

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 12 AUGUST 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 12 August, 1880.

Message from the Administrator of the Government.—
Hemmant's Petition.— Questions.— Alienation of
Crown Lands on Goldfields Amendment Bill—first
reading.— Formal Motions.— Ways and Means.—
Financial Statement.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The SPEAKER stated that he had received a
message from His Excellency the Administrator
of the Government, forwarding the Estimates of
Revenue and Expenditure for the Financial Year
1880-81.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Mr. McIl-
wraith), the papers were ordered to be printed.

HEMMANT'S PETITION.

Mr. ARCHER moved, without previous
notice—

That the Select Committee now inquiring into the
Petition of William Hemmant have leave to report the
evidence taken by them from time to time.

Question put and passed.

The hon. member then laid on the table a copy
of the evidence referred to, which was ordered to
be printed.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. DICKSON, pursuant to notice, asked the
Secretary for Public Works—

When he will be prepared to lay on the table of the
House, Plans and Specifications of the First Section of
the Branch Railway Line—Brisbane to Sandgate, and to
ask the House to approve of the Plans aforesaid?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Mac-
rossan) replied—

As soon as the surveys are completed, the route
decided upon, and the plans and specifications prepared.

Mr. BEATTIE asked the Secretary for Public Works—

1. Is it true that H. S. Martin, late Accountant, Northern Railways, has embezzled a large amount of Government Money?—and, if so, what amount?
2. Do the Government intend to prosecute him criminally?
3. If within the colony, has he been arrested?
4. Have the Government paid him £600, or any sum, for loss of office?
5. Has he left the colony?
6. If left the colony, do the Government intend to take steps to have him arrested.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied—

In answer to questions 1, 2, 3, and 6—A cheque was drawn for £740 by Mr. Martin in May last, for which no vouchers can be found. An inquiry is being conducted at Rockhampton by one of the officers of the Auditor-General's Department.

4. Yes, £600 12s. 9d., in terms of the Civil Service Act.
5. Yes.

The HON. J. DOUGLAS asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. If the Surgeon-Superintendent of the "Scottish Hero" refused to sign the certificate under the charter-party?
2. If he was requested to do so?
3. If he declined?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) replied—

1. The only document which the Surgeon-Superintendent is required to sign under the charter-party is merely a certificate of the number of passengers landed alive; but attached to the list of ship's stores I find a certificate signed by the Surgeon that he has examined them and found them of good quality.

2. The Government are not aware that the Surgeon has been requested to sign any certificate in connection with the "Scottish Hero." They have certainly never asked him to do so.

Mr. KATES asked the Secretary for Public Works—

Whether, and when, he intends to proceed with the erection of Post and Telegraph Office at Allora, the money for which has now been standing on Loan Votes for more than two years?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

The business transacted at Allora does not warrant the erection of a post and telegraph office.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Secretary for Public Works—

The sum of £51,000 was voted last session for railway construction in the Wide Bay and Burnett District: if not required for the Burrum Railway, do the Government propose to recommend to Parliament the expenditure of said sum on railway construction in the same district?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

The intention of the Government will be disclosed to the House at the proper time.

Mr. KATES asked the Secretary for Public Works—

When he will be prepared to lay upon the table of the House the plans and specification for the proposed Branch Line between Warwick and Killarney?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

When the surveys are completed and plans and specifications thereon prepared.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON asked the Secretary for Public Works—

When he hopes to be in a position to call for tenders for the work of constructing the first section of the Branch Railway to Clermont?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

Probably before the end of the present session.

ALIENATION OF CROWN LANDS ON GOLDFIELDS AMENDMENT BILL—FIRST READING.

On the motion of the HON. S. W. GRIFFITH, this Bill was read a first time, ordered to be printed, and its second reading made an Order of the Day for next Thursday.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

On the motion of Mr. AMHURST, it was resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider of an Address to the Administrator of the Government, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on the next Supplementary Estimates a sum of money sufficient to defray the cost of a Company of Volunteers at Mackay.

On the motion of Mr. BEATTIE, leave was given to introduce a Bill to amend the Fire Brigades Act of 1877.

WAYS AND MEANS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

The PREMIER, in making his Financial Statement, said:—

Mr. SCOTT.—In laying before the Committee the Budget for the year I have an advantage, not lately enjoyed by any of my predecessors, in making my Statement after the financial year has closed. While admitting the desirableness under ordinary circumstances of an earlier exposition of the fiscal state of the colony, I think on this occasion the delay that has unavoidably occurred will prove of some public benefit. With regard to the transactions of last year, the figures with which I have to deal will be the actual amounts realised or expended, instead of, as previously, only estimated amounts. Moreover, within the last three months there has been an undeniable improvement in revenue prospects; I am, therefore, enabled to make my present Statement with greater confidence and accuracy than would have been possible had my Budget been presented at the usual period of the year.

The Consolidated Revenue Account started on 1st July, 1879, with a debit balance of £177,625 3s. 3d. The operations of the year did not result in a reduction of that amount; the debtor balance on 30th June, 1880, standing at £239,006 12s. 7d. When I made my Financial Statement last year, the colony seemed to be emerging from a state of depression induced by three bad seasons of an extraordinary character. It was difficult to estimate how far the effects of that depression would be carried into the following year; but the circumstances being exceptional, I did not make provision—nor do I think any prudent Treasurer in my place would have provided—for the deficiency as if it were normal. While believing that the turning-point of the crisis had been passed, and that we might anticipate a better revenue for the future, I was still doubtful of the immediate result. I did not, however, feel called upon to provide by extraordinary taxation for what was only a temporary deficiency. But it is now quite evident, from the financial results of last year, that the loss the country had suffered during the previous three years told beyond our worst anticipations on the transactions of the year just closed.

Customs have yielded £86,247 less than I estimated; stamp duties £7,416; licenses, £5,077; while excise realised £1,975 more. The actual amount received under the various heads which figure in our Estimates as taxation proper was £96,765 below my estimate; and the total yield was less for the year 1879-80 than in any year since the present tariff has been in operation. No doubt the main cause of this great decline in one of our principal sources of revenue has been the general depression in trade. That does not,

however, account for it altogether; some portion of our customs duties have had a protective tendency, and articles, which in previous years were imported and paid customs duties, in the past year were produced in the colony. This has affected our revenue to the extent of nearly £12,000. The loss on fifteen articles from this cause last year as compared with 1878, was £11,492; and as compared with 1877, £15,118. On one article for example, maize, 206,604 bushels were imported in 1877, and only 2,599 bushels in 1879. Bran, butter, cheese, and other articles also show a large decline. Although this change materially affects the Customs revenue it is one upon which the colony may be congratulated, as the loss sustained by the revenue indicates that a considerable sum has found its way into the pockets of our agricultural classes. Owing to the low prices which have prevailed during the year, however, the growers have derived less benefit from the large yield of produce than they might reasonably have expected; but the general community has reaped some substantial advantages from all the necessaries of life having been cheapened by increased production.

