Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 1880

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 29 September, 1880.

Toowoomba German Lutheran Church Land Sales Bill.—Licensing Boards Bill—third reading.—Local Government Bill—third reading.—Railway Companies Preliminary Bill—second reading.—Local Works Loan Bill—committee.—Gold Mining Appeals Bill—committee.—Pacific Islands Labourers Bill—committee.

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

TOOWOOMBA GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH LAND SALES BILL.

Mr. GROOM presented the report of the Select Committee on this Bill, and moved that the document be printed.

Question put and passed.

LICENSING BOARDS BILL—THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, and transmitted to the Council with the usual message.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL — THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, and transmitted to the Council with the usual message.

RAILWAY COMPANIES PRELIMINARY BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith), in moving the second reading of this Bill, said that it was only distributed amongst hon. members on Monday last, and, as they might think that he was giving too short a time for the consideration of the details of the matter before passing the second reading, he was quite willing to postpone the whole discussion on the second reading, or to make his explanation of the Bill itself, and then to adjourn the debate to some future time. He had no special desire to press the second reading at once, and perhaps the best course for him to adopt would be to say what he had to say with reference to the Bill and then to consent to further discussion on a future day. He hoped that the discussion would be taken as early as possible, because he considered the Bill one of the most important measures of the session. In the Railway Act of 1872 provision was made for receiving proposals from private persons to construct railways, and it seemed as if there was an intention on the part of the Legislature at the time to provide for making them on the basis of land grants. However, the details of such a system were not worked out in legislation—provision was simply made for the Government to deal with proposals, no matter what they were, so long as private persons would construct railways. He could scarcely see why that legislation was rendered necessary at all, because the only power that seemed to be given to the Government which they did not possess before was to hand over to the parties making the proposal the right to survey, which right the Government, by resolution of the House, had the power to give. The Act, at all events, failed to explain the nature of the principles of a system on which proposals for the construction of railways by private people, who were to be subsidised by land grants, could be dealt with by the Government, and the object of the Bill he was now bringing under the notice of the House was to work out a scheme of the kind. From another point of view it was plain enough that the same thing could be carried out without any legislation at all—that was, that the Government could accept provisionally, without legislation on the matter, proposals from any person or any company, and having so dealt with them provisionally, to afterwards submit their proposition, in the shape of a Bill, to the House, which, when it received the sanction of the House, would confirm the agreement. There was nothing to prevent the Government taking that action at the present time; but he believed the real bar to proposals to make railways on land grants was the fact that there was no Act in force which provided for the preliminary stages. Suppose a company in England made a proposition to build a railway in the colony, they would, according to the Act at present in force, have to state the details of their proposition, and afterwards get leave from the Government to survey the land and then give further details, so as to enable a Bill to be brought forward. On account of the time and expense which would be involved in these matters a company or a private person would be very chary about incurring it until, or rather before, they received some sort of idea of the kind of proposition which the legislature would be in a position to accept, or were likely to accept. That was the great point to be secured by the Bill. It would give parties at home who were inclined to make railways in the colony an idea of the kind of proposition which the Houses of Parliament would be prepared to accept. As he had said before, he believed the Act in force gave the Government power to make a provi-

sional agreement under which all the necessary preliminary work could be done, but he believed the passing of the Bill would enable parties at home to know what kind of agreement would be accepted by the Legislature of the colony. If they made a preliminary arrangement with the Government, and the Legislature would not pass an Act in the terms of the agreement, they would have broken faith with the tenderers unless something occurred to debar them from sanctioning the agreement. If a Bill such as that before the House were passed, therefore, he had no doubt that it would give confidence to parties at home, who would be willing to tender for the construction of railways in the colony on the land-grant system, and they would invest their money in surveys and other preliminaries before undertaking the work. The principle embodied in the Bill by which it was proposed to pay for the railways was not that implied by the words "paying for the railway by means of land grants," because, according to the Bill, the Government did not get the railway at all. The railway would remain the property of the company who built it. The principle might be rather characterised as a bonus given to a railway company to build a railway which afterwards remained the property of that company. That was the real transaction—it was not payment for the railway by land, but it was giving a bonus of land adjoining the line to the company who constructed the railway, the company retaining possession of the railway afterwards. That that principle was a good one under all circumstances he was not prepared to uphold. He had always upheld in the House that the business-like way to proceed, if the colony wanted railways, was for them to borrow the money themselves and employ the best engineers and contractors to make the railways, which would remain the property of the Government; but it was quite plain, from the length which they had gone up to the present, and from the kind of railways they were building, that they could not go much further in that way. If they did they would assuredly be brought to such a position that they would be unable to pay the interest from the ordinary revenue; consequently, it behoved them to look about for some means by which they could gain the object desired—that was, to have railways throughout the country, without having actually to disburse the money or become responsible for the interest. He thought if hon. members would just consider the statistics of the colony they would see one or two points to which attention should be directed. Their indebtedness was greater than that of any other colony—nearly double; they were taxed heavier than any other colony in the Australian group—that was, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, and Western Australia. In the next place, they had one of the smallest populations; but if they examined the statistics in another way they would find that they were in a much better position. They had a larger amount of land than any of the other colonies had, and they had a larger amount of land per head than any other colony had; but a large proportion of that land was at present virtually unremunerative. Anyone considering that position would see at once that they could easily part with that land without any great disadvantage to the colony, and anyone would understand the advantage which it would be to them if they had railways constructed through that land. Their position when they gave land grants along a railway line in exchange for the railway would be this: they would give up the position of landlord of a certain proportion of land in the colony. That land did not go from them; it remained part of the colony, and although the Government would not get the railway, the colony would get it. The bargain would be this: they would get the benefit of a railway by giving up the right of landlord of a certain portion of soil. When they considered the rights of the Government as landlord of the portion of land proposed to be given to the railway contractors, they would find that they were of a very small pecuniary character, that the land brought in very little to them, that its value was entirely in perspective, and that that value depended much on the operations of the railway company. Under such circumstances, he did not think that anyone would question that the Government were making a good bargain in giving the land for the railway. He should not expatiate on that matter. The principle had, he thought, been acknowledged in the House before, and therefore he should confine himself to an explanation of the details of the Bill. If the principle of the measure was discussed he would possibly have a chance of referring to it by replying on the second reading. He had explained that the Bill was for the purpose of enabling the Government to deal with preliminary offers made by any company to make railways here. Clause 2 gave the Government that power; it said—

> "The Government may from time to time enter into a provisional agreement with any persons or corporate body, hereinafter designated 'the contractors,' for the construction of a railway in or through any part of the colony."

