, and would not, he believed, have the majority of the House with them. What was required was to make their land laws to suit the immigration which was bound to follow if they were colonists. They were bound to have immigration, and, as the hon. member for Mitchell had said, the squatters must give way; not only must the squatters give way, but the colony must find suitable homes for the immigrants that were introduced, and he trusted they would introduce people who would not be paupers, but would bring money in their pockets, and would be able to put the land to better use than the members for Gregory, Normanby, and he (Mr. Baynes) were doing at the present moment. It was a doubtful question whether a pastoral lease could be made indefeasible—he had strong doubts upon the point, but, seeing the rapidity with which they could legislate on other questions, it was quite possible they could legalise indefeasible leases. He was not aware that the hon. member for Blackall intended bringing forward the motion at the present sitting, otherwise he should have better prepared himself to speak upon it; but he would now conclude, as the member for Gregory was probably anxious to deal with it. He (Mr. Baynes) was sorry to say that he was not so well acquainted with the western country as with the Port Curtis district and other parts of the colony.

Mr. SHEAFFE said this was one of the most important questions brought forward this session, and he thought the House and the country owed the hon. member for Blackall a debt of gratitude for introducing it. He believed an increase of rents in

the western districts would be a very good thing for the country at large. As to indefeasible leases, he did not know whether they could be granted or not, but he believed the pastoral lessees in the outside districts would be quite prepared to pay a higher rental if they got a better tenure. The better security they would then be able to offer to banks or others would enable them to get money cheaper, and they would be in a better position to develop the resources of the country; and in order to assist in paying the cost the country would necessarily be put to in running lines of railway into the interior, he would be very willing to pay an extra rental. Country that was rendered more valuable by railways was able to pay an increased rental. On that account he should support the motion.

Mr. KATES, who was indistinctly heard, was understood to say the Loan Bill having been passed they must look somewhere for money to meet the interest on that loan, and he thought they might have a chance of getting it from the pastoral lessees. At the present time only £160,000 was received from the western runs in the way of rent, and he thought that by giving fixity of tenure they might get at least double, which would go a long way to meet the interest on the loan. The hon. member for Mitchell asked why not give the leaseholders in the settled districts the same privilege as those in the unsettled districts—

Mr. MOREHEAD wished to correct the hon. member. He said he was opposed to indefeasible leases altogether; but, if they gave them to leaseholders in the unsettled districts, why not, then, to those in the settled districts?

Mr. KATES said he was going to point out that the reason was, because in the settled districts the land would be required for agricultural purposes much sooner than in the unsettled districts. He was not in favour of twenty-one years' leases. Had they not passed the extension of the trunk lines into the interior they would have been more justified in granting twenty-one years' leases; but having passed those lines it was very likely they would require the land out there much sooner for settlement. He would not object to granting fourteen years' leases. The hon. member for Blackall had referred to the possibility of goldfields being discovered out there, and, if that happened, so much the better. He had always told his constituents that it would be just as well to give the leaseholders a better tenure than they had at present. They would then be able to improve their stations and to raise money, if they required it, on much better terms. Under these circumstances, he would be inclined to support the motion, provided it could be arranged to get an increased rent.

Mr. RUTLEDGE had listened with great attention to the speech of the hon. member for Blackall, and he must say that it tended in a very great degree to clear away some doubts he had as to the propriety in any case of granting a lengthened term of lease to squatters in the interior. He cordially concurred with what had fallen from the hon. member for Darling Downs as to the unadvisableness of throwing any impediment in the way of the development of these rich lands in the interior, so fitted for pastoral purposes, by refusing to concede a demand which on the face of it was so reasonable as that made by the hon. member for Blackall. He had seen in agricultural districts in New South Wales the very great evil and folly of large-landed proprietors refusing to grant long leases to their tenants. On the Macleay River a very large area of land was owned by one family, who invariably refused to grant lengthened leases, or any lease longer than from year to year, and the consequence was that all along that river there were the most wretched miserable hovels in the shape of residences that could be imagined. The tenants would spend no more than they were absolutely obliged in improvements, and were virtually prohibited from doing what was required to develop the resources of the land. On other rivers, where persons had long leases or were freeholders, there could be seen improvements of every kind springing up, employment on a large scale was given, works of considerable magnitude were undertaken, which would not otherwise be undertaken, and money was circulated; and not only were the occupiers benefited, but also the colony as a whole. He had distinctly stated to his constituents that he would be no party to any legislation that would injuriously affect the squatting interest, and he very much deplored the cry that had been got up and was maintained with acerbity, both inside that House and out of it, between the squatters and other classes of the people. He thought if pastoral lessees in the House would disabuse their minds of the supposition that hon. members on the Opposition benches were opposed to them simply because they were squatters, it would lead to a much better feeling, to more concessions being made, and to more business being done. He should be happy to support the motion provided that such guarantees as were considered desirable were incorporated in the proposed leases, so that it would be in the power of the Government to withdraw any area if necessary, at intervals, for other purposes than those of pastoral occupation. If they could devise some measure of that description as applicable to the outside districts, he was satisfied that it would result in bringing a great deal of capital

to the colony for the purpose of developing this squatting country, and this would give employment for a great deal more labour—in fact, it would tend generally to the benefit of squatters, settlers, and towns; and even though these squatters should be turned into millionaires, they should not grudge it if they themselves participated to some extent in the advantages arising from that liberal legislation.

Mr. STEVENSON said he intended to support the hon. member for Blackall in his resolutions, which were not of a very definite nature, but merely invited an expression of opinion on the part of the House as to whether it was desirable to do certain things or not. He would support them, not because he had the slightest interest in them as a squatter—because if such a measure were passed [he did not think it would benefit squatters very much—but because it would enable squatters who had to borrow money to give a security by which they could borrow at a cheaper rate and go into the English money-market instead of being confined to the Colonial money-market. At the present time all the security a squatter could give was a six months' tenure with a certain number of stock which might die in six or twelve months. English capitalists looked upon that as no security at all, and the only thing squatters could offer at present as security was their stock—their security consisted in their inaccessibility. Of course, when the railways were running out there the inaccessibility would not be so great, and therefore they would require more security or they might not be able to borrow money at all; but if hon. members opposite thought that in the present state of things squatters in the far West would be able to pay much increased rents by being given security of tenure, he could assure them that they were very much mistaken. He believed that the 30th of September would show that there were a good many squatters who were paying plenty already, and he would not be surprised to find that one-third of the country west of the Thompson would be thrown up. He could assure hon. members opposite that squatting was not the rosy game a good many of them fancied it was in these times. He felt certain that at the present time a good many squatters in outside places were losing money instead of making it. He should support the motion now without expressing any opinion as to how he should vote if it were brought forward in a practical form, because he did not believe it would benefit the squatters. If hon. members fancied that squatters wanted it they were very much mistaken. They did not care very much about it. It had been said that their security consisted in their insecurity; that the country was inaccessible at the present time, and until

railways went out there he (Mr. Stevenson) did not think, even if this tenure were granted now, that a very much increased revenue would be derived from an increased rental, merely on account of getting a more secure tenure. He felt perfectly satisfied, especially in the existing state of things, that squatters in the far West were unable, at the present moment, to pay more than they were now paying for their leases; and, as he said before, he believed that the 30th September would show that a great deal of country to the west of the Thompson would be thrown up.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that he was not sure that he ought to speak on this subject at all. He was very anxious to hear the hon. member for Maryborough speak on it, but there did not appear to be much inclination on the other side of the House to discuss it. It was evidently looked upon as an abstract motion that would come to nothing, and he believed that the hon. member who had proposed it was of that opinion himself, and he purposely allowed it to remain until nearly the end of the session merely to get an expression of opinion—in order, perhaps, to enable him to steer his course next session in case any attempt would be made to introduce another land law. It was agreed that some kind of land legislation would be required shortly. Generally speaking, having kindly feelings towards the hon. member for Blackall, it was very painful to him to have to oppose the motion. He would have to oppose such a measure in any shape it was put forward, from old experience. They thought they were doing a very fine thing in passing the Land Act of 1868 to give the pastoral tenant ten years' tenure for half of their runs on condition that the other half would be thrown open to settlement, and they made sure that these halves could not possibly be taken up for settlement before the ten years expired; but they found that some of them were wanted before even five years expired. On that account alone he would oppose closing up any part of the colony in this way. One reason that had been given for going in for the motion was, that at the present time pastoral lessees could not borrow money at easy interest enough to enable them to make improvements on their runs. But, he would ask, was that even the weight of a feather in the balance as against settlement? Did any hon. member believe for a single moment that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) would support the three trunk lines of railway for no other reason than that they would obtain a few thousands more from the pastoral tenants to assist in paying for the grease on the wheels? He would not go any length to support them on that principle, but he supported them on the principle of opening up the country. He should expect, when these

lines were extended 130 miles into the interior, that the land on each side would be thrown open as free as the morning to selection. That was his idea of opening up the country, and it was on that principle he had gone in for these trunk lines. In that view he believed the trunk lines would do immensely more good to the colony at the present time than the branch lines. He wanted to see the colony thrown open to selection, to see surveys made on each side of the lines for miles, and he was satisfied that the country out there would be settled long before the time hinted at by the hon. member for Blackall—from fourteen to twenty years. He was a pretty old man, but he hoped to live to see settlement far beyond this 130 miles, so that in any and every view he must oppose this motion, either abstractly as it was now brought forward, or practically if introduced in the shape of a Bill. The hon. member for Mitchell talked about insecurity of tenure: they had their pleasures and their pains, no doubt, and he thought, on the whole, things were very well with the pastoral tenants of the Crown at the present time. The hon. members for North Brisbane and Moreton had not stated their opinion on the point as lawyers, although the hon. member for Moreton went a long way towards it; but it appeared that under the Act of 1869, the pastoral tenants had the right to free-select one-sixth of the whole colony at 10s. per acre, and that no man in the colony could compete with them. The pastoral tenant could go on any part of his run and pick out one-sixth of his 25 square miles. Last session the hon. member for Moreton seemed very much inclined to think that that was not the law; but it was acted upon at the present time, and if there was any one thing above another that would induce him to give anything in the shape of fixity of tenure it would be as compensation for taking that right to free selection away from the pastoral lessee, and without that condition he would not give it at all. It would be a disgrace to their legislation that any one class in the country should pick out the eyes of the colony by being allowed to select one-sixth of their runs wherever they liked.