The decrease in the stamp duty, £7,416, is not due entirely to the falling off in this source of revenue. By an arrangement under which postage stamps could be used in lieu of duty stamps, there has been an amount, estimated at about £2,000, credited to the Post Office which should be credited to this item. The decrease in licenses is wholly due to the depression in trade. The land revenue has fairly realised my anticipations. I estimated a total from this source of £468,000, and it realised £460,192, showing a deficiency of only £7,808. Under the revenue classified as Receipts from Public Works and Services, there has been a deficiency on the Southern and Western Railway of £29,880; on the Central Railway of £521 only; on telegraphs of £3,680; harbour and light dues, £1,776; escort fees, £223. Under the heading Miscellaneous Services, there has been a decrease on the fees of office of £1,855; fines and forfeitures, £118; and other receipts, £35,593. The deficiency in this latter item is due to two causes:—First, that the loan was not sold so soon as was anticipated when the revenue estimate was made; and, second, that the interest previously charged on advances made from the Loan Fund to the Railway Reserves Account could not be charged, because of that account having been closed by subsequent legislation. The main features in the revenue account for the year just closed have been a great decrease under the headings taxation proper and receipts from public works and services, and the steady yield of the land revenue. There are, at length, hopeful indications that the tide has turned, and that henceforth both Customs and Railway Receipts may be reasonably expected to show a steady and progressive increase. If honourable members will turn to Table S, they will find confirmation of this statement. The exports show a gratifying increase in gross as well as per head of population. Gold and copper have barely maintained the production of the previous year, but tin shows an increase of 30 per cent. The greatest stride is made in sugar production, the exports of which were in 1878 valued at £119,000, and in 1879 at £275,000. Pastoral products also show a satisfactory increase. Imports show a considerable falling off under almost all heads, except coin and bullion, which were valued at only £73,000 in 1878, but rose in 1879 to £325,000. The effect of importation is seen in the bank returns (Table U) which, while showing a declension of deposits, advances, and note circulation, also exhibits an increase of over 20 per cent. on coin and bullion. The

deposits per head of the population, however, are still £16 12s. 9d., or £2 2s. in excess of the rate which obtained in 1875.

Comparing the estimated expenditure for the year with the actual result, we find that, while the estimate was £1,600,066 19s., the actual expenditure was £1,673,695 5s. 2d. A portion of this additional expenditure was thrown on the Treasury by the motions carried in the House subsequent to the delivery of the Financial Statement last year. The provision for Supplementary Estimates having been £51,453, the expenditure for the year has only exceeded the estimate by £22,175 6s. 2d. When we consider that the Supplementary Estimates for the year 1875-6 were £146,182; for 1876-7, £112,312; for 1877-8, £164,319; and for 1878-9, £163,225; the Government may be fairly credited with having exercised a judicious supervision over all expenditure not authorised by the House.

By turning to Table K, you will see, Sir, that the total revenue for the year was £1,612,313 15s. 10d., and the total expenditure £1,673,695 5s. 2d., leaving a deficit in the year's operations of £61,394 1s. 4d. If to this is added the balance transferred from the Railway Reserves Fund, which in considering the financial operations of the year ought properly to be taken into consideration, the deficit in the year's transactions amounted to £191,202 10s. 8d.

Having reviewed the operations of the year, I will now direct the attention of the Committee to some of the tables connected with my Financial Statement to which I have not yet specially referred. From Table D it will be seen that the Savings Bank Account was in credit on the 30th June last £120,850, against £101,408 on the 1st July last year. From Table E it appears that the Trust Accounts are in credit £77,619 against £70,851 last year. Table F shows the disposal of the public balances. The credit balance of the Loan Account, the Trust Account, and the Savings Bank Account aggregate £923,828 11s. From this has to be deducted the balance to debit of the Consolidated Revenue on 30th June, of £239,006 12s. 7d. There remained, thus, of cash in the hands of Government on that date, £684,821 18s. 5d. This sum was disposed of as follows: Queensland National Bank, London, £205,059; Queensland National Bank, Brisbane, £476,932; to the credit of the Agent-General, £2,830. When the balance of the £2,000,000 of debentures sold last April is paid up in October, the amount in possession of the Government will be largely increased. As much of this sum as the Government are enabled to make available in the colony which may not be required for immediate disbursement, will be deposited in the various banks on the most advantageous terms the Government can secure.

Table O shows that the colony has spent nearly £1,100,000 on immigration on loan account, and that the outlay under this head last year was £35,768, or scarcely more than one-third of the previous year's expenditure, and less than the outlay under the same head, in any year since 1871.

Table P is interesting, as affording proof that the balance of arrivals and departures was not against the colony last year, as has been often asserted of late. Taking Polynesians and Chinese together, the excess of departures over arrivals has been 111; but as the total excess of arrivals over departures of all classes—Europeans, Chinese, and Polynesians—has been 2,678, there is left a balance of European arrivals over departures of 2,567. Recollecting the exceptionally unfavourable character of the period, these returns must be regarded as highly satisfactory.

Table Q shows the expenditure on public works during the past three years. On Revenue Account there was last year a reduction in the outlay of about 30 per cent. as compared with the preceding year; but on Loan Account—in which I included Railway Reserves moneys—there was only a small decrease. This table shows that a large increase has taken place in the expenditure on railways, no less than £682,000 out of a total of £901,000 having been spent on those useful works. Table R shows that fifty-nine miles of railway were opened for traffic during the year on the Southern and Western line, and twenty-five miles on the Central line. Assuming that the average cost of our railways does not now exceed £5,000 per mile, the work done on the various lines last year was equal to over 136 miles of line or nearly double the additional mileage actually made available for public traffic during the year. This information inspires the hope that when the various contracts now being carried out have been fulfilled, the effect of the increased mileage will be very perceptible on the traffic receipts. The percentage of expenses to receipts on the Southern and Western Railway shows no diminution, owing to the unusual flood damages of last summer; but in this matter an improvement may be looked for during the current year.