All the clauses from that up to clause 30 embodied the conditions which Parliament would agree to if submitted to them. The Government were empowered to make an agreement, but it must be made subject to conditions provided for in the Bill in clauses 2 to 30. One of the first of these conditions was in clause 4—that the contractors should construct, maintain, and manage the railway at their own expense; further, that the railway they constructed was to be equal in quality to the railways which had been constructed in the colony up to the present time. He thought that the railways which they had constructed were of a good and permanent character, and that it was not necessary to require a higher class of line. Instead, therefore, of inserting long details, he thought it served all useful purposes to make a general provision that, at all events, the railway should not be inferior to lines already in existence. In the next place, after the railway was made it must be open for inspection before it would be allowed to be opened for traffic, and a certificate from the inspecting engineer would have to be given before it could be opened. Further, it was provided that if at any time afterwards it might occur that the line was unsafe for traffic, the Minister might interdict the traffic and suspend it until an engineer had certified that the line had been put in a fit state of repair. The next point was that in the agreement the company were to be bound to a certain amount of supervision over the tolls and charges on the line. That he had found a rather difficult detail to deal with, and it might possibly provoke some discussion. He had given power to the Government to fix the price that might be charged per mile for passengers and per mile per ton for goods, but the maximum rates which would be allowed would be 2d. per mile for passengers and 4d. per mile per ton for goods. The rate of 2d. per mile was something like what was charged on the Government railways for passengers other than in exceptional cases, and the maximum rate for goods was about 40 per cent. lower than the Government now charged. Originally he had fixed the maximum at the rates charged by the Government, but these varied so often, and were subject to influences which would not affect the operations of a

private company, that he thought that such a maximum would be an unfair one to fix. But that was not a detail of considerable importance, because it was the object of all railway companies to carry goods at the lowest possible price in order to encourage traffic. At the same time, the Government ought to have power to fix the maximum price to be charged. Another condition was that Her Majesty's mails and the necessary officers to work the mail service should be carried on the line free to the Government, and also that members of Parliament should be entitled to the same privileges of travelling free over the line as they enjoyed on the Government railways. The next condition was that the line was to be constructed in the time agreed upon in the preliminary arrangement. The next was that the contractors should get free all the land required for the construction of the railways and for the stations and other necessary buildings for working the line. It was necessary to make a clause providing for the state of the land tenure at the present time. Most of the land through which the railway would run was held under pastoral lease. The lessees had a right of pre-emption, and it was quite possible that from the time the preliminary agreement was accepted till the time when the Act passed selections might have been made so as to cross the route of the line. Some pastoral lessees might do so for the purpose of putting a hindrance in the way of the railway coming in that direction at all. There was a possibility of that, and it would be a constant temptation to do it, provided they were entitled to compensation. He had therefore provided that should any lands be pre-empted after the preliminary arrangement was made and before the Act was passed, the contractors should have a right of passing through those lands on payment of 10s. an acre, without any compensation for severance. That would be fair to both parties, for it might be with the object of extorting money that such a thing would be done, and it was necessary to make an arrangement by which the contractors could secure the land on equitable terms. Another condition was that the Government should exercise the authority they had under the various Railway Acts to procure for the contractors the necessary land which belonged to private persons; but all the expense in connection with it was to be borne by the contractors. The next condition—which was in favour of the contractors—was that they should have the right to cut and remove timber from Crown land, and take away stone, gravel, and other materials thereon, for the purpose of making the line. Clause 17 was as follows:—

"Whenever, for the purposes of this Act, any portion of Crown lands is resumed from pastoral lease, an indefeasible lease for the remainder of the term of the original lease shall be granted to the lessee for a portion of his run equal in area to the portion resumed, anything to the contrary in the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 or the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 notwithstanding."

That looked as if it were simply a provision in favour of the pastoral lessees of the ground; still it was necessary to put it into the agreement to show the contractors what land they had a right to select, and what not to select, and the conditions under which the remainder of the land not taken up by the contractors would for the future remain. Supposing 8,000 acres of land per mile was granted to the contractors, and that it was to consist of one-half the land on each side of the line, that would require the land to be cut up into blocks for 12½ miles on each side, or 25 miles right through. Without a provision of this sort, if the line went through a station that was not more than 25 miles wide, the whole of the lessee's property would be swallowed up. That would happen in some cases. Everyone would see that that would be a gross injustice to the men who had the smallest stations. If a station extended over 50 miles there would be no chance of the whole of it being gobbled up, and the large amount left would have an increased value in consequence of the railway being there. That would be some compensation to the squatter; but there might be many cases, and especially with the smallest men, where their runs would be entirely absorbed by the line passing through their properties. It had always been held and admitted by members interested that the squatters should be prepared to give up something on consideration of getting the advantage of a railway near them; but if the whole of a man's land was taken from him he could not possibly get any advantage from it. He thought, therefore, the fairest provision would be that, if 10,000 acres were taken from a man, the adjoining block of 10,000 acres should remain in his hands for the balance of his lease without the right of the Government to take any of it away from him. It was a very small amount of compensation, and one which he thought the House would not grumble at. Another reason why it must go into the conditions was that it was a very special consideration of the contractors that the Government should be debarred from selling the portion not selected by them for a certain number of years. Hitherto, proposing contractors for railways in Australia had always insisted that the Government should retain the land in the neighbourhood for a certain time, to give them time to dispose of their own land, so that they should not be undersold. To ask the Government not to dispose of any land in a certain district until the contractors had got rid of their own was too hard a condition to impose on the Government, and would very likely injure the Treasury. But he thought it would suit the contractors, the Crown tenants, and the Government if the blocks alternating with those given to the contractors remained as they were under pastoral leases until the balance of their lease expired. The pastoral lessee would have got some small compensation for having one-half of his land taken away from him, and the contractors would have some guarantee that the Government for a certain number of years would not be in competition with them in the sale of land, and the Government would have materially improved land to sell when the leases expired. Another provision was that all the railway material and rolling-stock required for the line should be admitted duty free, and he had also provided the rate at which it should be carried over the Government lines from the seaboard. Hon. members might perhaps see a discrepancy between clause 20 and clause 9. Clause 9 gave the Government power to prevent the contractors from charging more than 4d. per ton per mile, whereas by clause 20 they themselves contracted to carry railway material for 2d; but in reality there was no discrepancy, for the maximum rate for general goods was a different thing from the price at which a large amount of railway material could be carried. That kind of work was done at a much lower rate—often as much as one-eighth of the rate for general goods. The next condition to be inserted in the agreement referred to the granting of land to the contractors on the construction of a certain portion of the line. The provision was as follows:—

"Whenever, upon the certificate of the engineer, the Minister is satisfied that the whole of the line, or any prescribed section thereof not less than thirty miles in length, has been constructed faithfully of sound materials, according to the plans and sections approved by Parliament, and is complete and fit for public traffic, the Governor in Council may forthwith grant uncondition-

ally and in fee-simple to the contractors, an area of Crown lands not exceeding in the whole 8,000 acres for every mile of railway so constructed, subject to the following conditions, that is to say."