Mr. DICKSON said that some short time ago when he addressed the House he described the present motion of the hon. member for Blackall as one of the most important matters of the session, and expressed his belief that the hon. member had not tabled such a motion until after due consultation with the Government; the hon. member corrected him in that statement, and denied that he had consulted the Government in any way. But what was he (Mr. Dickson) to think that evening, after the hon. member had introduced the motion in his usual clear

and lucid way, when not one single member of the Cabinet had arisen to speak upon it? He (Mr. Dickson) must express his surprise that on a motion, an abstract one it might be, but still one involving matters of great moment, not a member of the Cabinet had addressed himself to the question, so as to place before the House the opinion of the Government on the matter. He thought it was the duty of the Government to let the country know what their views were on such an important matter; perhaps they were merely waiting to see what the opinion of the House was, so that it might guide them in the ensuing session. It was well known that nothing was likely to be attempted this session, even if the motion of the hon. member had been more favourably received than it had been; but it was the duty of Government to let the country know what their views were on the subject of giving extended tenure to pastoral tenants. This was not a question to be solely debated by the pastoral tenants themselves: every member of the House who had had his attention directed to our present financial embarrassments must regard such a question as one of the gravest importance. He did not intend, himself, to go into the question fully now, as the mover of the resolution had not informed the House what he considered to be an indefeasible lease, or in what way he wished the pastoral tenure to be improved; therefore, if he (Mr. Dickson) were to enter into a discussion on the subject he would be merely fighting a shadow. One thing, however, was very obvious to his mind from the whole tenour of the debate that evening—namely, that the pastoral tenants of the Crown were much riper for increased taxation than had been represented in the House, and that feature should not be lost sight of in the future, when they had to look for further means of increasing their revenue. He had been surprised to hear the remarks made by members representing pastoral districts, as to the country with which they were acquainted being nearly denuded of stock, and that it was likely to return into its primeval condition. If those statements had been made before the Loan Estimates were under consideration, and when the three trunk lines were being advocated by the Premier, it might have been of some benefit to the country. He had chiefly risen, however, to state that the Government ought to let the country see what were their views on this question, definitely and unmistakably. The Colonial Secretary in a previous debate ridiculed the idea of any leases being indefeasible; but the character of the resolution might alter materially the views of the hon. gentleman, and therefore it would be satisfactory to the country to know that this motion had

been gravely considered by the Government, and to learn their views upon it. He would take that opportunity of correcting a statement which had inadvertently crept into the report of the remarks he made on the previous evening, as he should not like it to go forth to the country that he was such an opponent of pastoral interests as would be inferred if the statement was left uncontradicted. He was reported to have said that he believed the financial position of the country was such that the Government would be quite justified in levying a tax "on the acreage occupied by squatters." He was sorry that such a statement should go forth to the country as made by him: what he advocated was a tax on acreage generally, and not one confined to acreage occupied by the pastoral tenants only.

Mr. HILL said the hon. member who had just sat down had tried to draw from the Ministry their views on this question, but had not favoured the House with his own views. The hon. member said that in expressing his views he would be simply fighting against a shadow, therefore the Ministry would be fighting against a shadow also. The hon. member for Blackall stated that he had not consulted the Ministry on his resolution, neither had he consulted the squatting members of the House, but had brought it forward as an independent member on his own account. He (Mr. Hill) certainly had not been consulted, and, in fact, he had not made up his mind whether he should support the resolution or not. He was very glad to hear it discussed, although, being introduced so late in the session, the time spent in discussing it would be almost wasted. With regard to what the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) stated, that settlement in the far West was likely to retrograde, that statement was made by him (Mr. Hill) months ago, before the Loan Estimates were brought in at all; first of all, as early as January, and later in May or June. No one was much better acquainted with the position of the squatters in the far West than he was himself, and he knew that under the fearful difficulties they had to contend with in the shape of bad seasons and want of access and of carriage they could not live, and much less bear any additional burden. The railway might keep them going, as he believed that a large portion of the country now used for cattle might be then turned into wool-growing country. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) about the concession which permitted the squatters to select one-sixth of their whole runs, he might state that that was simply held out as an inducement to squatters to take up the country; but notwithstanding that settlement had now gone on so fast, it was

not so valuable a concession, in fact, as the hon. member supposed; and, for his part, the Government should think themselves lucky if ever they got 10s. an acre cash within the next ten or fifteen years in that district. As for having entertained the idea mentioned by the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge), that the whole of the Opposition were animated by one rabid anti-squatting feeling, he (Mr. Hill) knew that, although there might be a few holding extreme opinions, there were others who were favourable to having this matter considered and discussed on its real merits. There was no class of men in the country who were so heavily oppressed and burdened as the squatters. The hon. member for Stanley stated that facilities for giving security so as to induce capital to come into the country was a matter of very little consideration, and he would throw it to the wind; but he (Mr. Hill) considered they wanted capital as much as population, as if they got capital they would have population fast enough. There was one great fault he had always found with the Liberal party—namely, that instead of inducing capital to come into the country, they looked upon men coming with money as a description of intruders. His opinion was that if they had capital they would soon have population.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said that, before the introducer of the motion was heard in reply, he would state that the reason why the Government had not spoken on the question was that it was an abstract question. He had over and over again stated that there was no such thing as an indefeasible lease; and if there was such a thing, he, as a member of the Government, would oppose it to the last. He had no idea of the country being given up to one class of persons under indefeasible leases; but, as he had said, he did not believe that there was such a thing, or that even a freehold was an indefeasible title. The hon. member for Blackall had brought forward the motion with a view of ascertaining the opinion of the House; but if he had consulted him (Mr. Palmer) he would have told him that bringing it forward in the way in which he had done would be of no practical use whatever, as it was an abstract question about which no member on either side of the House cared, and the debate had shown that members did not care to enter into it. If the hon. member wished to get an expression of opinion, the only plan was for him to introduce a Bill embodying his ideas on the subject. He quite agreed with the hon. member that it would be desirable that the pastoral tenants should have some better tenure than they now had, which in some cases was only six months, and in others not even that, as their lands might be resumed without any notice. He had

himself always been of opinion that the squatters' right to the grass must give way to permanent settlement. He had stated that opinion in New South Wales many years ago, when it was almost a case of tarring and feathering for a man to say such a thing; but he had always done so, as it had always been his opinion that the squatters were bound to give way. As he had already said, he did not believe that there was such a thing as an indefeasible lease and he had asked the hon. member for Moreton to define what that lease was, and had stated that he did not believe the hon. member could do so any more than the hon. member for Brisbane could define what "residence" meant. With the second part of the resolution—that in carrying out any re-arrangement of leases it would be necessary to make careful provision for reserving such lands as might be wanted for selection—he quite agreed; but if the first part of the motion was carried he did not know how the resolutions would be practicable or could be carried out. Supposing the first was carried it would not be possible for the Government to make a re-arrangement, as no Government could tell in what direction the tide of settlement would spread, and the very part that was rented might be the part to which the tide of settlement set: altogether it would be impracticable to carry out such an arrangement. He had never discovered the value of a resolution like that before the House; and if the hon. member wished to carry out his ideas, his best plan would be to introduce a Bill embodying them, and he would then have an expression of opinion on them. On an abstract question of this sort it was impossible to get a genuine expression of opinion.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said he had been wondering for some time whether the Government would express an opinion on the resolutions, which referred to a matter of considerable importance. It was not an unusual thing for a question of that importance to be brought forward by a private member, even although it was an abstract question. He had listened to the speech of the Colonial Secretary, and he must say that very little light had been derived from it as to the views of the Government on the subject. His (Mr. Griffith's) own opinion was that at the present time the mode in which the pastoral lands in the more remote interior were utilised was very unsatisfactory, as he believed they were not used to their full capabilities. Comparing the number of sheep in this colony with those in New South Wales—he did not profess to be personally acquainted with the relative value of the land for pastoral purposes in the two colonies, although he had heard, from good authorities, that there was just as good here as in New South Wales—

comparing the number, he found that the colony of New South Wales carried just three times as many.

MR. MOREHEAD: That is because so much of the country is inaccessible.

MR. GRIFFITH said that was one reason, but steps had been taken during the present session to make it more accessible. He considered the lands should be made more productive in a double sense—first in producing more sheep, and secondly in bringing in much larger rents to the State. He was quite certain that some change of the kind would have to be made before long. He might add that he did not think it was necessary for that purpose to grant indefeasible leases, as proposed by the motion of the hon. member for Blackall. There was nothing in the nature of our laws to forbid an indefeasible lease, which meant a lease for a term of years that could not be taken from a man without making him full compensation; but he did not think it would be necessary to go so far as that. He would not point out precisely the way in which increased rents should be obtained, but he believed that that would have to be done.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS had hoped to have heard a fuller discussion, because though the actual form of the resolution was indefinite, there was a pretty unanimous opinion against indefeasible leases, or leases not subject to some proviso which would really constitute them defeasible. It was an important subject, and he had hoped to have heard something from the Premier on the question, after the hon. member who brought it under the notice of the House had spoken. That hon. member was known to be well informed on it; it had frequently been brought under their observation, lately, as one of the questions of the future, for it was from the pastoral rents that they must acquire that increased revenue the necessity for which now stared them in the face. The hon. the Premier was probably animated by somewhat the same feelings as the hon. member for Blackall, who described the case as being one which necessitated the patriotism of any Ministry who dealt with the subject. He spoke of it as probably involving the downfall of any Ministry which took it up; and it would probably lead to the breaking up of their combination. It would be asking too much to expect to receive from the Ministry, under these circumstances, any definite announcement of their policy in this direction at present. They were, at the same time, indebted to the hon. member for breaking ground which would lead to further discussion both in the House and in the Press. The public mind was at present very insufficiently informed, and during the next few months it was just one of those matters which ought to be very carefully thought out, more