The Estimates of Expenditure for the current year will, I think, on examination be found to be framed with due economy. No doubt large increases have in some items taken place. These increases, however, are for the most part due either to extended services, to disbursements made under existing laws over which the Government have no control, or to increased interest on the Public Debt. In Schedule B an increase takes place of £2,714 through the operations of the Civil Service Act. The endowment to Grammar Schools and Municipalities has increased by £5,000. A new item appears in the subsidy to Divisional Boards of £50,000, which is more than balanced this year by the reduction in the Works Department of Roads and Bridges to the extent of £71,000. The amount of endowment paid under the Divisional Boards Act can as yet be scarcely approximated, but the provision made of £50,000 in the Estimates, being at the rate of £100,000 for the year, will, it is believed, meet all current demands. About one-third of the amount of the vote of £100,000, appropriated last year to meet the first year's expenditure, has been already placed to the credit of the various boards, and the balance available, together with the revenue vote asked, will place a substantial amount at the disposal of each board without serious pressure from local taxation; while the more effectual supervision exercised by the local authorities should secure better results, as well as more impartial distribution, than were attainable under the management of the Central Government.

The interest on the public debt is increased by £80,000. The estimate for the Registrar-General's department has increased £5,720, through the provision requisite for taking the census during the current year. The expense of St. Helena has increased by £5,540, which is balanced by a proportionate reduction in the item, galls. The Government Printing Establishment is increased by £1,084; the Benevolent Asylum, £1,000; the Lunatic Asylum, £1,381; grants to public institutions and smaller items of a similar character are increased £6,000. Public instruction requires an additional amount of £10,000. For our extended railway system I have provided an additional expenditure of £20,000. The total expenditure I thus anticipate will be £1,689,982.

In endeavouring to make the revenue meet the expenditure for the current year, I have given due

consideration to the various proposals for increasing the former. I see as little reason now as I did last year to materially increase the revenue of the colony through the Custom House. Our fixed duties are admittedly high, and it is very doubtful whether, for any length of time, an increase in our *ad valorem* duties would add to the Treasury receipts. I consider that a land tax, by the general Government, which, in some countries and in certain circumstances, is a legitimate source of revenue, in this country would be entirely inadmissible. A permanent tax on land would have the immediate effect of lowering the value of all the lands in the colony by a capital amount in proportion to the tax. The largest landholder in this colony is the Government, which owns over 97 per cent. of the whole. The tax, therefore, would fall heavily on the Government; in other words, its operation would be to depreciate the selling price of Crown lands for the future; to lower the price at which land could be disposed of either by selection or sale, and thereby permanently to cripple one of the main feeders of our revenue. Several members of this House have advocated the imposition of an export duty on wool, of an assessment on stock, and of an increase in the rents of the pastoral tenants of the Crown. Perhaps no industry has been so severely tried in the last few years as the pastoral industry. To no industry do we look with more hope for a general revival of trade. For some time cattle-owners have not even been clearing expenses in their business, much less earning interest on the capital employed. Sheep-owners have lately been better placed, but they have barely recovered from the terrible losses they endured in 1877 and 1878. To tax these industries at the present time would be imposing on them burdens which they are not able to bear. Besides, it is very questionable whether an increase of rents in the pastoral districts—could that be attained—would materially add to the revenue. We have an instructive lesson before us in the action taken by the late Government with regard to the rent of runs in the settled districts. In 1876 the rents received for the settled districts were £21,083; in 1879, the rents were doubled, and although the most strenuous exertions have been made by the Government to obtain the highest price for all the runs in the several districts, the total rent received for 1879 was only £18,070. No doubt a certain proportion of these lands was not included in the new leases, having been selected during the years 1877 and 1878, but not sufficient to make up the difference between £18,000 and £21,000. In the adjoining colonies an import duty on sugar is a fertile source of revenue. From its manufacture in this colony it has ceased to be so here, and it was worthy of consideration whether an excise duty might not be placed on that article. An excise duty to the extent of £3 a ton would have realised about £21,000. The difficulty and expense of collecting such a tax, however, appeared to me on mature consideration to be so great as to render the proposition impracticable.

While coming to the determination not to ask the House to increase the *ad valorem* or fixed duties, with a few exceptions to which I will specially advert, I have, however, considered it wise to take advantage of the opportunity, which I could not find last year, of laying before the Committee certain changes I propose in the tariff, with the view to rectify a few anomalies that at present exist. These will subsequently appear when I have given shortly the amounts that I expect under the different heads of revenue.

Customs I estimate will produce this year £522,000; excise, by assimilating the duty on spirits to that of customs, £57,000; stamp duty

I estimate at £45,000, about what it realised last year, but still less than it yielded in previous years; land revenue, without including auction lands, I estimate at £379,000. Receipts from public works—£200,000 from Southern and Western Railway, £85,000 from Central Railway, £50,000 from the post office, £36,000 from the telegraphs, £17,000 from harbours and light dues, £5,500 from escort fees—making a total from works and services of £393,500. I think this estimate justified both from a moderately-increased traffic that we may anticipate, and the additional length of line that will be open. Fees of office, fines and forfeitures, and other receipts, I estimate at £115,000. Last year I estimated the lands to be sold by auction at £70,000; we realised £77,895. Without advocating the wholesale system of alienating the lands adopted for many years in New South Wales, I still consider that land sales have not contributed sufficiently to the revenue of the colony, when we recollect the enormous area in the possession of the Crown, and the large outlay incurred for interest upon the cost of permanent, but not yet reproductive, improvements that have been made to the public estate. If you turn to Table W., page 18, of the tables accompanying my Statement, you will find that while the territorial revenue in Queensland is only 26 per cent. of the total revenue, in South Australia it is 33 per cent., and in New South Wales 36 per cent. These are the only two colonies which for extent of territory can be compared with Queensland. The above comparison is made between the whole territorial revenue and the total revenue: when, however, the comparison is made between the revenue derived from sales of land alone, and the total revenue, the small proportion that the former bears in this colony to what it does in others becomes still more apparent. In 1879-80, in Queensland, land sales formed only 6 per cent. of the revenue, in South Australia they furnished 21, and in New South Wales 20. Were I to carry the comparison farther back with the latter colony, the divergence between the proportion here and there would be shown to be very much greater. I propose to increase the sales by auction here to £175,000, or 10 per cent. of the gross revenue. A question of this kind cannot be fairly dealt with without considering fully the question of capital. Is there capital in the colonies at present to invest in land? Judging by the experience of the last two years that would seem doubtful, but when you calculate the immense accession of British capital to the colonies within the last twelve months, you will find grounds for being satisfied that at no time for many years past has there been a better chance of diverting capital towards this source of revenue. Within the last twelve months, between Colonial Government loans, capital of financial companies, and the returns for our grain and wool crops, the colonies have been supplied with British capital to the extent of twenty-one millions. No doubt a large portion of this has been used to fill up the deficiencies in the bank reserves, which bad times had so reduced; but the ease in the money market, and the confidence with which the trading classes look forward to lower rates, is a safe indication to a Treasurer that plenty of money will be forthcoming for the purchase of land.