The sub-sections that followed showed how that land was to be selected. The word selection, however, was a mistake, because the contractors were to have no power of selection. Double the amount of land for fulfilling the contract, on each side of the line, was to be surveyed in blocks of a size which would be settled mutually between the Government and the contractors, and the Government having taken one block the contractors would take the next. There was no power of selection either with the Government or with the contractors; but the Government had the power of exchanging and of arranging that, if it should be suitable to both parties, several blocks might be taken together, although that was not included in the Bill. It might happen that the Government and the contractors would arrange that very large blocks of land should be surveyed. The maximum allowed for one block was 16,000 acres. He did not know that that might not be increased; it was a matter for deliberation. If the land was surveyed in 16,000-acre blocks, and the contractors got each alternate block, they would get exactly half the frontage; but if the land was surveyed in larger blocks, the larger the block the less frontage they would get in proportion to the amount surveyed, for they would require to go further out. The object of the subsections was to give the contractors one-half of the land in blocks equitably arranged, so that in no case should the contractors have more than one-half of the frontage to the railway line. In clauses 22 to 25 inclusive hon. members would see a new subject introduced that had not been discussed in the House before, but which had a certain value in the London money market, and would give the colony an advantage. The contractors would have to raise a certain amount of capital for the purpose of carrying on so large a work, and their object would be to borrow on as cheap terms as they possibly could. The men with whom he came in contact in London considered that with a Government guarantee they could borrow easily at 4 per cent., and they were willing to give the Government a certain consideration for endorsing their debentures to a certain extent. That consideration was that they would take a certain amount of land less per mile. The operation could be made perfectly safe to the Government. He could explain it more fully by referring to the company who made him the offer. They offered to construct a railway from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria for 10,000 acres of land per mile. When they had got so far they asked for a concession in which the Government would run no risk, and which would be a great advantage to them—namely, that the Government should guarantee the interest on their debentures to an amount equal to £1,500 per mile of railway constructed for a certain number of years. He (the Premier) considered that guarantee worth a certain amount of consideration, and they agreed to reduce the amount from 10,000 acres to 8,000. Estimating the railway at £4,500 a-mile, one-third of that amount would be £1,500. If the Government guaranteed the interest on debentures to that extent for twenty-one years, whenever the contractors failed to pay the interest the Government could step in and take possession of the railway and keep it. They would thus have a railway for one-third of the price it was estimated to have cost. The only risk the Government would run would be that through the failure of the contractors at any particular time they might suddenly be called upon to pay a large amount of interest without having funds in London for that purpose—so, to save the Government from any contingency of that kind, there was to be a running guarantee always in the hands of the Government from some bank or banks to pay the first year's interest. If the contractors got into such a position that they could not pay the interest on their debentures, and if the bank was called upon to pay it, the Government were authorised to take possession of the line at once, and to keep possession of it. It was entirely a matter of arrangement, and would greatly facilitate the borrowing of money in England by the contractors. If the contractors were willing to give a price for such a concession, and if the Government thought the price was good enough—as he believed it was—they might very well agree to the guarantee. There was one objection to it, however, and that was, that it might possibly be looked upon as an addition to the liabilities of the colony in the eyes of those who rule the London money market. Those people always gauged a colony's financial position by seeing what was its amount of indebtedness per head of the population, and the value of its credit was in proportion. It was, of course, an advantage to keep down the liability as much as possible. At present it stood at £47. By guaranteeing the interest on the contractors' debentures it might seem at first sight that they were increasing the liabilities of the colony. But the security was so good that they ran no risk from it, and it was so small a guarantee, and for such a limited period, that it would not be looked upon as one of our permanent liabilities. They did not run the risk of losing the £1,500 of capital, but only the interest on £1,500 for twenty-one years, and the security was a railway which cost £4,500 a-mile. And it was always a diminishing time. Clause 27 gave power to the Governor in Council to purchase the railway; but it did not give him the permission, for before any such purchase could be carried out it would require the sanction of Parliament. A provision of that kind was necessary, for it might happen that at some future time the Government might wish to have possession of the whole of the railways. Clauses 28, 29, and 30 provided the means by which the value of the line was arrived at, should the Government make up their minds to purchase it. Clause 31 provided—

"Every agreement made subject to the provisions of this Act shall, as soon as practicable after the execution thereof, be laid upon the table of the Legislative Assembly; and unless sooner ratified or disapproved of by a resolution of such Assembly, such agreement shall be deemed to have been ratified, and shall be binding."

That clause was in a better form than it was sometimes put, and would be useful to both parties. Hon. members would see that all the provisions of the Bill were general. It did not apply to any particular part of the colony. No doubt what had been called the Carpentaria scheme induced a Bill of this sort to be brought before the House, but it was intended to be a useful provision for all parts of the colony, and of course the Act could be put in force in any part of the colony. When he pointed out the advantages of putting this provision into the Act he dwelt rather much upon one—namely, that the companies would be encouraged to make offers, knowing well that the Government in this way having pledged themselves beforehand, what terms the Government would be likely ultimately to accept. When he was in England he was powerless to deal with these men, because he could not accept without knowing what the House was likely to do, and making out what Parliament or his own colleagues would be likely to accept. Passing a Bill of this kind, however, would give him some guarantee as to what kind of proposi-

tions would be acceptable to the Government, and at the same time it would be a sort of guarantee to them how to spend their money preliminary to securing the Act. But there was another advantage—namely, that publishing our wants in this way secured competition amongst companies. He had no doubt that when it was known by means of an Act of this kind how the Government were prepared to deal with offers made by companies, there would be not only offers such as they had had before by parties who knew the colony, but there would be competition amongst those companies and demands for the privilege of constructing lines on the land-grant principle. He believed that if a Bill of this description passed, ultimately a line connecting the western termini of the Southern and Western and Central lines with the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria would be carried out. Queensland was the only colony that was in a position to make a large transcontinental line, with the exception, at all events, of South Australia; and that exception scarcely could be taken into account, because the character of the country throughout a large portion of the northern territory of South Australia would prevent the carrying out of a scheme on the basis which he had indicated. He had to direct the attention of hon. members to some information he had given them in the shape of a correspondence between himself and certain parties in London. The correspondence exactly explained the position in which they were at the present time. They were anxious, principally on information he had given them with regard to the colony, and which he took care was conveyed by means of official statistics, to take some decided steps, and in consequence of that information he got the offer that had been published. Of course, the Government were not bound by that offer, neither were the parties who made it. They were anxious, however, had they had some sort of guarantee that the matter would have gone through the House, to at once have gone to an expense of £30,000 for surveying the line. Of course, he could not give a guarantee of that kind, and he only mentioned it now as an indication of the view capitalists were prepared to take when the scheme was properly put before them. He believed himself there was no difficulty of any magnitude in the way of carrying out the scheme of connecting the shores of Carpentaria with the termini of both trunk lines. Right up to the shores of the Gulf, with the exception of about 50 miles on the Nicholson, Leichhardt, and Gregory, which was liable to floods, but which was no serious impediment to the construction of the line, the land was of a very easy character; and he knew no place in the world where railways could be constructed of such a length under easier conditions. The land was particularly well adapted for the scheme which he had advocated, and he believed they would find a capital terminus at Point Parker. The information he could give with regard to that place was not such as he should like, but he thought he had quite information enough to be assured that a good terminus for sea-going steamers of large dimensions was to be found at Point Parker, and that the port would be accessible, by land, for the railway. This view of the matter, he was quite aware, he had often heard contradicted, but the most reliable information he had obtained led him to believe that a good harbour for large sea-going steamers might be made there at a small expense, and that there would be no difficulty in taking the line to a good port. By commencing an enterprise of this kind, and entrusting it to men of enterprise and capital to carry it out, the colony would gain a great advantage, and he wished hon. members to think out for themselves how great that advantage would be. The time offered by these parties to construct the line contrasted greatly with the ability of the colony as shown by what they had done in past years to carry out lines themselves. Since 1865, when their railways were commenced, they had progressed in the interior at the rate of 24 miles a year on the Southern and Western line, and from Rockhampton, on the Central line, they had progressed at the rate of 12 miles per year. The amount proposed to be opened every year on the Carpentaria line was 100 miles. He himself thought it was too little, and believed that contractors could be got to consent to opening at least 150 miles a-year. He did not wish to weary the House with statistics, but when he reminded hon. members that the colony contained 428,000,000 acres of land, and that up to the present time only 4,000,000 had been alienated, and not more than three and a-half or three and three-quarter millions were under proceess of alienation—making a total of seven and three-quarter millions — they would see how small a matter it would be for them to part with the quantity of land required for this scheme. No doubt, calculations would be made that it would be a great deal better for them to hold the land. In fifty years' time, if the land increased in value to £5 per acre, the colonists of Queensland might argue that the railway had cost something like £40,000,000 of money to the colony. But what at the present time they had to look at was the value of the land now. It was in truth of no value at all. What he proposed to do was to exchange that which was bringing in no money, and which was perfectly unsaleable, or only saleable at a very low price, for what was a really tangible benefit to the country —namely, a railway that would open up the country, improve the value of the rest of the land, and largely increase the population. He had said this was a general Bill, adapted to other localities besides the one indicated, and if the Bill passed immediate steps would be taken by the Government to draw the attention of capitalists at home and in the colony to places where the Government would look with favour upon railways being made upon the land-grant principle. He would now, having explained the provisions of the Bill at some length, repeat that he was quite willing that the debate upon it should be adjourned, to give hon. members time to consider the various clauses. His duty, however, was to conclude by moving the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. DAVENPORT, agreeing with the Premier's suggestion, moved that the debate be adjourned.