particularly as it was in this direction they must look for the increased revenue to meet the interest on their indebtedness. The hon. member (Mr. Archer) stated he was anxious, as they all might be, to develop the country, and pointed out that it was not being done because the tenure was insufficient in that country which had in the past contributed so much to the wealth of the colony. He differed with the hon. member there: it would be very difficult to substitute a better tenure than they had. The tenure they had now was absolutely indefeasible, as far as grazing or pastoral rights were concerned, for thirty-five years, as long as the stipulated and gradually increasing rent was paid. With that was coupled the right to purchase up to 2,560 acres of the land leased. Compensation also for improvements was secured, and fencing even was protected. In addition to the grazing right the pastoral tenant had undisputed possession for thirty-five years, subject to the paramount rights of Government to withdraw certain portions of the leasehold, but only for purposes of sale. For grazing purposes, then, there was not much to complain of, coupled as those rights were with the right of pre-emption. Now, what harm had pastoral tenants suffered from resumption, except in so far as the colony had reserved to itself the right of selling the land to any person who found it would pay him to settle on it? That right they could not part with. When they considered the vast area they were dealing with, that the area leased in the unsettled districts to which the hon. member's motion referred comprised something like 250,000,000 acres, and that out of the whole colony only 5,000,000 acres had been alienated, or conditionally alienated, he could not see wherein the insecurity of tenure under the present law consisted. The hon. member had said that the tenure was so uncertain that if he wanted to borrow money he had to go to middle-men to get it. Though it might be difficult to borrow money, it was not a substantial ground for the assertion that the tenure was insecure: it was good for pastoral purposes. The hon. member's contention, however, was, that even that insecurity which made him go to the middle-man should be done away with by offering a permanent tenure. The real fact was that security had little to do with selling rates. The prospects of immediate profit were not good, and therefore the security was at present depreciated. They had an inherent right to revise their laws on pastoral tenure; but the Legislature before doing so must have good grounds for it. He doubted whether any change in the direction indicated was desired, and it would be foolish for the pastoral tenants to push their claim to any extreme, for, after all, the graziers themselves, in

comparison with the actual area sold and to be sold, or which might be alienated in the next few years, had, in his opinion, an admirable tenure. The people should not shut out from themselves the right to sell land when it was necessary to sell it; for therein consisted their only chance of increasing the revenue, which they all knew must be increased. The hon. member had also referred to the undesirability of locking up large sums of money, representing the capital of the colony, in land, and he (Mr. Douglas) admitted with him that money might be better invested than in that way; but, though that was so, it was no reason why they should deprive themselves of the right to sell land to people coming to the country and who would settle in it. What reason had been given to show why they should not induce foreign capitalists to buy land? A little had been done in this respect, but still he was not anxious to lock up money which might be used for industrial purposes. He was certain, also, that there were moneyed people yet in the old country and in the neighbouring colonies who would be willing to buy our lands and put them to good use, if they could acquire them on anything approaching advantageous terms. Therein lay the saving-point of our present law—the power to induce the people to come to the colony and take up the western country on a different tenure from that on which it was at present held. If in the next ten years they sold as much land as they had done during the last twenty, it would be a flea-bite compared with the vast area they had at their disposal. Much had been said about the land sold by auction in the Maranoa district;—well, all the land sold in that district did not amount to half-a-million acres, while the grazing area of the district was something like eleven millions of acres. The hon. gentleman need not feel alarmed at the prospect of the land-buyer invading the territory of the pastoralist. The grazier, with his tenure of, altogether, thirty-five years, had very little to fear from the inroads of the land purchaser, especially as he had a right to pre-empt 2,560 acres of land for improvements made on every run he held. That right, he contended, was only a permissive right. The Governor in Council was empowered to sell, but it was equally lawful for him to refuse to sell, although the practice had invariably been to accept the proposals made for the purchase of those pre-emptions. No doubt, land had often been bought that did not include permanent improvements, but the exercise of the system had been on the whole advantageous. The purchaser of a pre-emptive gave better security than the mere grazier that he was a permanent occupier of the country. The hon. gentleman had referred to some comments he (Mr. Douglas)

had made with regard to the working of the land laws in New South Wales, and inferred from it that he (Mr. Douglas) did not desire to see money locked up in land here in the same way as it was in that colony. What he had said on that subject did not refer to the fact that a large amount of money had been expended in the purchase of land—which he did not look upon as a bad thing—but that there had been a large amount expended on conditional purchases where insufficient value had been obtained to cover the conditions. Although that had resulted in confusion, it was the fault, not of the land laws, but of defective administration, and this colony might well avoid the evils that had befallen the adjoining colony in its land administration. So convinced was he on this point that he had come to entertain a feeling of dislike towards those elaborate conditions, which were so often set aside, and believed it would be far better for the colony to secure absolute alienation of land without conditions. The system of conditions, under the most watchful of Administrations, was fraught with great evils, and in practice was frequently set aside. For those reasons he had not lately looked upon the land laws of New South Wales with any large amount of admiration. Under their present tenure, the position of the pastoral leaseholders was not so very bad after all, but the State could not forego the right of selling the land whenever it was required; and if they would make their railways pay, the Government must have the power of selling the land to those who would improve it. For that reason great difficulties would arise out of any attempt to shut up the leasehold land for an indefinite number of years. The real squatter, so long as he was allowed to graze, had all he wanted; and that he had under the present law. But the grazier must not be allowed to keep out men who would go there for other purposes, or as more permanent holders; and they ought by all means to encourage the introduction of new blood for the purpose of improving the country and increasing the population. Committed as the colony was to a large system of public works, additional revenue must inevitably be found in some form or other; and the country would have to fall back upon the public estate for that purpose. A good deal had been said about the possibility of a land tax. No Government would inflict a land tax if it could be avoided; but it might become necessary to impose a tax upon freehold, and even upon leasehold, without touching the present tenure at so much per acre or per square mile. If the Legislature had the power, as it undoubtedly had, to impose a land-tax on freehold, why not, also, on leasehold property? Property, in fact, must

be made to bear the burden of increased taxation, if expenditure had been incurred for the improvement of that property. Those things must be looked upon as possibilities in the future. No one wished to injure the pastoral lessees, for with their prosperity was bound up the prosperity of the colony; but he was anxious to secure ample access to their leaseholds, so that, if the necessities of the State became such that additional revenue must be found, they could be made to bear their fair share of the burden.

Mr. ARCHER, in reply, said he would first refer to the speech of the hon. member (Mr. Douglas), who had spoken as if he felt an interest in the question, and that was a compliment which none of the other speakers had paid him. The hon. member had compared the quantity of land sold with the total available land of the colony, in order to show that within the next ten or twelve years twenty millions of acres would be wanted for sale and settlement in the West. But such a quantity would not be wanted there, even if the population amounted to a million; and in any case the quantity wanted in the West would be small as compared with the quantity wanted in the other parts of the colony. It would be quite feasible, before granting indefeasible leases, to set apart a sufficient quantity of land for sale and selection: but that was a matter of detail on which he would not enter. The hon. gentleman had mentioned 200 millions of acres as the area of the unsettled districts, and said that in the whole of Queensland only five millions of acres had been sold. Taking this as a basis, and bearing in mind that not a quarter of the land in the settled districts had been selected, it would not be a difficult problem to find out how much would be wanted in the unsettled districts during the next twenty-one years; and then an indefeasible lease might be granted for the part that was not wanted. If, as a squatter, he (Mr. Archer) were offered an indefeasible lease for a run in which he had an interest, on the condition that all other squatters would get the same privilege, he should object to it, knowing that such a measure would defeat its own object. It would raise such a cry of indignation that no Government would be able to prevent the people from asking for what was their right—land for settlement when they wanted it. That was simply a matter to be taken into consideration by the person drawing up the Bill, and was not a difficulty that could not be overcome by legislation. The hon. gentleman asked what benefit would result? To that he would reply that it would not give greater security to the graziers than they had now, but it would be an immense benefit in inducing people holding land on worse conditions in other places to take up land here. The

hon. gentleman had mistaken him when he spoke of locking-up capital. He had no objection to land being sold to foreign capitalists, but he considered it was a misfortune for Queensland with her very small capital available for other purposes to lock up money in land. He believed that most of those who had collected large estates would have done much better had they simply employed their money as graziers, and not as landowners. If foreign capitalists could be induced to invest in land here he should be very glad. The idea of land near to present and future railway lines not being thrown open was perfectly absurd, and no one would dream of proposing such a thing. He still believed that if indefeasible leases were granted for such portions of runs as would not be wanted for public purposes foreign capital would be attracted, and the colony would be enriched by the extra rents. As he had been accused of being the fifth Minister, he had almost expected to have been honoured with the views of the Premier on this question; but his silence would effectually prevent hon. members in future from saying that he (Mr. Archer) was the fifth Minister who was forging future measures for the Government. The truth, he was sorry to say, was that neither the Government nor hon. members opposite were yet educated up to this question. A great deal required to be talked and written upon the subject to let the idea into the dull brains of those who did not agree with him. He was astonished at the way the Colonial Secretary approached the question. In the first place, that hon. member doubted the possibility of granting indefeasible leases; but, according to the hon. member for North Brisbane, and in his own opinion, there was no doubt on that point. If the Government granted such a lease they could no more take it away than they could take a man's private estate without giving compensation. To expect, therefore, indefeasible leases to be granted for runs in the West, without reservations having been made, would be absurd. One of the most ridiculous objections made was that the motion was vague: it was purposely so. The object was to ascertain whether the House agreed with the proposition that it was right to grant indefeasible leases. Had they said "Yes," there would have been a basis for future legislation; and they might say "No" just as well on a vague question as a decided one. As most of the hon. members who had spoken had said "No," it was evident that there was no basis for legislation as the House was at present constituted, and that public opinion was not prepared for the question. The Colonial Secretary said if he (Mr. Archer) brought in a Bill he might ascertain the feeling of the House; but the hon. gentleman might as well advise him to

make himself Premier and Minister for Lands at once. What shouts of derision there would be at the idea of a private member bringing in a Bill to grant freeholds to the squatters out West! He presumed that was meant for a bit of chaff; but, if not, it was about the feeblest, and certainly the most absurd, thing the hon. gentleman had spoken in the House. He was not at all cast down by the fact of the motion not meeting with general approval, but he was not going to be such a fool as to introduce a Bill. The hon. member for Port Curtis appeared to be disappointed because the settled districts were not included; but he did not think it would be either right or possible to grant such leases in the settled district. It had been shown by the number of halves of runs that had been sold that there was a certain demand for land in those districts, and as soon as prosperous times came again selection would begin afresh; and a proposal to lock up land near to a large population was almost as bad as throwing open the best land where there was no one at present to select. There was therefore no chance of securing anything like permanent leases for runs on the coast. If anything could be done to improve the position of the men owning those runs he should be only too happy to assist, but a proposal to grant indefeasible leases could not meet with approval. The objection that the motion had been brought too late in the session might be coupled with the objection that it was vague. Did an hon. member suppose that if the motion had been brought forward on the first day of the session, even, any legislation could have taken place during the session? Of all possible land Bills such a measure as would be necessary would present most difficulties, and to ask anyone to produce such a Bill within a few weeks would be quite out of the question. The motion was introduced to obtain an opinion from the House; that opinion being adverse, the matter fell to the ground. Another objection was that people would keep their old leases until a railway was projected, and then get an indefeasible lease; but any Minister for Lands who gave them such a choice would be a greater fool than any who had held office yet. The lessee would have to elect which lease he would have, and then stick to it. He believed what he had proposed would be an immense advantage to the colony. He had considered the matter as much as any member of the House; and, if the House was not educated up to his standard, he could not help it. As it was perfectly clear that the feeling of the House would not justify any Ministry in passing such a measure, he would, with the permission of the House, withdraw the motion.