I find that under the operations of the Railway Reserves Acts the late Government had caused to be surveyed for sale by auction the large area of 634,000 acres, none of which has yet been alienated. The Government have no intention to confine their operations to this land, but have little doubt that from it and other lands available the estimate will be easily realised. Nor do they anticipate that the effect will be to prevent or even to discourage settlement. Spread

over the whole colony, the area proposed to be sold should rather stimulate settlement, by creating a permanent interest in the soil, and attracting capital for the carrying out of improvements calculated to increase its productiveness.

In addition to the revenue at present received under customs, I calculate on an increase under two items. I propose to levy a duty of 2s. per 100 feet superficial on log cedar exported.

The export of cedar is an industry which has never contributed to the revenue of the colony in proportion to the advantages gained by those in the trade. The imposition of a duty was recommended by a Select Committee which sat on Forest Conservancy in the year 1875, and that is the only practicable method, that I can see, of realising for the colony some equivalent for the loss of one of its valuable indigenous products. It is proposed to exact the duty on log timber alone. Should, however, the duty have the effect of causing cedar for the future to be manufactured in the colony, and afterwards exported, then the indirect advantages alone may be considered a justification for the imposition of the tax.

Under the present tariff the duty on candles is 2d. per lb., equivalent to an *ad valorem* of 25 per cent. Stearine is admitted at a duty of 5 per cent. The consequence of this anomaly is that stearine has been introduced here from the neighbouring colonies and manufactured into candles, with a loss to the revenue of something like the difference between 5 and 20 per cent. By the imposition of the duty on stearine the price of candles will not be increased, but we shall save to the revenue an amount that is at present being paid for the protection of the manufacture of the article in the adjoining colonies.

At present the duty on imported brandy is 12s. a gallon; on other spirits, 10s.; the excise duty on spirits manufactured in the colony is 6s. 8d. This can only be viewed as a protective duty, and one of the least advisable kind. The effect of the differential duty has been demoralising, for there is reason to believe that the Customs has been defrauded by the extensive imitations of foreign spirits manufactured in the colony, while the public health has probably suffered materially by the consumption of immature and unwholesome spirits.

I further propose to allow spirits to be methylated in bond, such methylated spirits to pay a duty of 2s. per gallon. Under the law no spirit should leave bond without paying the prescribed duty. Notwithstanding this, however, I find that under the authority of an Executive Minute, dated 26th January, 1871, the practice has been to allow methylated spirits to be taken out of bond in payment of a duty of 6d. per gallon. My proposition will put a stop to this illegal action, and impose a duty which cannot be deemed excessive.

Acids, boats, leather, and screws, I propose to take out of the fixed duties and put them into the *ad valorem*.

The increased duty on stearine, the export duty on cedar, and the increased excise on spirits will, I calculate, supplement the revenue to the extent of £28,000.

With these proposed changes, I estimate a total revenue for the year of £1,722,500; the total expenditure I have estimated at £1,689,982; leaving an estimated excess of revenue over expenditure of £32,518. No doubt this amount is much too small to provide for unforeseen expenditure for the year. Hon. members, however, will see when I come to deal with the present deficit that the above excess will, from another source, be supplemented to the extent of £78,037.

I will now explain how I mean to deal with the debit balance of £239,006 12s. 7d. Last year we admitted in the Railway Reserves Act Amendment Act the principle that the whole revenue of the lands ought to go to the Consolidated Revenue Account. By that Act there was transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Account £129,821 14s., being the cash balance to the credit of the Railway Reserve Fund unexpended. The whole amount that had been raised under the Railway Reserves Acts, on the same principle, ought certainly to have gone to Consolidated Revenue. Had it not been used to supply the place of moneys which ordinarily come from loan, the amount would have been available for the Consolidated Revenue. There was raised altogether under the Railway Reserves Acts £446,884 10s. 7d.: there has been already transferred to the Consolidated Revenue £129,821 1s. 4d., leaving £317,063 9s. 1d., which by the principle of the Act passed last year ought also to be transferred. That balance I propose now to transfer to the Consolidated Revenue, which will leave that account in credit on the 30th June last to the extent of £78,056 16s. 6d. This amount, added to my anticipated excess of revenue over expenditure, will give me a total excess of revenue of £110,575. To carry out this arrangement legislative authority must be obtained, and the £317,000 must be included in the first Loan Bill. In the meantime authority will be asked to issue Treasury bills for that amount, bearing 5 per cent. interest, which it may be found expedient to use, but which will not be sold unless funds are actually required.

I have thus explained how I propose to deal with the present deficit in a way consistent with the principles already admitted by the House, and always acted on until the time when the experiment of the Railway Reserves was attempted. My proposal has simply the effect of transferring back to the revenue sums which I consider should never have been taken from it. I have previously explained how, having got rid of the deficit, I propose to provide for the year's expenditure.

LOAN ACCOUNT.—On the 1st of July, 1879, the Loan Account was in credit £318,483 7s. 4d. There was sold during the year debentures to the extent of £1,377,211 9s. 2d. There was expended during the year £970,336 7s. 9d., leaving a balance to the credit of the account at the 30th of June of £725,358 8s. 9d. The debentures sold included the amount realised for the 1878 loan—viz., £1,045,794 14s. 6d., and a deposit of £331,416 14s. 8d. paid on the sale of the £2,000,000 of debentures issued under the Loan Act of 1879.