Mr. GRIFFITH also thought this would be the most convenient course.

Question of adjournment put and passed; and the resumption of the debate made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

LOCAL WORKS LOAN BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee to consider this Bill.

Preamble postponed.

Clause 1—"Interpretation"—put and passed.

On clause 2—"The word interest to mean and include liquidation payments"—

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was pointed out yesterday that some alteration seemed to be necessary. The Local Government Act provided for raising special rates to pay interest, but they would not be large enough to cover the instalments of the principal.

The PREMIER said that instead of the provisions of the Local Government Act, the present Bill provided for an additional 16s. 8d. in payment of principal and interest. For instance, Brisbane, under the Local Government Act, borrowed £12,000 and paid 5 per cent.; for the future it would pay £5 16s. 8d. For the loan of 1864 it paid 6 per cent. interest and 5 per cent. redemption; under the new plan it would be 5 per cent. altogether; so that Brisbane would pay less interest and have the advantage of wiping off the whole in forty years.

The HON. J. M. THOMPSON said that under the Local Government Act, when a loan was contracted, a special rate was levied to meet the interest on that loan; and rates for that purpose had been levied in many cases. The intention of that Act could not be evaded by saying that the word "interest" should mean and include liquidation payment.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the Divisional Boards Act provided that interest on loans might be stopped out of endowment. The Local Government Act provided that when a loan was contracted the Council should make a special loan rate for the purpose of paying interest on the loan, that rate to continue to be levied as long as any money remained due in respect of that loan. The loan was not advanced until the Government were satisfied that the rate had been made, and that it would be sufficient to meet the interest. In every case of a loan under that Act that provision had been complied with, the rate in force was just enough to pay the interest, and the money so raised could not be devoted to any other purpose. The 189th section provided that separate accounts should be kept, and that the money should be applied "for the several purposes in respect of which they are hereby authorised to make and levy such rate and not otherwise." If the Government meant that fresh rates were to be made in order to make the amount raised sufficient to cover the liquidation payment as well as interest they should have said so.

Mr. DICKSON said that where municipalities had borrowed money for public works, especially waterworks, and were paying 5 per cent. interest for the loan, it would be unwise to call upon them to increase the amount, thereby placing them at a disadvantage for extending and maintaining the works they were committed to. The Corporation of Ipswich, for instance, instead of paying 5 per cent. for the £31,000 they had borrowed, would be called upon to pay within a fraction of 6 per cent., representing an additional burden of £310 annually. Rockhampton, which had always been a model municipality, would have to pay an additional £250 per annum; Maryborough, about £400; Toowoomba, £160; Warwick, £170; Townsville, £330. Whilst the principle of the Colonial Treasurer might commend itself to hon. members as desirable in respect of works of a perishable character, he maintained that it was not desirable to violate existing agreements with municipalities, especially with reference to waterworks, which were of a permanent character and would retain their usefulness for considerably more than forty years. Many of the municipalities were just commencing those institutions, and they had quite enough to do to meet their present engagements without being saddled with any additional burden.

The HON. G. THORN said he was sorry the hon. member for Dalby was not in his place, as he knew that hon. member desired to call the attention of the Committee to the position of the Dalby Municipality with reference to water supply. They had paid nearly £3,000 out of their own rates for the construction of two dams for the use of the public travelling with stock, and they were now fettered with a debt of £5,000, for which they had agreed to pay 5 per cent. interest. It would be only fair that either those dams should be taken over and the debt cancelled, or else that moneys which had been paid for similar purposes in other districts should be made a charge against the local municipalities.

Mr. KATES said in the district he represented the people had quite enough to do to pay the 5 per cent. interest without being called upon to contribute to a sinking fund. In the case of Warwick, also, the £850 required to meet the interest on the debt necessitated a rate that was quite high enough.

Mr. HORWITZ said when the Warwick Municipality agreed that the Government should construct waterworks for them, they did so on the understanding that the works would be completed for a cost of £9,700, according to the plans and specifications prepared by Mr. Highfield. Now, it appeared that the works had cost £17,000, and more would be required before the tank could be made fit to hold water. If the people of Warwick had known that the Government could not do the work for the amount named, they would not have consented to pay the 5 per cent. interest, and the Government had no right to make further charges. Instead of paying 5 per cent. on £9,700, the people were now to be called on to pay an amount equal to 10 per cent. on that sum. Mr. Highfield did the work on behalf of the Government, and they ought to be responsible for the miscalculation and the additional delay and expense. The works were to have been completed in nine months, and they had been three years in course of construction, a great deal of unnecessary expense going on all the time. An overseer and five or six men had been kept walking about doing nothing, and no doubt the people of Warwick would indirectly have to pay them for idling away their time. It was very hard that the ratepayers should now be saddled with an extra charge.