Mr. NORTON, in explanation, said he had not expressed a wish that coast runs should

be included. He contended that the terms of the leases of those runs should be extended beyond the five years, and that the rental should be proportioned to the carrying capacities of the runs; but he had no wish to interfere with selection.

Motion, with permission of the House, withdrawn.

SOUTH BRISBANE RAILWAY.

Mr. MESTON, in moving—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider of an Address to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on the Loan Estimates a sum of £50,000 for the construction of a Line of Railway from Oxley to South Brisbane—

said he was one of those who had regretted that a line from Oxley to South Brisbane was not among the proposed works appearing on the Loan Estimates, because it would have been one of the most justifiable lines, and its justification had been admitted by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, in replying to a deputation. Various surveys of this line had been made from time to time. The first was by Fitzgibbon, in 1866. The second was by Thorneloe Smith, 1870. At that time the intention was to bring the Southern and Western line to deep water at South Brisbane instead of bringing it to North Brisbane by the present route. There was no intention of altering the original route until 1873, when it was decided to build on the north side. In the report which he held in his hand, he found that the Premier, in answer to a question as to whether he would state any reason why the line was brought down on the north instead of the south side, said that he considered the south side should have been the terminus, both from an engineering and commercial point of view, and that a mistake was made in bringing it down the north side. There was no question a mistake was made in bringing the railway down on the north instead of the south side. Various estimates had been prepared as to the cost of construction of the line that he now advocated, the highest being by Mr. Stanley in 1873—£9,902 per mile. Mr. Thorneloe Smith prepared an estimate in 1876 at £9,500 per mile, with gradients of 1 in 80. In 1870 there was an estimate made at £7,200 per mile, with gradients of 1 in 60. There was also an estimate at £6,300 per mile, with gradients of 1 in 50. The Premier, also, in reply to an inquiry as to whether he was able to give any information as to the advisability of constructing a branch from the present terminus to Bulimba, with a view to connecting railway communication with deep water, said he thought the advantages to be gained by getting to the river by that route were nothing compared with the cost of making it, and that with the present

traffic it would be an absurdity. He did not know whether Government intended, in connection with a railway to Sandgate, to run a branch to Bulimba, but he would leave the Bulimba line out of the question as thoroughly unfitted for the requirements of the future. One of the chief objections to the South Brisbane line, as urged by persons opposed to it, was that it was liable to be flooded; but the same objections might be urged against several parts of the Southern and Western Railway. Only the other day they heard of parts of the line past Dalby being washed away. He did not think that any part of the Oxley-to-South-Brisbane line would be washed away. He believed that Mr. Stanley's estimate was made on the supposition that the line would have to be made at a high level, so that there might be no danger of its being flooded. Supposing, however, it were flooded, at the most there could only be a cessation of traffic for a day or two. He did not see why the line could not be constructed for £4,000 or £5,000 per mile, and was of opinion, also, that the Government property in South Brisbane might be sufficient to cover the entire cost of construction. He found that the Government land had street frontage of 5,454 feet, and wharf frontage of 2,510 feet, giving a total of 7,964 feet, which, if only sold at £6 per foot, would realise £47,784. £6 per foot he believed to be a reasonable estimate, for if the line were constructed the land would, of course, realise very much more than it would now do. He believed, also, that the rental of the dry-dock alone would amount to something like the interest on the cost of construction. He held in his hand a letter from Mr. William Coote, stating, in reference to his inquiry as to the cost of the line, that Messrs. Overend would build it on the average section for £4,500 per mile, and that he had heard that a leading engineering firm were willing to give for the use of the dry-dock a yearly rent much more than the interest upon the cost. He believed the reason the line was not included in the Loan Estimates was, because the Premier was under the impression that there was not a sufficient quantity of marketable coal available to justify the construction of a railway which was chiefly intended for an export trade in coal; but there could be no longer any question as to the quality or quantity of the West Moreton coal. The whole district was a vast coal-bed, and as to the quality of the coal they had the evidence of engineers and firemen that for steam purposes it was equal to any Newcastle coal. He could also furnish the testimony of managers of three gas companies, that for gas purposes the coal of one of the West Moreton mines was the best in Australia, and equal to any coal that was

known. If a railway were constructed to deep-water, Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide would receive coal from this district. Week after week flour-ships from South Australia went away in ballast to load coals at Newcastle, while they had mines here whose development was entirely checked because there were not sufficient facilities to get coal down to deep-water. To send it down by rail by the present route was out of the question, and to forward it by punts took too long. Without a line to deep-water an export trade in coal was out of the question. The Premier had said that if the coal was in the district the line was as justifiable as any on the Estimates. He (Mr. Meston) had satisfactorily shown, he thought, that the coal was there in quantity and quality; and the excuse for not undertaking the work, therefore, existed no longer. It would be needless to expatiate upon the benefits that would flow from an export trade in coal. They wanted capital in the country, and there was no trade—excepting, perhaps, wool—which would realise more capital than coal. They knew how Newcastle had sprung into existence through it, and that if its coal trade died out that town would cease to exist. No industry would give more employment to labour than coal. The line could be regarded in no other sense than a national one; for, although it was chiefly required for the development of the coal trade, it would be useful for the export of agricultural and other produce, of which they had, unfortunately, too little to export at present. What was wanted was a suitable export trade, which would lead to the establishment of industries throughout the colony, give employment to labour, and find a market for the produce of their farmers. Taking into consideration that this line would develop such a trade, and considering also Messrs. Overend's offer, he thought there was ample justification for undertaking the work. It might be said that the land would cost more than the line, but he believed that all could be bought for £2,000 or £3,000. He sincerely hoped that hon. members would look at the matter impartially and dispassionately. He had no intention of embarrassing the Government, and was satisfied that if the House affirmed the desirability of constructing the line, the Colonial Treasurer would see his way to make provision for it.

The PREMIER said the hon. member must be congratulated upon having made out a good case for this line of railway; but the Government must oppose the motion for a reason that must be very apparent. They had motions of a similar character on the business paper, and notices of others to be brought forward before the session closed, involving a total sum of £2,429,000.

The motions now before the House amounted to something like a million and a-half of money, and they would very soon make up a supplementary estimate of two millions. He would also point out that the motion as it stood could not be carried into effect. The Loan Estimates were passed, and the only way to provide for this line would be to put it on a supplementary loan estimate. With regard to the line itself, there was no doubt about its importance. He looked upon it simply as a matter of time when this line would be constructed, and he was satisfied that it would be constructed before long. The only drawback to the line, and the reason why it had not occupied a more prominent position before the House, had been, as he had always stated, the quality of the coal prepared for export; but that, he was glad to say, was gradually being removed. He believed that coal was now being raised, although it had not gone much into the market, which would result in a large export trade from this port. That removed the only defect in the argument in favour of this line, which was the first that ought to be constructed, with the exception of a line to the Logan, which ought to occupy the premier position, and this should occupy the next. He did not mean to compare the different propositions as to the route the line should take to deep-water. His own settled conviction, having examined all the different routes that had been proposed, was that it should come down to South Brisbane. He had held that opinion all along; but, for the reasons he had given, it was impossible for the Government to undertake the work this session; and he hoped the hon. member would see his way not to embarrass the Government by pressing to a division a motion of this kind on a private members' night.

Mr. KINGSFORD said, after the able speech of the hon. member for Rosewood (Mr. Meston), it was hardly necessary for him to say anything, more especially after the satisfactory remarks of the Colonial Treasurer. He thought they might now rest satisfied that when the right time came—and it would not be long—the Government would see their way to construct a railway from South Brisbane to Oxley. For his part, as a representative of the south side, he felt very much gratified, and thanked the hon. gentleman for the encouragement he had given to the advocates of this line. There had been very little encouragement in the past, but he thought they could now see a little light not far distant, and that by a little more perseverance and patience, before long the people on the south side would be gratified by having the advantage of a railway connecting them with the main line. It would be something to feel gratified about if among the many applications for railway

lines, and the large amount of money that would be required to construct them, the insignificant south side should secure a fair share, although only a small share. He could only say that on the south side there were resources in the shape of coal which would tend as much to the future greatness of Queensland as the coal in the old country gave England her great superiority over other nations; and, repudiating any rivalry with other proposed lines, he thought it might be safely said that there was not one that claimed greater attention on the part of the Government than the one now under discussion. He need not say more, but would simply promise the Government that, so long as he had a seat in that House as one of the representatives of the south side, he would give them no rest until the pledge, almost, that had been given to-night was carried out and this line was constructed.