The large increase under the head of interest upon the public debt I propose to meet, as already indicated, by increased sales of Crown lands. This intention is strictly consistent with the policy I have repeatedly enunciated in past years, namely, that while it would be inexpedient to construct railways out of land revenue, the public estate may be prudently drawn upon to defray the interest charge accruing upon capital expended upon uncompleted lines, as well as upon those which, by making the interior easily accessible, not only encourage settlement, but also give to large areas of land, previously almost worthless, and wholly inconvertible, a realisable cash value. With so practically an almost inexhaustible resource at command, I do not think the Treasurer would be justified in further adding to the public burdens for the purpose of opening up the dormant resources of the great interior of the colony.

At the time of my arrival in England, last December, I found the money market in an unsettled state, and Australian securities in some

disfavour in consequence of the large applications for loans recently made and impending. The stock of the colonies, whose indebtedness was large in proportion to their population, was much depressed, and investors insisted on applying that test in fixing the value of the respective securities. I found that New Zealand had just placed £5,000,000 on terms pronounced highly satisfactory, but which on investigation appeared to me the reverse, the price realised for the 5 per cent. stock, £97 10s., being equivalent to rather less than £80 for 4 per cents. I found also that the South Australian Government were awaiting a favourable moment for placing their £3,000,000 loan, and that the quotation for that colony's stock was just 6 per cent. higher than that of Queensland. After careful inquiry and consultation with my financial advisers, I therefore came to the conclusion that, if offered in January, our loan could not be expected to realise more than 85. A very general belief obtained among investors that the works on which we were engaged would compel me to apply at once for the full sum authorised by the Loan Act of last year. Hence I determined to await a more favourable state of the money market, and endeavour, by disseminating correct and reassuring information as to the condition, resources, and prospects of the colony, to raise the estimation in which our securities were held. About the middle of January our debentures commenced to rise, and the market continued to improve until March, when their price relatively to that of the other colonial securities determined me to place the loan early in the following month, and to invite tenders for two-thirds the authorised amount. The transaction proved successful, and the Loan Fund was thus placed in the position to carry on the public works of the colony on the existing scale for nearly two years from the commencement of the present financial year.

But although the loan was thus advantageously placed, my visit to the mother country confirms me in the conviction that if we desire to carry on the great public works already initiated to an early completion, some means must be found of doing so other than the authorisation of further loans. I am still satisfied of the necessity of a system of railways to provide that quick and certain means of internal communication which is essential to the progress of the colony. I am also satisfied that if provision could be made temporarily for the accumulating interest charge, the construction of the railways by means of borrowed money must eventually prove a remunerative undertaking to the Government. At the same time, having regard to prospective revenue exigencies as well as to the preconceived opinions of the British money-lender, I am constrained to advise that the enterprise of private capitalists be enlisted in the work of railway extension. While in England I ascertained beyond doubt that gentlemen of unquestioned position in the monetary world are prepared, on equitable terms, to complete our trunk railways on a system of land grants. By acceding to their proposals the indebtedness of the colony would be confined within prudent limits, and the advantage of a continued stream of foreign capital would be insured.

I am free to admit that the system of land grants, like every other human device, is marked by imperfections and may be liable to abuses. But I believe it is also attended by peculiar advantages. The capitalist who constructs a railway through unoccupied country in consideration of alternate blocks of land along the route must look to the introduction and planting of population on the soil as the only practicable means of making his undertaking

remunerative. He must, therefore, not only construct the railway works, but also maintain an immigration agency. Moreover, to attract traffic to his railway, he must offer inducements which experience has shown cannot be safely offered by any Government. I am, therefore, deliberately of opinion that statutory powers may be advantageously granted by Parliament under which our trunk railways may be continued with vigour, and to the manifest advantage of the best interests of the colony.

The negotiation of the greater portion of the loan of last session places the Government in possession of funds for the prosecution of the various works authorised by Parliament. Among the more important of these are the several branch railways, designed to meet the wants of the agricultural and mining districts, while acting as feeders to the trunk lines. Already the plans of some of these railways await the sanction of Parliament; others are in course of preparation, and will shortly be presented for your approval. In the meantime the Government invite your most earnest consideration to the Bill now before the Assembly, for facilitating the construction of railways and tramways along the public roads of the colony. This measure the Government deem essential to protect the tax-paying public against the claims, usually excessive, and always difficult to dispute, of the land-owners, whose properties are almost invariably benefited by the railways intersecting them. The general extension of branch lines is so obviously dependent upon their construction at a cost affording reasonable hope of their becoming speedily remunerative, that I trust honourable members on both sides of the House will unite to place the Railway and Tramway Bill on the statute-book without unreasonable delay.

I have now, Mr. Scott, completed my review of the more striking facts relating to the financial position. But for the fear of wearying the Committee, observations on many important phases of the subject might have been profitably extended. I think enough has been said, however, to show that the fiscal situation is not altogether unsatisfactory. Although occasionally embarrassed by the difficulties everywhere encountered in the settlement of new countries, and liable to the several alternations of prosperity and adversity incidental to all young communities, the colonists of Queensland are rich in the uncontrolled possession of a vast national estate of priceless value and almost illimitable resources. Immediate prospects, it is true, are not exceptionally good; yet, on the whole, they are the reverse of discouraging. It is evident that the severe test applied to the colony by its recent adversity has but served to demonstrate the security and extended basis of its varied interests and resources. Nor are indications wanting that the confidence of the people in the colony is shared by their fellow countrymen elsewhere. Capital is again abundant, and only awaits profitable employment; the pastoral and agricultural wealth of the colony, some of which has become inconvertible at remunerative prices, chiefly because its annual yield has overtaken the demands of the Australian markets, continues to rapidly accumulate; the several mining industries are being conducted with undiminished success; and the benefit of railway, steamship, postal, and telegraphic communication are becoming appreciable in the remotest districts of the colony. All that is now wanting to restore a full measure of prosperity is the means of placing our surplus food products within the reach of the British consumer; and that problem is, it may be hoped, now in a fair way of solution. I sincerely trust, also, that the

policy of the Government, as foreshadowed in this Statement, will, if sanctioned by Parliament, contribute in some measure to the return of that confidence in the resources of the colony which is justified by the difficult experience of the past and the encouraging prospects of the early future. I will now conclude by moving:—

That towards making good the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, there be collected and paid in lieu of the duties of Customs now levied upon the undermentioned articles, the several duties following, that is to say—

1st. On Acids	} An <i>ad valorem</i> Duty of five per cent.
„ Boats	
„ Leather	
„ Screws	
On Tallow and Stearine	} A Duty of 1½d. per lb.
On Spirits Distilled in the Colony	
On Spirits Methyiated in Bond	} 2s. per gallon.