The PREMIER said that no grievance could possibly be made out in the case of any municipality in respect to the working of this measure. The hon. member for Enoggera contended that the people of Ipswich would suffer, because they would be called upon to pay 16s. 8d. per cent. per annum towards the redemption of their waterworks; but the hon. gentleman forgot how much of the interest and principal of the main debt would be remitted thereby. Under the Act of 1864 they had to pay 6 per cent. interest and 5 per cent. redemption on their loan of £6,898; and they had incurred a debt of £31,000 under the Local Government Act. They would in future be called upon to pay £5 16s. 8d. on the whole amount.

Mr. DICKSON said he was aware that in the case of loans made to municipalities before the Local Government Act of 1878 was passed the Treasurer had charged semi-annually 2½ per cent. in redemption of the original debt; but when that Act was passed the loans made under it were chargeable with interest only. Most of the latter loans were made for the purpose of constructing works of a permanent character for services which must continually increase, and all that could reasonably be expected from the municipalities was the payment of interest as it fell due. The amount of 16s. 8d. additional appeared insignificant, but hon. members should remember that after, say, twenty years only about half the debt would be outstanding, and still the municipality would have to pay the £5 16s. 8d. per cent. on the whole amount. For the forty years they would experience no benefit from the redemption fund, and it was during the

first fifteen or twenty years that they required most assistance, and every penny of their revenue to provide current expenses and extend their service. He saw no necessity for calling upon them to recoup the Government before the period for which their loans had been timed. The security was ample, and if these municipalities were permitted to have gone direct to the public creditor no doubt they would have been able to obtain the money for the same period as the Government—forty years—and why should they be placed at this disadvantage? It was desirable that the Government should stand in the position of creditor to the municipalities so as to exercise salutary supervision over them, but at the same time it was never intended to place them in a worse position than if they had gone direct to the public creditor.

The PREMIER said the hon. member should let them see what were the advantages which municipalities received under this Bill as well as the disadvantages. He (the Premier) had made a calculation which would show how it would work. At the present time Brisbane was paying £4,263; that was 5 per cent. under the Local Government Act, and interest on her 1864 loan; while under this Bill she would pay only £2,447, not much more than half, and at the same time wipe out her debt in forty years. The hardship was therefore not felt at once. Ipswich, at the present time, paid for interest on her 1864 loan, and 5 per cent. for water supply, £2,307; and by this arrangement she would pay next year only £2,068, thereby gaining £230, and wiping off the debt in forty years. Where did the hardship come in? So far from being a hardship it was a great advantage, and must result in great good. If any Government would lend him money at 5 per cent. and a sinking fund of 16s. 8d.—that was £5 16s. 8d.—he would be quite willing to take over the Brisbane Waterworks. There was not a municipality that would not pay up the money before it was due, because they would find it was to their profit to do so. With regard to the remarks made respecting the dam at Dalby, he was aware that was not put there merely for the people of Dalby, but for stock travelling in that part of the colony, and he should give the matter early attention.

Mr. GROOM said he was one of those who looked upon the water supply to the different municipalities specified in the Bill as one of the greatest blessings ever conferred on those places. He was sure that in the town he represented, if the waterworks had been erected ten or twelve years ago, it was impossible to say the amount of life that might have been saved. The unhealthiness resulting in typhoid and other fever had no doubt arisen from drinking impure water, insufficient drainage, and the drainage of cesspits into the wells. It was the same at Warwick; and he was satisfied that even if water supply cost more than was first estimated, as was the case in all municipalities, the extra cost was amply compensated by the benefits derived from it. As far as the principle of the Bill was concerned, he was in favour of it, and for this reason: that, even supposing there might be some slight inconvenience, there was the great advantage that the more a municipality reduced its debt, the more it renewed its borrowing power at the same time. It would be observed that with the exception of Brisbane there was not a municipality in the colony that had directed attention to drainage and sewage works of great magnitude, and he was convinced that before many years were over this question would force itself upon the municipalities in a very marked manner, and it would have to be settled in order to ensure the health of the people. Therefore, whatever apparent disadvantages there might be, he thought it was necessary that some steps should be taken to pay off these debts. He knew the impoverished condition of some municipalities in the interior, and the difficulties they laboured under to make both ends meet and at the same time carry out necessary improvements; and the time was not far distant when application would be made to relieve them of a great deal of the liabilities which appeared in the schedule of the Bill in order to enable them to carry out other works of urgent necessity. It was not only in this colony that this question was cropping up. Within the last fortnight a conference of municipal delegates had met in Sydney, and brought up an elaborate report, in which they recommended that larger endowment should be given to the country municipalities; and the same question was certain to arise here.

The PREMIER said he was obliged to the hon. member for referring to one of the principal reasons for bringing in the Bill, which was that by reducing their debts municipalities acquired extended power for borrowing for fresh works. Under the Local Government Act the borrowing powers of all the municipalities would very soon be exhausted, because none of them made any effort to wipe off the principal. Just to show that there was nothing in the argument of the hon. member for Enoggera—who argued that it would be a hard matter for a municipality to pay off part of the principal—he (the Premier) had made a calculation which showed clearly that there was no hardship at all—that they would actually pay less next year than they would if they allowed things to go on. For instance, Toowoomba, which this year paid £1,615—including waterworks, and the 16s. 8d. per cent., which would wipe out the debt in forty years—would only pay £1,250 next year; so that it was a great advantage. They got relieved of the old 5 per cent. redemption money, which was a hardship.

Mr. DICKSON said he could not understand the Premier when he said the municipalities had made no effort to pay off the principal, and now admitted that they had been paying off 5 per cent. redemption money. He (the Premier) was therefore not correct in saying that they were not reducing the debt; they were actually now paying 11 per cent.—6 per cent. interest and 5 per cent. in liquidation—while under the Act they should only be paying 6. He thought if the Government got 5 per cent. on the £95,000 from the Brisbane Waterworks they might be very well content without charging about £1,000 additional for liquidation.

The PREMIER said the hon. member misunderstood him. When he (the Premier) spoke on the second reading of the Bill, he stated distinctly that municipalities that had borrowed under the Act of 1864 had paid principal and interest they had become liable to pay up to the present time. Local bodies which had borrowed under the Local Government Act, however, had made no effort to pay off principal. As to the power of the Brisbane Waterworks to pay, he would read a statement which had been furnished to him by very good authority, showing the receipts and expenditure for last year. When municipalities took over waterworks, either in Brisbane or elsewhere, he considered that Government buildings should pay rates just the same as any other buildings; and giving the Brisbane Waterworks credit for supplying the Government departments, the rates during the year amounted to £10,733, and the expenditure for maintenance to £3,349 17s. 2d. The interest and redemption money they would have to pay under this Bill was £5,541 13s. 4d., leaving an annual profit of £1,841.

Mr. McLEAN said he saw no reference made in the six classes of work mentioned to the drainage of agricultural land. Money might be spent with considerable advantage in draining portions of the colony, but there appeared to be nothing in the Bill by which work of that nature could be undertaken.

Mr. FRASER pointed out that for works of the fifth class only ten years was allowed for repayment, which would amount to £12—19s. per cent.—which would come very heavy upon bodies under the Divisional Boards Act. He saw no reason for limiting the period to ten years.