Mr. HENDREN said year after year an extension of the Southern and Western line from Oxley to South Brisbane had been promised, and, although they should cast no imputation upon the promise of the Treasurer, still it was very strange that this small line of seven miles was not included in the Loan Estimates. They had £50,000 on the Loan Estimates for the Burrum line; and, as it appeared from the language of the Treasurer that that money would not be required, as the line would be carried out by private enterprise, he should be glad if by some means that £50,000 could be transferred to the line to South Brisbane;—it would be more than sufficient for the construction of that line and, he believed, rolling-stock. As to the quantity of coal being produced, he could say it was increasing every month, and that one mine alone was capable of turning out 500 tons per week, and it was of excellent quality. As the hon. member for Rosewood said, this was a national work involving the interests of the whole colony. Although it would benefit South Brisbane it would also benefit the whole colony, and more especially the western interior, and the traffic would not consist merely of coal, but also of all the wool and other produce of the western districts. He entirely approved of the manner in which the motion had been brought forward, and although the amount could not be placed on the Loan Estimates, he hoped it would be placed on the Supplementary Estimates.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said the Treasurer evidently did not wish the mover of the motion to be downcast as to the result of it; but at the same time he said the Loan Estimates had been passed, and that there were motions tabled for railway lines to the extent of a million and a-half of money. But that was no argument why a line like this should be neglected. He believed that this line above

all others was the one that would pay the greatest amount of interest on the cost of construction. The trade was already there, and this line would still further develop it, and there was no doubt that it should have preference over all others. The hon. member (Mr. Kingsford) appeared to be thankful for small mercies, and to think that the promise of the Premier threw a little light on the matter, and that in a few years they would have this line; but he forgot that the loan just passed was to extend over three or four years, so that there was not much likelihood of its being passed during that time. However, in the event of anything arising necessitating any of the lines passed not being made, he hoped the money would be devoted to the construction of this line.

Mr. BEATTIE believed that where it was possible to construct railways that would be reproductive they would be justified in constructing them, and he was not going to say that it would not be justifiable to construct a line between Oxley and South Brisbane. There would be large suburban traffic; but at the same time he differed from the hon. members who were always talking with reference to the coal trade to South Brisbane. He was perfectly certain that if a line was made to South Brisbane for the coal trade only it would not pay for greasing the wheels, let alone the interest on the outlay. Knowing well that that would be a most expensive line to construct, and seeing that his opinion in regard to a line being taken to Bulimba instead was borne out by the Engineer-in-Chief, he considered that if a line was necessary for the coal trade alone it should go to Bulimba. He believed that the locality mentioned by hon. members who had spoken about the shipment of coal was totally inadequate as to the wharfage accommodation that would be required—it would have to be made by excavation, which could not be done without a great deal of money. At the place he mentioned there would not only be deep water, but ground naturally formed for wharf purposes, so that the expense of shipment would be very much reduced. He was also satisfied that arrangements could be made with the owner of the land by the Government for the purchase of it, which would very slightly increase the expense of the construction of the line. It had been said that there was an immense trade in coal to be opened up, but he doubted it very much, as taking all the coal that had been shipped for the last twelve months it would not pay the cost of one mile of railway. Again, it was all very well to talk about giving facilities to the mines on the south side of the river, but why should the mines on the north side be neglected as they would be by the proposed line to South Brisbane? Whereas if a line was constructed to Bulimba, with a short loop-line from Bun-

danba, they would get all the accommodation with a saving of expenditure—that was, presuming the line was extended only for coal purposes. If it was intended for suburban passenger traffic also, and was taken to Woolongabba, it would have the station just outside of the town, and there would be the same complaint that now existed in regard to the present terminus. A sum was placed on the Loan Estimates for a line from Brisbane to Sandgate, and, if that was constructed from a point mentioned by the Engineer-in-Chief, it would not be more than a mile and three-quarters to the place he had spoken of at Bulimba where there was deep water. The Engineer-in-Chief, when examined before the Royal Commission on the extension of the Southern and Western Railway to navigable water, said, in answer to questions, that he was in favour of the Bulimba line, as he considered it was the natural outlet from the existing line and the most economical and convenient way of extending the present line to deep-water. On being asked what he meant by natural outlet, Mr. Stanley said that it was a natural extension and not a branch line: whereas, in the case of the South Brisbane line, it would be an independent branch, necessitating special locomotive power and involving many of the expenses of a terminal station. He (Mr. Beattie) calculated that the extension from the proposed Sandgate line to Bulimba would cost at the extreme £20,000, even with the purchase of land, and would afford all the facilities for the shipment of coal, if that trade existed. The coal trade was simply an experiment so far, as they had to get a market for their coal. They had not been successful hitherto, although some had been shipped to the East and had paid fair freights. The want of success was due to a great extent to the rubbish which had been sent by owners, as in the few cases where it had been well selected the coal had fetched good prices—he believed that some sent to Hongkong brought as much as 3*ls.* 6*d.* a ton, whilst some sent to Oregon was sold at the same price as Welsh coal. In regard to handling coal, that was another point in favour of Bulimba, as an inexpensive hydraulic lift could be substituted there for shoots. His remarks had been confined to a coal line, and he believed that by adopting the Bulimba route there would be a saving of at least one-fifth of the expense.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he was in favour of the motion, and about ten days ago had intended to put a motion on the paper for £150,000 to be devoted to these lines of which this was one. The other two were the extension from Highfield to Crow's Nest—about twelve miles, and which would make the present line of some use—and the line to the Upper Logan. He was glad to

hear the Premier say that these were lines which must soon be undertaken, and that after the Logan line this one would be taken. He did not concur in the remarks of the hon. member for Ipswich, who argued that they would have no more loans for three years. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) would be inclined to borrow money in the English market whenever they could get it on reasonable terms, and if the last loan had been for ten millions he would have supported it. Young colonies must borrow money, and he felt quite satisfied that there would be more money borrowed before three years were out. In reference to some remarks of an hon. member (Mr. Beattie), the same appliances which he had advocated for Bulimba would apply equally well to South Brisbane. The hon. member who brought forward the motion should be satisfied with the results he had obtained, and not press it, especially after what the Premier had said—that whenever further works were authorised this would be the second line, and would be only inferior in point of time to the line to the Upper Logan. Something had been said about the mismanagement of the coal trade, but that was not extraordinary. New industries generally were mismanaged at first, but there was no doubt that a sufficient quantity of coal could now be put out and disposed of to keep the line in constant traffic all through the year. It did not say much for the port of Brisbane that there were not vessels enough in the harbour to take the coal which would pass over the railway. The deficiency, however, was not to be traced to the coal, but to the mismanagement at the wharves and to the expensiveness of the port, few shipmasters who came to Brisbane ever desiring to come back again.

Mr. MESTON, in reply, felt greatly satisfied in the favourable expression of opinion which had been given, the only hon. member who had spoken against the motion being the hon. member for Fortitude Valley. But, although the Premier had congratulated him (Mr. Meston) on having brought on the subject without any reference to Confucius or Democritus, he could not help referring to a remark of Cicero's which would apply to the hon. member (Mr. Beattie)—that party faction and man's regard for private interests always had impeded, and would continue to impede, public business. Had the hon. member lived in South Brisbane he would have supported the motion; but, as it was, his opinions were guided by the position he occupied. The reply of the Premier would have been a little more satisfactory if he had given some definite information as to a probable loan next year; but, after the favourable expression of opinion by the House, he begged leave to withdraw the motion.

Withdrawn accordingly.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. GARRICK said that in some remarks he made at the previous sitting he had been incorrectly reported in *Hansard*. As far as he was personally concerned, he had usually to commend the reporters rather than grumble at them; but it was necessary he should make this correction. It appeared in *Hansard* that—

"Mr. GARRICK, whose remarks were almost entirely inaudible in the gallery, was understood to agree that a classification of land might be carried out, and that it was important that improvements should be taxed."

That was the very opposite of what he said. He did say that there should be a tax on land, and that land should be classified; but he expressly stated there should be no tax on improvements.

GOOTCHY TO GAYNDAH RAILWAY.

Mr. BAILEY moved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider of an address to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on the Supplementary Loan Estimates a sum of £100,000 for the construction of the line from Gootchy, *via* Kilkivan, towards Gayndah.

He said that the only way in which they could obtain *bond fide* revenue was not by increasing the taxation of the people now in the colony, but by increasing their power of developing their resources by the employment of a large population. The motion was calculated to open up very extensive resources within a short distance of the coast and the metropolis, and those resources would cause the employment of many thousands of men. Those resources were only now undeveloped on account of the difficulties in the way of carriage. He proposed that the line, a survey of which had been commenced towards Gayndah, should touch the very large coalfield at Miva; beyond that was the Kilkivan mineral district, of which a good authority said it was simply on account of the cost of carriage that most of the operations were stopped there after the mines had become the property of some of the wealthiest men in Sydney. Mr. King, when Minister for Works, had said he would do all he could to have the line made, and, on the strength of that, the capitalists expended some thousands of pounds. Mr. King left the Ministry, and the promised railway fell through. Carriage to the mine cost £8 to £10 per ton; horse-feed, 15s. a bushel; hay, £15 a ton; and carriage of copper down, £4 10s. to £6 a ton; firewood became scarce, and, at last, every 20s. expended only returned 19s. Work was then stopped, and after paying off £25,000 liabilities, 800 people lost their employment and the place became a barren wilderness.

There was a large number of mines in the vicinity of Kilkivan where they were obliged to stop work for the same reason. The cost of carriage was so great that the expenses were slightly over the returns. Going beyond Kilkivan they came to a very extensive wheat district, concerning which some Adelaide gentlemen who saw it wrote to their friends in South Australia that the district was as large as from Adelaide to Kapunda, with thousands and tens of thousands of acres of as fine land as they had ever seen, although there was rather too much timber upon it. Seeing the smallness of the area of wheat land in the colony and the difficulty in obtaining by exchange 20,000 acres at Allora, it was a pity not to open up a district within a few miles of the Gympie Railway, where there were hundreds of thousands of acres of wheat land better than any on the Darling Downs. Another interest that would be benefited by the railway would be the pastoral interest in the Burnett district; but apart from that, the mineral and wheat lands, if opened up, were capable of settling a large and useful population. He did not intend to make a speech on the subject, and after having mentioned some of the advantages the line would confer on a large and valuable district, with every likelihood of its being a profitable undertaking, he would commend his motion to the consideration of the House.

The PREMIER said he had very little to say on the subject. A motion of this kind was quite premature, even accompanied with the information the hon. member had given; but no doubt the hon. member had served his purpose in bringing the question forward. The reasons he (Mr. McIlwraith) gave for not supporting the motion of the hon. member for Rosewood applied with considerably more force to this. As he had stated before, the Government had no intention of making a supplementary loan estimate this year. It would have been more modest on the part of the hon. member if he had asked for a sum for a survey, but to ask for £100,000 to construct the line was too much, especially as the House had just passed a three-million loan.

Question put.

The House divided:—

AYES, 10.

Messrs. Bailey, Douglas, Dickson, McLean, Griffith, Meston, Macfarlane (Ipswich), Tyrel, Swanwick, and Groom.