2nd. That there be collected and paid on all Log Cedar Timber—the produce of Queensland—exported from the Colony, a duty of 2s. per one hundred superficial feet, one inch thick.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he should like to know what the Premier proposed to do this afternoon.

The PREMIER said he did not desire, and it would be unreasonable to ask for, an immediate discussion of the Financial Statement, which had cost him a great deal of consideration, and which hon. members might desire time to look over. What he intended to do now was to ask the Committee to pass the resolution he had proposed, so as to enable him to collect the several duties there specified to-morrow morning. The resolution would require to be followed by a Bill; he had no intention to bring it in and pass it through all its stages to-night. The Government would be satisfied with the passing of the resolution.

Mr. DICKSON said he thought it undesirable to pass the resolution this afternoon. The Government possessed the power to collect the increased duties at once, and hold the funds so collected in a suspense account until the question was definitely settled. The consideration of the proposed changes in the tariff might involve the discussion of the entire Financial Statement, inasmuch as arguments might be urged that might possibly induce the Colonial Treasurer to modify or extend his list. That was done in 1874, when the Treasurer of the day, in dealing with his tariff resolutions, made several modifications in them. By postponing the consideration of the resolution no restriction was placed on the action of the Government; and, if the Colonial Treasurer insisted upon the passing of the resolution to-night, it would lead to a very long debate, for it might be necessary to go into the whole question of the tariff and the whole of the Treasurer's financial proposals. He submitted, therefore, that the consideration of the matter should be left over till Tuesday, when the debate on the Statement would take its ordinary course; and then, as in 1874, the Colonial Treasurer might accept modifications suggested in the course of the debate. The hon. gentleman had full power to collect the enhanced duties immediately, the revenue would not suffer, and hon. members would have an opportunity of more fully considering the subject, which would not then be closed to discussion.

The PREMIER said that in 1874 the then Colonial Treasurer brought in a new tariff, and asked the Committee to discuss it item by item. They refused to do so, and the result was a compromise exactly like what he now asked the Com-

mittee to do—namely, to pass a resolution embodying all the items prior to their being discussed *seriatim* in the Bill subsequently to be brought in. All the Committee was now asked to do was to affirm that certain articles should be charged an *ad valorem* duty, and that on certain other articles a specified duty should be imposed. When the Bill came to be considered, those items, though they could not be increased, might be diminished, or knocked off altogether. All he wanted now was a recognition by the Committee that he had a right to collect the duties to-morrow morning. That was the system followed in the House of Commons—duties were levied immediately after the resolution had been passed in Committee of Ways and Means, and not before.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it would be desirable first to consider what the incidence of the proposed changes in the tariff would be. It was impossible to find out at a glance from the tables. He wanted to know the difference between an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. on the articles specified and the duty at present imposed? For aught he knew it might be a reduction. The Colonial Treasurer had furnished no details, and the Committee had not sufficient information before them to enable them to discuss the propositions now. It would almost be necessary for him, if they went on this afternoon, to make a supplementary statement giving the details, without which they would be in the dark. The question of putting an increased duty on spirits manufactured in the colony was a very serious one; it would open up a wide question, on which different opinions might exist. As to the duty on cedar, he believed hon. members on both sides were fully agreed. In 1874, to which reference had been made, the then Colonial Treasurer introduced an almost entirely new tariff, but with this distinction, that his object was to reduce taxation, not to increase it, and there was no question about raising a large additional revenue. On the present occasion the real question was whether the proposals of the Colonial Treasurer were sufficient and satisfactory for the existing wants of the colony. If the resolution was disposed of and brought up in the form of a Bill, no hon. member could propose an increase in it, whereas in Committee of Ways and Means any amendment might be proposed. Speaking from recollection, he was under the impression that on a previous occasion, when the 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty was carried, an hon. member who was not a member of the Government succeeded in obtaining the rejection of the proposals of the Government, and successfully moved a proposition for the *ad valorem* duty, which was of an entirely different kind. If it was necessary to pass a resolution to enable the Colonial Treasurer to collect the tariff to-morrow there would be some reason for going on with the resolutions now. But such was not the case; and besides, if the resolution was disposed of to-night, there being no other motion before the Committee of Ways and Means, the Committee would be at an end until the financial business of the session was practically concluded. It might be necessary to move that money should be raised by other means, and there would be no opportunity of doing so if the resolution were disposed of to-night, for the Committee would not sit again until the Estimates were through and the formal resolutions were proposed for appropriating money from the Consolidated Revenue. As to the powers of the Colonial Treasurer, it was laid down in "May" that, when a resolution in Committee of Ways and Means was reported to the House, it was customary to act upon it, although the power to do so was not, strictly speaking, a legal one. The Colonial Treasurer had without the reso-

lution being reported an equal power, and certainly no objection would be raised to these duties being collected by the Colonial Treasurer; that, he believed, was what was done in 1874. On that occasion, also, the Statement was a full one, and it was pointed out what the effect of each proposition would probably be. Another difference between that occasion and this was that, although the Committee then proceeded to consider the resolution that night, they only disposed of a small part of it. Everybody now was surprised at the small amount of additional taxation proposed in view of the financial condition of the colony. The Premier seemed to think that by additional taxation to the amount of £20,000 the country would go along swimmingly; and he (Mr. Griffith) would be glad if that were so. But the information they had just received was so surprising that they would like time for the consideration of the matter. It might be that some hon. members who were not members of the Government would like to propose some other means of raising revenue; and for that reason there should be an adjournment of the Committee before the business was disposed of, in order to give hon. members an opportunity of considering the whole question. He did not think that was an unreasonable proposal. If there were other matters for the consideration of the Committee he could understand the Government wishing to pass these resolutions now; but under the present circumstances there should be no objection to hon. members having an opportunity of getting all the information they could with respect to the Financial Statement and these resolutions now proposed.

Mr. GROOM said that a somewhat analogous case arose in 1870, when the hon. member for Western Downs, the Hon. R. Ramsay, who was then Colonial Treasurer, said:—

"The course which has been adopted by the Collector is this: He has sent a scaled copy of the tariff to every Custom House, with instructions to each sub-collector to act on it from to-morrow morning, unless he receives telegraphic instructions to the contrary."