The PREMIER said under the Bill the Governor in Council had power to postpone the payment of any part of the principal for five years. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Logan (Mr. McLean), he would be glad to insert in the clause any words that had been omitted.

Mr. KATES believed in the principle of the Bill, but thought it would fall heavily on some municipalities. He was sure that if the Warwick people had been aware that their waterworks would have cost £17,000, they would not have gone in for them. It was calculated that the expenditure should not be more than £9,000, and it was through the mismanagement and misconduct of the late engineer, Mr. Highfield, that it had been increased out of all proportion. On that £17,000 the people would now have to pay £950 interest, and £250, and £170 liquidation, or altogether, £1,370. He thought it would be quite time enough to commence the payment of liquidation five years hence.

The PREMIER said the hon. member had nothing to find fault with, because at the present time they paid as interest £1,400 a-year, and would have to pay, under the Bill, £1,236.

Mr. GROOM said that, in regard to the overcharge or excess in amount paid for the construction of the Toowoomba waterworks and similar undertakings, people had been led astray. There was nothing so likely to mislead as the construction of waterworks. It had been found that the cost of such works was generally £4 per head of the population. At Bradford the cost was £7 per head, and at Aberdeen and Taunton the amount was lower. In Sydney, where the water supply came from the heads of the Nepean, the cost was a million and a-half of money with 250,000 people, and in London and Liverpool it was also about £4 per head of the population. The cost at Warwick was also £4 per head of the population. He himself was under the impression that a large amount of money had been unnecessarily expended on the Toowoomba waterworks; but when members got the evidence of the select committee they would see that every item had been satisfactorily accounted for. They had been led to believe that works could be constructed for £10,000, but found afterwards that there were many expenses which were lost sight of at first. Although Mr. Highfield might have been a little extravagant, the works had been carried out satisfactorily on the whole.

Mr. BEATTIE was pleased to hear the explanation given by the Premier with reference to the receipts and expenditure of the Brisbane Board of Waterworks; but if the hon. member knew a little more of the matter he would not say so little had been expended as was shown on the return. All other places that he knew of—Ipswich, Rockhampton, and other towns—brought the water to the front of the premises; but in Brisbane the main was taken down the centre of the street, and the owners of property were compelled to take it from the main. Therefore, in order to get at the true expenditure, they must add the cost of taking the water from the main to the premises, and they would then find that the whole of the revenue would be absorbed. The other day he had the water laid on to a cottage in Fortitude Valley, bringing in 8s. a-week, and had to pay £2 19s. Many people were not able to have the water laid, and would rather pay the rates without having the water than go to the expense of laying it on. That was the position consumers in Brisbane had been placed for many years. They acknowledged the benefit conferred, but it must be admitted that they had to pay largely for it.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that on the second reading of the Bill he had expressed his opinion in favour of it, and could not see any reason to alter his opinion. Ipswich appeared to be in the worst position, and yet would be considerably benefited. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley placed Brisbane in a worse position than the other towns, but that was in consequence of the greater expense of the works. If they looked at the debts of Brisbane and Ipswich in connection with their respective populations, they would see that Ipswich was in advance of Brisbane. As had been said by the hon. member for Toowoomba, such places as Ipswich and Toowoomba would be in a position in a few years to reduce their indebtedness, and apply for a fresh loan. He should support the Bill.

Mr. FEEZ had spoken strongly in favour of the Bill on its introduction, and was now even more convinced of its soundness. In the face of the calculations and explanations given by the Premier, he could not understand how any hon. member could oppose the Bill. It had been proved that Ipswich, Rockhampton—in fact, all the corporations—would benefit by the passing of the Bill, and only Brisbane would have to pay interest, which they ought but did not pay before. If those places were gainers, and were, in addition, enabled to pay off their debt in thirty or forty years, there was nothing to grumble about. There need not be the slightest apprehension about the corporation being able to raise the money; and the Bill would have his warmest support.

Mr. THOMPSON said the difficulty which had been pointed out might be met by the insertion of some such clause as this:—In cases of loans to divisional boards, under the Divisional Boards Act specified in the second schedule hereto, the powers of raising interest under section 67 of that Act shall be applicable and applied for the purpose of raising the half-yearly instalment required by this Act to be paid according to the said second schedule in reduction of principal and interest. It might also be added:—In case of loans to municipalities under the Local Government Act of 1878, specified in the second schedule hereto, moneys raised by special loan rate under that Act shall be applied *per tanto* in reduction of the half-yearly instalment required by this Act to be paid according to the second schedule hereto in reduction of principal and interest.

The PREMIER said no addition was necessary. It was a matter of difficulty to make a clause really retrospective. There was no necessity for alteration, as the clause was very well as it stood.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wished to say a word with respect to the Brisbane Board of Waterworks. The Minister for Works said last night that if they had not paid their interest previous Governments were very much to blame for not making them, and that they ought to have removed the boards one after another until they got a board of honest men. That attack upon the Board of Waterworks ought not to have been made,

especially by the hon. gentleman, who had been on the board himself for nearly two years. Why did not he remove himself if he wanted to get honest men? If he did not attend the board it was his own fault, and if he did, he came himself under his own accusation.

Clause 2, after further discussion, put and passed as printed.

Clause 3—"Existing debts to be loans under the Act"—amended, on motion of the PREMIER, to apply to loans made since the schedule was prepared.

Clauses 4 and 5 passed as printed.

On clause 6—"Local works to be of six classes"—

Mr. GRIFFITH suggested that provision should be made for the class of drainage works which had been referred to by the hon. member for Logan. It would perhaps be well to fix the term of loans for such works at twenty-one years.

Mr. McLEAN said that works for draining swamps were not included in the list of works specified in the clause. In the district of Beenleigh a large amount of land could be reclaimed, and as, if the work were carried out, it would be of a permanently beneficial character, the term of the loan might be fixed at thirty years.

The PREMIER said he had no objection to inserting drainage works of the description mentioned, the term of the lease to be twenty-one years.

Mr. GRIFFITH agreed that twenty-one years would be sufficient. He suggested that in the words "permanent works for drainage and other sanitary purposes," in subsection 2, the word "or" should be substituted for the words "and other"; and that at the end of subsection 3 there be added the words "permanent works for drainage or sanitary purposes other than those hereinbefore mentioned."

The suggestions of the hon. gentleman were proposed as amendments, and passed.

Mr. McLEAN suggested that the words "hardwood timber" should be inserted in subsection 3, to meet the case of bridges, and so raise them from the fifth class to the third.

The PREMIER replied that that was met by the power given to the Governor in Council to alter the material of any class of work.

Clause, as amended, passed.

Clauses 7 and 8 passed as printed.

On clause 9—"How payments appropriated"—

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not quite understand how the money was to be apportioned in each succeeding year.