NOES, 17.

Messrs. McIlwraith, Macrossan, Palmer, Hill, Norton, Amhurst, Persse, Kellett, Low, Beor, H. W. Palmer, Stevenson, Lalor, Stevens, O'Sullivan, Morehead, and Scott.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative,

GRANTS TO SOCIETIES.

Mr. GROOM, in moving

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider of an Address to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed upon the Supplementary Estimates of 1879-80 the following sums:—

(1.) Grants to Agricultural and Horticultural Societies, on the same conditions as heretofore, the sum of two thousand five hundred pounds.

(2.) The Acclimatisation Society, the sum of five hundred pounds.

(3.) Loans to Trustees of Cemeteries, the sum of twelve hundred pounds.

(4.) Schools of Art and Mining Schools, the sum of three thousand pounds—

said that, on looking over the Estimates-in-Chief when first placed on the table, he observed that the usual subsidies granted to these societies were omitted. Believing, as he did, that whatever scheme of retrenchment any Government might bring in, these societies, at all events, should not suffer, he considered it his duty to place this motion on the paper for the consideration of hon. members. He was speaking not only as a member of the House, but also as president of a school of arts and an agricultural society. On looking over the Auditor-General's report for last year, he found that there were altogether twenty-two agricultural and horticultural societies extending all over the colony, so that nearly every member of the House was interested in some such society. The amounts paid to those societies were—Marathon Society, Aramac, £200; Southern Queensland, Beenleigh, £190; Great Western, Blackall, £112; East Moreton, £50; Mulgrave, £95 17s.; Peak Downs, £115 10s.; Drayton and Toowoomba, £181 17s.; Burnett District, £92; McIntyre River, £71; Gympie, £400; West Moreton, £70; Ipswich Pastoral and Agricultural, £89; Wide Bay and Burnett, £265; Fitzroy Pastoral, £395; Central Queensland, £276; Western Pastoral, £82; Queensland Pastoral, Springsure, £139; Border Agricultural and Horticultural, £62; Royal Agricultural, Toowoomba, £400; Eastern Downs, Warwick, £309. In addition to those sums the members of the societies had raised equal amounts, so that the principle of helping themselves had been virtually carried out. Some of those societies now found themselves in a very awkward position. Not knowing that the usual subsidy would have been struck off the Estimates-in-Chief, the executive officers had made themselves responsible to the banks for overdrafts, to erect different buildings necessary to carry on the exhibitions. Ever since the Legislature had refused to give titles for the lands granted to those societies, banks would only ad-

vance money on the personal guarantee of the executive officers. In Warwick, for instance, the executive officers of the Agricultural Society had become responsible for the sum of £500, and the same thing had occurred in many other places. They had accepted the responsibilities in good faith, expecting the usual grants would have been continued. Those societies were in a different position from that occupied by the National Society in Brisbane, for which two distinct grants had been made—the first of £3,000, and subsequently one of £1,500. They had been thereby enabled to erect substantial buildings, and were in a position to carry on without any subsidy at all. The other societies had received no distinct vote for purposes of building. Hon. members knew that those societies were not carried on for nothing. The secretary was the only paid officer, the other executive doing the work gratuitously, and it would be admitted by all that a considerable amount of good work had been done by those societies in all parts of the colony. Those who were present at the recent show of the Royal Society at Toowoomba would admit that the £400 received last year had been well repaid to the country in showing strangers where good stock could be procured. It was impossible to estimate the amount of good done by the National Society in Brisbane. He had always most cheerfully given what assistance he could to that society both by his private means and his vote in the House, because he believed it was serving the best interests of the country. If the subsidies were withdrawn a very considerable inconvenience, or even loss, would be entailed, and in some cases the change would involve ruin, so that the buildings would have to be sold and shows entirely cease. It might be asked why did not these persons subscribe the amounts themselves: but it might as well be asked why did not the National Society erect their own buildings. It had been stated to-night that the pastoral occupiers were the most heavily taxed of any class, but he contended that the residents of municipalities were more heavily taxed. They had to pay, in addition to their share of the ordinary revenue, water and gas rates, and rates for special improvements, while hardly a day passed without their being waited upon for contributions for one thing or another. The amount contributed by that class to these societies in such times as the present did them infinite credit. The Acclimatisation Society had peculiar claims, because it was a national society. Its efforts were directed all over the world, and great benefit resulted to the colony from the exertions of the gentlemen who conducted it. Whatever fate might befall the other parts of the motion, he sincerely hoped the grant to that society would be continued. With regard to loans

to trustees of cemeteries, he was surprised that the Colonial Secretary should have left those amounts out of the Estimates, because the Cemeteries Act of 1865 rendered it almost imperative that a certain sum should be set apart for the purpose of carrying out the Act. The 30th section of that Act provided that the Governor in Council, upon examination of the accounts which were sent in in January of each year, might direct the manner in which the balance of money should be appropriated, and, if any sum had been lent, determine the proportion to be applied in payment of such sum. The reports made by trustees showed that sometimes £100, and sometimes £200, appeared to their credit, and the Act gave the Colonial Secretary power to advance money and to determine whether it should be repaid or be an absolute gift. He did not see why the Act should not be complied with, until in process of time the cemeteries would become self-supporting. The Auditor-General's report showed that there were thirty schools of art scattered over the colony, so that there was scarcely an hon. member who did not represent one or more of them. No one would dispute the amount of good they were doing. Believing the subsidy would be continued, many of them had entered into contracts for buildings and were placed in a very difficult position. They were institutions deserving the best consideration of the House, and he hoped the amounts would be restored to the Estimates. He was exceedingly sorry the Colonial Treasurer should consider it his duty to oppose the motion. The feeling in the country was very strongly in favour of the motion, and he—and no doubt other hon. members—had received letters to that effect. Whatever schemes of retrenchment might be necessary, and however much they might regret the decreased revenue, those institutions should not be punished by having their subsidies swept entirely away. If the Government could not consent to vote the whole amount, they might say that 10s. in the £1 would be paid until the revenue improved. Cutting off the whole of the subsidy without note of warning would entail a very considerable amount of injury, and be the means of involving private individuals in pecuniary loss, because they had made themselves responsible for debt as they could offer no other security. The amount of good that schools of art did in the work of education hardly needed pointing out. In his town the School of Arts was doing a great deal of good in that way, and was well supported by the public in relation to other institutions; and he should regret its closure, as would probably be the case if the subsidy were withdrawn. There was a mortgage of £1,800 upon the property, the interest upon which

would amount to a considerable sum, and the management would not be able to provide this interest and carry on the institution if the subsidy were suddenly withdrawn. With these observations he should leave the motion to the House, sincerely hoping that it would receive every consideration, and that the institutions would be considered apart from party politics. The matter was not brought forward in a party spirit, and the institutions were not identified with politics in any way.

The PREMIER said the hon. member had disclaimed having any party feeling in bringing forward the motion, and had asked that it should be judged without party considerations; but the hon. member knew very well that all the members on his side would go with him, and that his disclaimer was simply an invitation to as many members on the Government side as were willing to support him. The Government had not left off the subsidies because they did not believe in the objects of the institutions or had no sympathy with them, but they had good reason for their action. In the first place, the Local Government Act which was passed last year distinctly laid down that the subjects named in the motion should come under Municipalities, and he would refer the House to the 167th clause in support of the statement. With that provision before them the Government were justified in considering that it was intended, when that principle was framed, that these subjects should be dealt with by the localities. There was not the slightest doubt that they were not objects for which the colony generally should be taxed. A great many of the schools of art were merely circulating libraries, and should not be supported by the public purse. The Acclimatisation Grounds were an exception; and, looking at the reason on which the subsidy for them was annually voted, a great deal was to be said in favour of its continuance, because the grounds were a national undertaking, although in private hands. An effort ought therefore to be made to subsidise that society to as great an extent as before. The funds of the colony would not, however, permit £7,500 being granted to the societies named in the resolution. Moreover, £7,500 would not cover all that was asked, for there were applications now in for something like £12,000. When he made his Financial Statement he had run close to the wind, and since then nothing had happened in the condition of the colony to make him suppose otherwise than that he had been sanguine in his expectations: the colony had continued in a state of depression beyond their expectations, and the Treasury could not stand supplementing these institutions. The motion was one of these which appealed to private members, and made members inclined to break away from control; but he would tell

the House plainly that, whether the amount was passed or not, he had not the money to pay it.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said that after the explanation of the Premier it appeared it would not matter whether the motion was passed or not; but instead of suddenly taking away from these societies the whole of the subsidies which they were in the habit of receiving, and which they had calculated upon getting this year, could not the Government arrange to give them half, or a quarter even, as had been suggested by the mover? If that were done for a year or two the societies would be able to carry on, and would devise some means of getting on afterwards without Government aid. So far as the Ipswich School of Arts was concerned, the management had been in past times looking to the subsidy to help in paying the interest on the money that had been borrowed, and how they were to get on in future if aid were suddenly withdrawn he did not know. He presumed the Government would have to foreclose and take over the School of Arts. The horticultural and agricultural societies would collapse completely, he was afraid, if a small subsidy were not voted to them.

Mr. KATES said, as the representative of an agricultural constituency, he could not allow the motion to pass without offering a few remarks. He had received a letter from the secretary of the Allora School of Arts, informing him that the sudden withdrawal of the subsidies would be damaging in the extreme. To show how differently things were managed elsewhere, he might mention that in his native land a scientific man had been employed by the State during the last twelve years to do nothing but show the farmers what to do with their soil, and to point out which was the best adapted for the growth of particular products. Countries in which agriculture was encouraged rose to prosperity—as South Australia and America, for example. The revival of trade in America had been mainly because of that country's increased production of breadstuffs, something like twenty millions being drawn by her last year from England for breadstuffs. They could grow wheat in this colony; and the agricultural interest should therefore be encouraged as much as possible. The whole amount asked for agricultural and horticultural societies was only £2,500: if the Government could not subsidise pound for pound as heretofore, let them reduce it gradually, and in a year or two these societies would be able to carry on without aid. A sudden withdrawal, however, would be very injurious.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was all very well to talk of subsidising schools of art, agricultural and horticultural societies, and so forth; but they might learn something from their friends the Chinese, who said, "Suppose no have it, no can get it!"