That was on the 22nd November, and on the 24th November the Committee resumed, and the items proposed by the Treasurer in his resolution of the 22nd were then proposed in committee. Amendments were moved in order to make increases, in some cases even in opposition to the intention of the Colonial Treasurer. In fact, some of the amendments caused duties which the Colonial Treasurer proposed for revenue purposes to take a protective form. Various increases were then moved and agreed to; and the Colonial Treasurer ought now to accede to the proposition of the leader of the Opposition, so that hon. members could consider the matter carefully. Considering the circumstances of the case, the course taken by the Treasurer in 1870 might well be followed now. The collectors of customs could be informed by telegraph of the duties they were to collect, and the Committee could discuss the question afterwards. In 1870 the course adopted was wise and reasonable; and subsequent events had proved it, for from that time the revenue steadily increased in consequence of the alterations in the tariff. The same course might be adopted at the present time with probably the same result. The change in the tariff proposed by the Government would no doubt take the country by surprise, because a much larger scheme of taxation was expected; and many things that were fully expected to be taxed were not touched at all, though it was well known there were some articles on which a tax would receive a large amount of support from outside. If a majority of the House were inclined to increase the revenue, he should be inclined to assist them, and so no doubt would the

Treasurer. As to the present course of procedure, he would remind the Committee that in 1870 the tariff was submitted by the Colonial Treasurer, and two days afterwards a discussion took place on the whole question; and the same thing might be done now.

Mr. KING hoped the Premier would act upon the precedent set in 1870, and give the Committee plenty of time to consider the proposed alterations in the tariff, and in the meantime collect duties on the Executive authority vested in him. He would point out one reason in favour of that course. At different times since the passing of the tariff of 1874 fault had been found with some of its provisions, which were undoubtedly faulty; and the objection was raised that any attempt to remedy the faults pointed out would have to be held over till a general revision of the tariff took place. He would remind hon. members of a matter that was brought forward by the late hon. member for Brisbane (Mr. Stewart). At the present time there was a duty on flax and hemp actually higher than that on cordage and ropes; that was to say, a higher duty on the raw material than on the manufactured article, which was very discouraging to the manufacturers of the colony. There was also a duty of 6d. a bushel on wheat, while flour was admitted free. It was very absurd to tax wheat and allow flour to go untaxed, for if wheat were imported duty free the millers in the colony might derive some benefit. There were some other matters in the tariff that should be considered, and he hoped that the Treasurer would give the Committee time to consider the resolution.

The PREMIER would like to have heard some precedents in favour of what had been asked. All the precedents he was aware of were in favour of the course he was now pursuing. The Committee clearly understood that when he asked them to pass the resolution it was simply to give him a legal position to collect the duties proposed. He did not wish to prevent full discussion on the duties he proposed: he simply asked the Committee to give an air of legality to any proceedings they might take, which course had been pursued by every Colonial Treasurer previously. Since he had been in the House any alteration in the duties had always been proposed in Committee of Ways and Means. "May" said:—

"In the imposition and alteration of taxes the effect given to a vote of the Commons, in anticipation of the passing of a statute, is more remarkable than in the voting of supplies. It has been customary for the Government to levy the new duties, instead of the duties authorised by law, immediately the resolutions for that purpose have been reported from a committee and agreed to by the House; or from the date expressed in such resolutions, although legal effect cannot be given to them by statute for some weeks and may ultimately be withheld by Parliament."

It seemed, therefore, that the invariable practice was that no new duties should be collected without a resolution being reported by the Committee of Ways and Means. He would take the precedent of 1870. In 1870, the Colonial Treasurer, after making his Financial Statement, moved:—

"That there shall be collected and paid, in lieu of the duties of Customs now levied upon the undermentioned articles, the several duties following, that is to say:—"

Then followed a long list of between twenty and thirty articles, the duties on which were altered in many cases by being increased, so that the leader of the Opposition was wrong in saying that taxation could not be increased. In 1874 the *ad valorem* duties were reduced. The duties on Schedule A—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You mentioned 1870, just now.

The PREMIER said he was speaking of 1874, when Mr. Hemmant's tariff was under discussion. On that occasion there was a long discussion which was ended at last by a compromise. The only object of the Treasurer was to get some legality for proceeding to collect the duties on the next day. After five hours' discussion on the point whether the resolution should be passed till a Bill was brought before the House, the schedule was passed *in globo*. And that was what he asked for now. The Treasurer then insisted on discussing and passing the whole of the items first, and bringing in a Bill afterwards. That was the course in 1874. The Colonial Secretary had just pointed out to him that the precedent quoted by the hon. member for Toowoomba was quite the other way. On that occasion the House continued to sit till midnight, and then passed the resolution, which was a resolution similar to the one now before the Committee. The question was put and passed, and a Bill afterwards introduced which went through every one of its stages.

Mr. GROOM said he desired to correct the hon. the Premier. On the occasion he (Mr. Groom) referred to the House resumed, the Chairman reported progress, and the Committee sat again on the following day. He well remembered that on the 25th November the Committee sat till midnight, and continued till 5 o'clock before the tariff was eventually got through. On the day the Treasurer delivered his Financial Statement he adjourned. If the hon. the Premier would look at *Hansard*, volume XI., page 64, he would find the case he referred to.

Mr. THORN said that he recollected very well that on the occasion referred to the tariff proposals were submitted *seriatim*. Hon. members might be inclined to oppose some of the items, or to increase some of the proposed duties.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he presumed the hon. gentleman wished the resolution to be passed in order to furnish him with an authority to collect the duties, but he would point out to the hon. gentleman that he had that authority without any resolution. The matter was not of much consequence one way or the other, and he should have no objection to the resolution passing if the hon. gentleman wished it. The resolution could only give the hon. gentleman a power which he already possessed, and the whole subject would have to be re-discussed. He had the power—

The PREMIER: How?

Mr. DOUGLAS: It is the recognised practice.

The PREMIER: Can the hon. gentleman point to one case in which the Treasurer has collected duties without the authority of a resolution of a Committee of Ways and Means?

Mr. GROOM: 1870.

The PREMIER said he had been looking for a precedent, but did not find that duties had been collected before the Committee of Ways and Means came to a resolution. He did not ask for any debate now, knowing that the whole question would be discussed when a Bill embodying the resolution came before the House. Hon. members could then make any alteration in the items, so long as they did not increase any of the proposed duties; and if there should be a general disposition on the part of the House to do that, there would be no difficulty in re-constituting the Committee of Ways and Means and introducing another resolution. This was only a formal matter, and he wished to act in accordance with the precedent of the home Parliament, and with the action of our own Legislature in 1874, in which the leader of the Opposition concurred.