The PREMIER said he had a table prepared as a guide to the Colonial Treasurer to apportion the sums to be paid each year. He would take the case of a loan of £100, repayable in ten years. The annual payment was £12 19s. For the first year £5 would represent interest, and £7 19s. the payment towards redemption of principal. Next year the same sum was paid, of which £4 12s. was for interest and £8 7s. for principal. In the third year, out of the same sum, £4 3s. 8d. was for interest and £8 15s. 4d. went towards paying off the principal;—and so on till the tenth year, when 12s. 4d. was for interest and £12 6s. 8d. redemption money.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not understand the principle upon which the tables had been calculated. The borrowers seemed, from the Treasurer's explanation, to pay a great deal more than persons who borrowed in the ordinary way. Was the money re-paid to be put out at interest?

The PREMIER said that the hon. member misunderstood him. What was done with the money when received did not enter into the calculation. What the Government might do with the money after they got it was for the Treasurer to decide. He would probably lend it out again as fast as possible. The principal and interest were to be paid at a certain time, and the calculation was so made that they only paid 5 per cent. all the time.

After further disscussion, clause put and passed.

Clauses 10, 11, and 12 passed as printed.

The PREMIER proposed the following new clause to take the place of clause 13 :—

13. If through the default, neglect, or refusal of any local authority—

(1.) A special rate or special loan rate of sufficient amount is not from time to time made and levied in the manner prescribed by the Municipal Act or other Act relating thereto; or

(2.) The proceeds of every such rate are not from time to time paid to the Treasurer according to law :—

The Governor in Council shall forthwith make and levy such rate, and for that purpose he shall have and may exercise all the powers enjoyed and exercised by the local authority for the making, levying, and recovering general or special rates upon all rateable property within the jurisdiction of such local authority.

The object of the new clause was this: the rate, although it might have been struck, might not be sufficient to provide interest for a certain loan, and it was quite possible it would not come up to the Treasurer's expectations. In the meantime the Treasurer was left without any power at all to provide that a higher rate should be enforced. Under those circumstances the Government should have more than the power to withhold the endowment; they should have the power of levying the rates themselves—in fact, all the power that the municipal council itself had. It was not a power that under ordinary circumstances would be exercised, and it ought not to be compulsory on the Treasurer to do it.

New clause ultimately agreed to with verbal amendments.

Clause 14 passed as printed.

On schedule 1—

Mr. GROOM called attention to the fact that there was no Drayton Municipality. It had been extinct for years, and was now absorbed by the Division of Gowrie. He could not see any use, therefore, in putting the debt of £546 in the schedule.

The PREMIER said he was aware that the municipality of Drayton was defunct, and the chance of getting the money was rather hopeless; but this was the schedule of all the loans that had been made to local bodies, and there was no reason why this item should not appear as a record.

On motion of the PREMIER, the schedule was amended by adding to the municipality of Ipswich "£3,000, Local Government Act," making the total amount of loans to that municipality £40,898; in Roma municipality the sum of "£1,000, Local Government Act," was increased to £3,500, making the total £5,250; and in Clermont municipality "£1,000, Local Government Act," was inserted. The total amount of the loans was then altered from £407,491 to £413,991; and the schedule, as amended, was agreed to.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Preamble moved—

Mr. DICKSON asked if the figures had been checked, because he found a discrepancy between the amount set down in the schedule as the indebtedness of the municipality of Townsville and the amount shown in returns ending on June 30 of this year?

The PREMIER said the figures were correct at the time the schedule was made, but he found that there were three loans that had been made since. He would, however, have the amounts in the schedule checked before the Bill went into the other Chamber, where the figures could be altered should it be necessary.

Mr. GRIFFITH: It is a money Bill.

The PREMIER said it was a matter that did not affect the principle that distinguished the two Houses, but was simply a statement of fact as to how much money was owing by each municipality. The discrepancies pointed out by the hon. member for Enoggera had arisen from the fact that the Auditor-General credited interest that might have been received in the months of July, August, and September. He would take care to have the schedule thoroughly checked.

Preamble put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for Monday next.

GOLD MINING APPEALS BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS, the House went into Committee upon this Bill, and the clauses were passed as printed, with a verbal amendment in the preamble by Mr. GRIFFITH.

The Bill was reported accordingly, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PACIFIC ISLANDS LABOURERS BILL—COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee, and resumed the consideration of Mr. Griffith's amendment on clause 2 of this Bill.

Mr. THOMPSON said that what he said last night upon this subject was, not that the poll-tax on the Chinese was a failure, but that after these Pacific islanders had served their time it was not right to restrict their employment, which would make compulsory vagrants of them, and cause them to come under the operations of the Vagrancy Act.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (in answer to Mr. GRIFFITH, whose remarks were inaudible in the gallery) said the hon. member would do better if he withdrew his amendment altogether. The amendments proposed by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) appeared to be more suitable, and with a little alteration might answer every purpose; but the amendment of the hon. member for North Brisbane, if carried, would so transmogrify the Bill that its author would not know it;—it would spoil the Bill entirely.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, so far from the amendment spoiling the Bill, without it the Bill would be absurd. He wanted to know why only during the first three years, and not the fourth year, the islanders should be entitled to protection? Was there anything magic in the term of three years? So long as the islander was employed in the colony, so long ought he to be protected in the way proposed by the Bill.

The PREMIER said he was astonished that the hon. gentleman could not see the reason for treating the islanders who had been in the colony longer than three years in a different manner. The only reason for considering them differently from Europeans, for instance, was that they were a lower class of men altogether. Being half-savages they actually required special protection; but after they had served their time, and if they liked to remain in the colony, they might give them credit for being able to look after themselves. He did not see why they should remain under this expensive system of supervision all the time they were in the colony. The colony performed its obligations if the inspection extended over three years. He saw a stronger objection still to the amendment—it was a very risky thing to alter the definition clause before studying the effects the alteration would have on the rest of the Bill. The hon. gentleman might have looked to see what effect the amendment would have, but he was quite satisfied no other member of Committee had the slightest notion how the different clauses would be affected. He knew very well that if the hon. member had carried his amendment last night some ten or a dozen clauses would require to be altered; in fact, the Bill would be made quite a different measure. If there was any good reason for altering the definition of the word "labourer" it would be quite as good afterwards. He was sure the Colonial Secretary would have no objection to alter the definition afterwards, if it was necessary.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he quite agreed that if the effect of the alteration of the definition would be to spoil the rest of the Bill it would be undesirable to make it; but it would not have that effect. The second part of the Bill related to the introduction of Pacific islanders. There was nothing in that part which would be affected by his amendment. The third part related to the employment of Pacific islanders in the colony, and the term "labourer" was used in two or three places. The 19th clause provided that no transfer of the services of a labourer should be made except for the purpose of his employment in tropical or semi-tropical agriculture. That was equally applicable in the thirty-seventh month of a man's presence as in the thirty-sixth. If the islander was engaged under a registered agreement, as he ought to be, the provision ought to extend to the fourth and subsequent years as well as the first three years. The 20th section provided for the removal of labourers from the estate or place where they were intended to be employed, and went to the root of the whole matter. As the Bill stood, when the man's first three years were up he could be taken to any part of the colony and be employed without restriction, and that was what a great many members desired to prevent. The way the term "labourer" was used throughout the Bill would allow the islander to be employed anywhere after the expiration of his three years' engagement. The 22nd section provided for the payment of the wages of islanders. Why should they not be protected in this respect as much after the three years as during the time? The fourth part provided for the cure and treatment of labourers when sick, and he could not see why they should not be cared for as much during their second engagement as during their first. Take the case of an islander whose master became insolvent after the first year, and who then entered into another engagement for three years. Why should he be only protected for two years of the second engagement? The only answer to the argument was that after three years he should be sufficiently acquainted with our ways and be able to look after himself. If he went home after serving his three years' engagement and came back he would be a labourer within the definition of the Act, but if he stayed he would not. It seemed to him to be very absurd to draw arbitrary lines in that way. His amendment would have no effect except to make the Bill apply to all Polynesian labourers so long as they remained in the colony.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the Premier had given a good reason why these

islanders did not want protection after having served their three years. They were supposed to know how to take care of themselves and look after their interests, and, as a matter of fact, he knew that they were able to do so. Another reason was that under the second engagements the labourer would get, at all events, double the wages that he received under the first, and there was no necessity for calling upon his master to provide hospital attendance and care for him while he was sick.