He should like to put a statement of the general revenue before the House, and he would only go back as far as 1872. In August of that year their general revenue was £76,480; in 1873, £73,118; in 1874, £71,814; in 1875, £92,006; in 1876, £95,443; in 1877, £101,292; in 1878, £100,924; and in 1879, £79,688 2s. 4d. That was the general revenue for the month of August, and with a revenue of that sort he would like to know how hon. members could try and force the Government into granting these sums for these institutions, which, he maintained, they could do very well without, if they were to be kept on at all. As a matter of fact the Treasurer could not find the money if the House passed the resolution on a falling revenue, and he maintained that agricultural and horticultural societies, if they were worth anything, could support themselves. He had been intimately connected with the Queensland National Association from the commencement, and every member of the council of that association would bear him out that he had always tried to impress upon them the duty to depend upon themselves and not upon the Government. He had supported votes in that House for them to start with, but as soon as they were well started he had always, in the council, opposed their going to the Government for money. He said that if such societies had any life in them they ought to depend upon themselves and the subscriptions they got from the general public, and not ask the House to assist them. The sum asked for agricultural and horticultural societies, which were extending all over the colony, would not be half enough for them, and if they were to survive at all they should depend on themselves entirely. The Acclimatisation Society stood on very different ground, and they might afford the £500 for that—it would be money very well spent. The next item was loans to trustees of cemeteries, £1,200, and he could tell the House that that was not one-third of the amount that was asked by different parts of the colony for loans to trustees of cemeteries. It was the greatest farce in creation to call them loans. No Treasurer or member of the Ministry had ever seen one shilling of the money paid back, as far as his experience went, and it extended nearly as long as that of any member of the House.

MR. GRIFFITH: Don't they pay interest?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY said not a rap—they never paid anything back. He thought if men were only a few degrees removed from savages, the least they could do was to attend to their dead friends and look after the fencing of cemeteries. Then £3,000 was asked for schools of art and mining schools. In his experience schools of art did not benefit the general public one iota or tittle. They were meant for a small clique in towns, and nobody else derived any bene-

fit from them; and if they wanted them, let them pay for them. The School of Arts in Brisbane—no doubt he would be answered by the hon. member for Maryborough, who was president of that institution—had drawn a great deal more from the revenue of the colony than could be imagined. He did not know how it was, but the amount of subsidy the School of Arts in Brisbane had got from the Government went beyond any of the other schools of art in the colony, and he said the advantage the community derived from it was not what it ought to be. If the inhabitants wanted an institution of that kind they should subscribe liberally and keep it up, and not come to the general revenue for a subsidy. Even in Brisbane what benefit did the general public derive from the School of Arts? Did one man out of 100 or five out of 1,000 go there or know anything about it? It was merely kept up for a small clique, who, as in other towns, constituted themselves managing committee, president, and everything else, and buttered themselves up on doing a great deal for the public by attending to the School of Arts. If there was any item that should be struck out of the resolution it was the amount for schools of art. Then with regard to mining schools, where were they? There was a so-called mining school at Gympie, for which a large sum was placed on the Estimates, and another small one at Charters Towers, and how did they benefit the rest of the colony? But to go back to the simple fact—they had not the money to pay for these things, even if the resolution were passed; and after the schedule he had read as to the general revenue of the colony, he sincerely hoped the House would pause before they attempted to force this additional expenditure on the country. The sum asked for—over £7,000—was not half the colony would be called upon to pay if the resolution were passed, because, if they granted a sum to one association, they were bound to grant it to all on the same conditions; and every week—he might say almost every day—claims were coming in to such an extent that the Estimates of last year would not meet one-third of them—but they must be paid, because the country was pledged to pay them for last year. The Government were prepared to put a sum on the Estimates for the Acclimatisation Society, but in the present condition of the colony they were not bound to find funds for private societies, which only did good to a very limited number of the population.

MR. REA said they were asked where the money was to come from for the purpose; but money had been found to carry the telegraph line out to Cork head stations and other stations. No such question was asked when £20,000 was voted for that purpose; but when it was a sum for ad-

vancing the welfare of the young men of the colony, by providing means for their education so that they might become competent to engage in farming and other pursuits with some prospect of success, the starvation policy of the Government came in. They could find millions of money to increase the value of their own stations; but for schools of art and other institutions for the benefit of the general public they could find none.

Mr. Dickson said under ordinary circumstances he would feel disposed to sympathise with the Treasurer in the difficulty he represented himself to be in at the present time—namely, that he would be unable to give effect to this resolution if passed by the House; but when he contrasted the opinions expressed by the Colonial Secretary when this subject was at a previous period under discussion, he was at a loss to understand how a mere change of position in the House could change his views *in toto*, and he was further inclined to think that the Treasurer was on this occasion only acting the part of Treasurer, being apparently desirous of defending the Treasury to a greater extent than its needs required. The amount of money asked for under this resolution was not an enormous one, and, even if the Treasurer could not see his way to assist these societies to the usual extent, he might give them a sum on account, so as to keep them in a state of vitality, and not allow them to become defunct. It must not be forgotten that the subscriptions to these societies in the present depressed times were even more reduced in proportion than the revenue of the State, so that this was the time they most required assistance. Hon. members must not be dismayed by the long array of figures read by the Colonial Secretary, because the total revenue for the year could not be estimated from the receipts for one or two months only. Two of the largest items of revenue came in only half-yearly—the pastoral rents on the 30th September, and the Crown lands alienation receipts on the 31st March. No one month taken by itself could furnish even the Treasurer with any reliable data as to what his receipts were likely to be for the whole year. He had observed with great regret that the revenue of the colony did not seem to be so elastic as even the Premier expected it to be. He had warned the hon. gentleman of that when he made his Financial Statement, and had told him that he should look the position in the face, and should, if necessary, even propose increased taxation for a time. He was sure the colony would have submitted to this policy rather than learn that educational institutions, such as those referred to in the motion, were to be starved out of existence by the niggardliness of the

Treasurer. The total amount set down for those institutions was about £7,000; but he (Mr. Dickson) would be content to see even a smaller sum granted for the present, say £5,000 or £6,000, which would not affect the Treasury at the end of the year to any appreciable extent. If it was for a new service the case would be different, as the present was not a time to enter into fresh expenditure; but these services had continued from year to year, and this was not the time to withdraw such assistance as the people had been led to look for. For his own part, he should have preferred to see some of the items connected with other services of the colony reduced rather than have the assistance to these educational institutions withdrawn. The Colonial Secretary informed the House that he considered these societies, at the present time should not receive the support proposed, but should support themselves. That was totally different to the opinion of the hon. gentleman in 1877. In September, 1877, the hon. member for Toowoomba introduced a motion to obtain contributions to agricultural societies on the pound for pound principle, and sought further to have the amount granted to such societies unlimited. He (Mr. Dickson), as a member of the then Administration, resisted the proposition to the extent that no contributions from the State should in any case exceed £200. The Government accepted the principle of assisting those societies, but proposed a limit. On that occasion the present Colonial Secretary addressed the House and supported the resolutions as they stood, saying that he considered to confine the subsidy to £200 would be absurd and not of the slightest use—that the principle had hitherto been, that all associations which approved themselves to the Colonial Secretary as doing good work in the country were entitled to pound for pound for what they actually raised by private subscription, and he was sure the revenue of the colony would not suffer by it. The hon. gentleman also said he was not in favour of helping one society and refusing all but an infinitesimal amount of aid to another—in fact, the more that was paid away for such purposes the better it would be for the country. That was the hon. gentleman's utterance when the motion was before the House, and when the question went into Committee the hon. gentleman repeated his opinion to this effect—that if an association chose to subscribe a larger sum the more good would be done by its exhibitions—if it subscribed £500 it should get an equivalent amount. Such being the hon. gentleman's opinion in 1877, he (Mr. Dickson) wished to know what there was in the circumstances of the colony to justify the statements made by the hon. gentle-

man that evening, or to justify starving out educational institutions which did a large amount of good in the colony, and which it was the duty of that House to encourage accordingly.

MR. KELLET said he hoped the Government would grant the first item—namely, the vote for agricultural societies, as he was satisfied that a great deal of injustice would be caused by their refusing to do so. He knew that many societies of that class had been started with the understanding that, if the people in a district subscribed a certain sum, it would be supplemented by the Government of the day. On those terms people had subscribed largely—in fact, he had himself collected £500 for starting suitable buildings at Ipswich for the Agricultural Society there, as the people considered it would be for the benefit of the district, and the means of educating the farmers in agricultural matters. After the money was subscribed, he had great difficulty in getting the then Colonial Secretary (Mr. Miles) to pay the subsidy, as, although he promised to pay it, he tried to repudiate it, but eventually it was paid. The society at Ipswich considered that it was better to erect good buildings at first, and several persons became responsible for the cost, feeling satisfied that whatever party was in power, the grant in aid would not be knocked off. It would be a great hardship to those persons who had made themselves responsible on that understanding if the subsidy was withdrawn, and would also prevent the society from doing that amount of good they otherwise could do.

MR. BEATTIE trusted the Premier would see his way clear to agree to the motion, even if he only gave one-half of what was asked. The hon. gentleman had made a saving on the Volunteer vote, which would go a long way to pay all the money required to supplement schools of art and other kindred institutions. He was glad it was not intended to reduce the vote to the Acclimatisation Society, as it was an institution which had done a great deal of good and was most valuable to the country. The gentlemen who had the management of it devoted a great deal of time, at inconvenience to themselves, to their work, and were worthy of every encouragement. With reference to schools of art, he represented a district which had never asked the Government to give it either money or land for building a school of arts, but private enterprise had erected a building in Fortitude Valley, and given it for public purposes with the distinct understanding that the Government would give something towards a free library and reading-room. Private individuals had assisted to carry it on for the last eight or nine years, and it had become of such benefit that it was constantly occupied.

The action of the Government would cause much inconvenience.