Mr. GRIFFITH said this was not altogether a formal matter. The position was very different from that of a Bill in committee founded upon a resolution of a Committee of Ways and Means. The imposition of taxation could only originate in Committee of Ways and Means, and while in Committee of Ways and Means any member of the House could propose any new tax he chose. When the proposals got out of Committee of Ways and Means the House had simply to deal with the resolutions which had been agreed to. At the present stage any member might propose additional taxation—a land tax, tax on wool, or any other conceivable tax—and every member had equal rights; but when the proposals had passed this stage the duties proposed might be reduced but could not be increased. The hon. gentleman said that in 1874 he (Mr. Griffith) concurred in the course of action then taken. He certainly supported the Government then, but he knew at that time very little about financial matters; and he believed that in the course of the debate he made a proposal.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You took an extreme view, and insisted upon the items being passed in detail.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not remember that, but, at all events, the real business was done in Committee of Ways and Means. Hon. members were all anxious that the Treasurer should be enabled to collect the duties to-morrow, and the general opinion seemed to be that they were fixed too low rather than too high. The duty upon spirits involved a matter of policy, and upon that point he would express no opinion now. With regard to the substitution of *ad valorem* for fixed duties on some articles, hon. members would be in a better position to form a judgment if they were informed of the value of the articles imported and the extent to which the change would be likely to affect trade. The duty on acids was the first item. According to table V in the Treasurer's tables, acids and saltpetre were at present taxed at the rate of 4s. per cwt., and the amount of revenue realised was altogether £403. That amount might perhaps be fairly divided between the two articles, giving £200 as the result from the duty on acids; but hon. members did not know whether the substitution of *ad valorem* duty would have the effect of increasing or decreasing the yield from that impost. The next item was boots, but, as far as hon. members could discover from table V, boots already paid an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent., so that on that item there would be no change at all. The present duty on leather was 2d. a pound, and apparently it only realised £744.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Because the importation was stopped.

Mr. GRIFFITH said hon. members would have to consider how encouraging the importation would affect the leather trade and the boot manufacturing trade, which was an important one. Was the alteration an increase or a reduction? It seemed hardly probable that a duty by which only £744 was realised would have the effect of keeping out leather. From nails and screws, at a duty of 2s. per cwt., £693 was realised, and probably the greater part of that sum was derived from the duty on nails. The amount of duty realisable from the first articles enumerated probably would not exceed £500 altogether. As hon. members did not know what quantity of tallow and stearine was being imported under the present *ad valorem* duty, they had no means of ascertaining what would be the effect upon trade of the proposed alteration. The Treasurer was understood to say that this alteration would have the effect of changing the course

of trade, but he did not state in what way or to what extent. Would it tend to raise or to diminish the revenue? With respect to the proposed increased excise duties, he should like to be informed of the number of gallons of spirits produced in the colony. He would say nothing about the merits of that question now. The question of methylated spirits seemed a small one. If the resolutions were now agreed to there would be an end to the matter, so that this was not a purely formal business. Hon. members should understand that the discussion of this matter was not a merely formal ventilation of opinion; the case was not like that when the Colonial Treasurer brought down his Financial Statement and moved the first item of the Estimates *pro forma*. The Committee of Ways and Means was the place where it was necessary for the House to consider any proposal for altering the taxation of the colony, and he was anxious to get all possible information before considering the proposal. It was necessary first to find out whether the alterations were really worth talking about at all.

The PREMIER said he had explained that his only desire was to get the authority which the House of Commons always gave to the action of the Collector of Customs, and he had found, now, that there was a precedent in 1870 when the resolution in Committee of Ways and Means did not pass until two days after the Collector commenced to collect duties under the new tariff. He was very glad to have found the precedent, being more inclined to follow that precedent than to adopt the course he had before proposed. He would prefer to allow the matter to wait, especially if there was any probability of the hon. member for Maryborough helping him, as the hon. gentleman had hinted, by proposing an alteration of the duties in the direction of increasing the revenue. He (Mr. McIlwraith) had no intention of making any such proposition, but perhaps the hon. gentleman might see his way to send funds to the Treasury which he (Mr. McIlwraith) did not anticipate. With regard to the information asked for by the leader of the Opposition, he was quite prepared to give as much as he knew. He had moved acids from among the fixed duties to the *ad valorem* list because the variations in the prices of that article were so great that an *ad valorem* duty acted more equitably. The same argument applied to boats.

Mr. GRIFFITH: It is boots in the schedule.

The PREMIER said that was a misprint—it should be boats. Leather also varied in price from 7d. a pound to 8s. or 9s., and a duty of 2d. a pound was something enormous on the cheapest kinds, whilst it was next to nothing upon the valuable leather imported from home. The duty on screws was not a very important matter. Stearine had been taken out of the *ad valorem* list simply because the Customs were losing money under the present system. There was a duty of 2d. a pound on candles, which was equivalent to about 25 per cent. Under the old tariff, stearine was introduced here at a duty of 5 per cent., and moulded into candles; so that the colony was giving 20 per cent. protection to the manufacturer of stearine in other colonies. He should be inclined to make the duty on stearine exactly the same as that on candles were it not that a manufacture had been already established, and such an alteration might be considered unjust. He would therefore intimate, now, that duties would be collected to-morrow on the new scale upon his responsibility, and that he expected to be in a position to go on with the discussion of the Financial Statement on Tuesday next. He moved that the Chairman leave the chair.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked when the hon. gentleman would give the information he had asked for with reference to the quantity of spirits produced in the colony?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : You will find it in the Registrar-General's returns.

Mr. DICKSON said the Treasurer would greatly facilitate matters if he would cause a table to be prepared by Tuesday next showing the effect which the proposed alteration would have on the amount of revenue derived from the various articles, and also showing what would have been the amount of the Customs revenue to date if the proposed tariff had been in operation during last year. The hon. gentleman might also obtain a report from the Inspector of Distilleries to assist the House when dealing with the spirit duties.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the table might also be made to show the actual revenue received and that contemplated under the new tariff.

The PREMIER said the House should have the desired information.

Mr. THORN said he presumed the Treasurer had wired to the Collector of Customs in the North?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : The hon. member may safely leave the Treasurer to look after his own business.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

The PREMIER said there had been an understanding that private business should be proceeded with; but, there being nothing very important on the paper, he should prefer to adjourn.

The House accordingly adjourned at twenty minutes past 5 o'clock until Tuesday next.