MR. O'SULLIVAN was only acquainted with one school of arts, of which he happened to be the founder; but he was not quite clear whether, if the items of the vote were put separately, he should vote for grants to schools of art. What good had they done? The Ipswich School of Arts was managed by a clique—an ignorant, low "ring," called the Corporation of Ipswich—a pitiful, low, ignorant, factious mob. The School of Arts was nothing better than a renting machine. The municipal council met there, and there were firms of lawyers and surveyors occupying offices in it. The hall was let to every villain who liked to come along—to every firebrand, outcast, and scoundrel who went about doing his best to raise bad blood among his neighbours. Had the Auditor-General ever called on the committee of management to produce its accounts? If those accounts were seen they would show the institution to be the best paying concern in the colony, and that it would have no difficulty in paying the interest on the loan for building it. The general public took no advantage of it. It was managed by men some of whom can scarcely read and write, and there was no necessity for voting money to support it. It was about time these institutions should work themselves out of the over-nursing they had received. As to the books the Ipswich School of Arts possessed, there were many of them of such a character that they were only fit to be thrown into the river; and there were very few people who ever went near the institution.

MR. GRIFFITH said some extraordinary objections had been raised to the grants in aid of these institutions, and the most remarkable were some of those made by the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan), who must really have a very poor opinion of his own townspeople. Because the hon. member disapproved of the Corporation, and did not approve of their collection of books, he had gravely urged that the country should discontinue grants to these institutions all over the colony in the future. That was no objection at all. The only reasonable objection was that the revenue was in such a depressed state that the country could not afford the money. There was some force in that—it might be a reason for reducing the grants; but was it any reason they should suddenly, in the middle of their year, withdraw the aid they had been accustomed to look forward to and leave them to their own resources? Frequently the committees incurred personal liabilities on the faith of the money voted by the House; and, although the state of the Treasury might be a reason why the grants should be stopped, it was no reason why this should be done suddenly. They should have had

notice that it would stop on December 31. Another objection was that the institutions should be self-supporting; but that, also, was no reason for a sudden change. The Government seemed delighted to carry on business by sudden fits and starts—disturbance of confidence in everything, but their reasons were insufficient for such a course. These societies, especially the agricultural and mining, were valuable educational institutions, and that was the justification for State aid. There were no agricultural colleges, and the only approach that could be made to agricultural education was by assisting the societies to collect information and disseminate it. They really did to some degree, therefore, perform the functions of agricultural colleges. In respect to schools of art, they were the only means in country towns for the acquisition of a knowledge of passing events—no private individual being able to collect newspapers, reviews, and so on, as the schools of art did. It was very well for hon. members, who had the advantage of the Parliamentary Library, or the libraries of their clubs, to say schools of art were of no use; but they were valuable educational institutions for the people, and it would be a great misfortune to do anything which would seriously have the effect of discouraging them. Members who did not believe in the general diffusion of knowledge might naturally object to schools of art; but those who, like himself, did believe in it, and who assisted it as much as they could, would vote for the resolution.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said the provision to carry newspapers free by post was a recognition by the Legislature of its duty of doing something towards the education of the people. Institutions like schools of art, which afforded facilities for the dissemination of information by books and newspapers, deserved the patronage and support of the Government. He was sorry the Ipswich School of Arts had fallen upon such evil times, but when the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) joined with others in establishing it he must have been convinced that schools of art were useful institutions. It did not follow that because that particular School of Arts had, as was said, fallen into the hands of a clique, therefore all schools of art were to be discouraged. As to the object of schools of art, it was one thing to have a library and a table covered with the ephemeral literature of the time, and another thing to have a large establishment with immense facilities for lectures and public entertainments solely for revenue purposes. The latter was not an essential part of a school of arts, and ought properly to have no connection with it. As to the choice of books for libraries, he might say that sufficient care was not always exercised by those whose duty it was to make selections. He had had shown

to him, not long ago, extracts from a book in the library of the Brisbane School of Arts of such a character that no man with respect for his daughters and sons would allow to find its way into his family. He would suggest, if the Government continue to subsidise these institutions, that someone should be appointed to make periodical inspections of the libraries. He hoped the grant to these institutions would not be suddenly withdrawn. In country districts the school of arts was the place where young men went in preference to the public-house, and on that account alone were worthy of support. He need say nothing in advocacy of the claims of agricultural societies and the Acclimatisation Society: the good they did was patent to all. He should vote for the resolution.

Mr. AMHURST said that, while agreeing with the motion, he thought it was inopportune. The country was suffering from a deficit, and, as these were institutions more for the benefit of the rich than the poor, the knife of retrenchment might fairly be used upon them. He should be sorry to see the grant entirely done away with; but the supporters of schools of art and agricultural societies might, for at least a year, keep them going by putting their hands into their own pockets. By doing so they would set a good example to others, and at the same time relieve the strain on the revenue.

Mr. NORTON said he had heard with regret the condemnation of schools of art, and hoped there were not many so bad as the one mentioned by the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan). In large towns those institutions might not be so necessary as in small towns, where there was absolutely no place of amusement to which people could go in the evenings. If there was no school of arts the young men would probably go to the public-house, and might end by going there too often. At the town with which he was connected the school of arts had done a vast amount of good; the papers were eagerly scanned, and valuable books were much more largely read than was generally supposed. Although he valued these institutions so highly, he felt sure the Premier would not have opposed the motion unless he had good grounds for doing so; and he (Mr. Norton), for that reason, should reluctantly vote against it, and he did so with sincere regret.

Mr. HENDREN, referring to the Ipswich School of Arts, said it was one of the finest in the colony. The interest on the debt upon it was paid regularly, and it was managed by the Municipal Council—which could not be called a clique, as it was annually elected by the ratepayers. The institution was open to all-comers, and the spare chambers were let to respectable business men. The institution did not deserve the opprobrious epithets applied to it by the hon. member for Stanley.

Mr. KINGSFORD said there was a great deal of truth in the old adage that "ignorance was the parent of crime." The more money was spent on such educational institutions the less would be needed for gaols and policemen. In connection with the South Brisbane School of Arts, he might mention that the institution had recently suffered a great loss. They had not only lost hundreds of pounds subscribed, but also the pound for pound equivalent from the Government.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the South Brisbane people made a mistake in the person with whom they entrusted their money, and they had no right to urge it as a reason why the House should assist them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Stanley had uttered a sweeping condemnation of the Ipswich School of Arts, but the hon. member for Enoggera had uttered an equally sweeping condemnation of the books in the library of the School of Arts in Brisbane, when he said that a respectable man would not allow his daughter to read them, and recommended the appointment of a public censor and the establishment of a sort of *index expurgatorius* in connection with these institutions.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he believed that one book of a somewhat objectionable character, which had been on the reference shelf of the Brisbane School of Arts, had by accident got into circulation. It was a literary production found in all libraries of any extent, but not suitable for general circulation. The Brisbane School of Arts, however, was not characterised by any of the attributes imputed to schools of art by some hon. members: no one could say that it was managed by a clique. Strangers who had visited it were generally pleased to say that it was well managed. As far as the subsidy was concerned, it had only received the usual pound for pound, and there were no just grounds for complaints such as were urged by the Colonial Secretary. A great deal of valuable information was disseminated by these institutions in the country; and in smaller towns, if the subsidies were not authorised, the deprivation would be seriously felt. Had the withdrawal of subsidies been part of a general scheme of retrenchment, very little exception would have been taken; but schools of art and agricultural societies had been singled out. The action of the Colonial Secretary showed an illiberal and cross-grained spirit—he seemed to be exhibiting a sort of spleen which was not justified by his action on former occasions.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he did not say that the books in the library of the Brisbane School of Arts were unfit to read; he made reference to but one book. His intention was to show, as a reason for the appointment of somebody to look into the

character of the books in the schools of art, how, in a well-conducted library like that of the School of Arts, it was possible for an objectionable book to get into circulation.

Mr. TYREL said that £114,870 had been voted last year for education, and it had been shown that to twenty schools of art the very small sum of £3,600 had been paid. Having got a loan of £3,000,000, they might expect such a season of prosperity that the sum of £3,600 could well be spared, and he should support the motion.

Mr. SWANWICK said that a book of an objectionable character had been found in the library of the Normal School only a short time ago, but because such books might be in libraries it was not necessary that young people should get hold of them. He should vote for the motion, because he thought it would be a very great pity if schools of art in country towns failed for want of funds. The title "school of arts" was a perfect misnomer for a simple library, and he regretted that classes were not conducted in connection with those institutions. They had been started from time to time, but had always failed, because the young men got tired in a few months and gave them up. Believing that the benefits arising from such institutions outweighed any possible harm likely to result from the accidental circulation of a bad work, he should support the motion.

Mr. Low was very sorry that the Ministry were so stony-hearted regarding the motion before the House. Although they objected to be squeezed, they might, allow themselves to be so on the present occasion to the extent of one-half. The Pastoral Association of Goondiwindi, which he represented, had subscribed a very considerable sum under the supposition that they would receive an equivalent amount from Government. They had gone to much outlay in fencing ground, &c., and he did not know what the consequence would be if the grant were refused. He looked upon the society as one of the best that could be established. The only way by which farmers could know anything about stock was by means of these institutions, and the Government were standing in their own light to refuse these subsidies.

Mr. GROOM desired to point out that when the Colonial Secretary drew a distinction between the country societies and the one at Brisbane, he did the former a great injustice. The National Society had a community of 30,000 to support it, trains ran in all directions to bring people down to its exhibitions, and larger facilities were given to it by the Railway Department, tickets to its shows being available for fourteen days, whilst for the country shows they were only available for three or four days. If the National Society was able to carry on without a subsidy, it was

entirely owing to the exertions of the Government in its behalf through the Railway Department, and to its being established amongst a larger population. With regard to what had been said about the Ipswich School of Arts, he was sorry that Ipswich was always held up in the House as an awful example. The Toowoomba institution was not managed by a clique. It had a library of 1,600 volumes, and in the reading-room there were papers from all parts of the world. The daily *Hansard* and parliamentary papers were there, and were perused with avidity, and he might assure the hon. member for Mitchell that no speeches in *Hansard* were more read or discussed than his (Mr. Morehead's).

Motion put and passed.

RESCINDMENT OF ORDER.

On the motion of Mr. O'SULLIVAN, the following resolution was agreed to:—

That the Order made by the House on the 1st August, viz.:—That there be laid upon the table of the House, a separate Statement of all Accounts for the eighteen months ended on the 30th of June, 1879, in connection with the expenditure and management of Woogaroo Asylum, Ipswich Asylum, and Brisbane Reception House respectively," be rescinded.

BANKERS' BOOKS EVIDENCE BILL.

On the motion of Mr. GRIFFITH, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council with message inviting their concurrence with the amendments made in this House.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 11 o'clock, until Monday next.