The PREMIER said the hon. member for North Brisbane had asserted that the alteration would make no difference, but he (Mr. McIlwraith) contended that it would make parts of the Bill quite inconsistent and absurd. Take clause 42: according to it a man could be fined for giving, not selling, a Polynesian a glass of grog;—that was a hard provision, but it was justified by the fact that the islander was a man who was not supposed to be able to take care of himself during his first three years' engagement, but to exercise that supervision during the course of his life was absurd.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the more he thought about the measure the more inclined he was to be ashamed of it. It had been more than a tradition among Englishmen that when a man put his foot on English soil he was a free man, but by this measure they went back upon this tradition. Not only was a man bound down during the three years of his engagement, but after that it was proposed that he should not be allowed to sell his labour in the best market. He believed sugar-planters could not get on without some such statute, but it was lamentable that the Legislature should have to pass such a measure to support the industry and make modified slaves of men, for, after all, the condition of the islanders would be very little better. He believed some law of this sort was required to be passed if the sugar industry was to succeed, but it was a lamentable fact, and he deplored it, that any measure should have to be placed on our statute-book providing that, to some extent, labour should be bought and sold. These islanders were indented from the South Sea Islands, and he believed that many did not know what work they had to do. When they came to the colony they were to be surrounded with all sorts of disabilities and be amenable to laws to which no other labourers were subject.

Mr. McLEAN said the complaint had not been so much against the employment of this class of labour on sugar plantations or stations as against it being brought into competition with white labour in the towns and suburbs, where kanakas had been employed in all sorts of occupations. If the Government lost control of kanakas at the expiration of their three years' engagement it would be at the very time that they were brought into active competition with white labour.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was glad to have got at the bottom of the tremendous opposition which had been used against the employment of Polynesians by squatters. There really had never been any exception taken to their employment in the interior until it was found that they had trodden upon the toes of white men in the towns. That was in effect what the hon. member for Logan had said. When it was found that the toes of the inhabitants of the towns were being trodden upon, and not sooner, the cry was raised that it was the squatter who used black labour in preference to white. He maintained that more kanakas had been employed by the townspeople of Brisbane than by the whole of the squatters of the colony. But now that the cause of the supposed trouble was brought home they said the squatter was the man who used black labour in order to displace white labour. The fact was the member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) had used more black labor in proportion to the white labour that he employed than any squatter in the colony.

Mr. DICKSON: It is false.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was thoroughly opposed to white labour being put out by black labour in any place where it could be advantageously used. The member for Enoggera need not tell him that he had never employed black labour. It was no use the hon. member attempting to be very virtuous, as he had sinned just as much as any other hon. member in that direction. They had all employed kanakas. He would ask the champion of white labour, the leader of the Opposition, whether he had ever employed kanakas?

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD would ask the hon. member (Mr. Miles) whether he had not employed kanakas?

Mr. MILES: Often.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the hands of hon. members were not very clean if the employment of kanakas soiled them. There was no doubt that the opposition to the kanakas in the centres of population had been brought about by the fact that there were numbers of them who had worked out their service. They were now free men and had a right to serve their labour as they chose. He would repeat, notwithstanding a contradiction of the Minister for Lands, that they were free residents in a free country, and they could enter the open labour market in search of employment. Having been brought here, what was to be done with them? Were they to be sent back to their islands; or were they to be put under police surveillance? He noticed a provision in the Bill that half the fines should go to the informer. The measure would lead to a most extraordinary state of affairs. There would be a race of men here who could not get employment without those who employed them being subject to all sorts of pains and penalties. The thing was monstrous and absurd, and ought not to exist. He was quite certain that the senior member for Enoggera agreed with him on that point.

Mr. WALSH thought that it was generally admitted that kanaka labour was necessary.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. WALSH would admit it for one, and he believed the opinion was generally maintained throughout the colony that that labour was necessary. The question which arose in his mind was as to how they were to deal with the labour when they had it. It was desirable that it should be dealt with in such a way as to prevent its coming into competition with white labour. He was not quite clear as to what was to be done with the kanakas after they had served their three years. Were they then to be at liberty to compete with other labour as they pleased?

Mr. GRIFFITH: According to the Bill they will be.

Mr. WALSH said that they would be more dangerous than ever after they had served the three years. When they had a little religion and civilisation about them they would be positively dangerous. It was a notorious fact that the missionaries in the South Seas, in New Zealand, and everywhere else had done more towards the committal of murders than anything or anybody else had done. That had resulted from their trying to ram Christianity down the throats of savages who would not have it. They ought to try to understand it themselves first. He should

like to see some provision in the Bill to the effect that if the kanakas remained in the colony they should be treated as Asiatic labourers, and be kept within the control of the Government. He thought it would be wise of the Government to accept the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition. The Bill almost compelled people to send the kanakas back to their islands, but if they chose to remain here they would, as he said before, become a source of danger if they were not kept within control. From the knowledge which they would have acquired during their three years' service, they would be better able to enter into competition with other portions of the community.

Mr. MACFARLANE said there could be no doubt that this was a burning question. It seemed that the squatters were quite content to do without kanaka labour, and as the townspeople were of that opinion, why not do away with the labour altogether? He could not see that there was any necessity for it. If it was necessary for anyone, it was for the sugar-planters. It would mean cheaper labour to them, but as far as the general welfare of the colony was concerned he could see no necessity for it. He was astonished to hear hon. members talking about allowing those men to have their freedom after their three years' service, when last night, when another Bill was going through the House, they had no compunction about curtailing the liberties of white men. It would be slavery to prevent the black man doing as he pleased, but it mattered nothing about curtailing the liberties of the European.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Who are the Europeans to whom you allude?

Mr. MACFARLANE said that the hon. member was one of them. The hon. member was prohibited from sitting on a licensing bench because of a certain position which he occupied. It appeared to him that the black labour could be very well done away with altogether. They might introduce a clause into the Bill to allow the importation of kanakas for three years—that would give six years before it could come to an end. By that time white men would have worked themselves into the plantations which were now paying very well, and black men would not be required.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the only consideration which would induce him to vote for the Bill would be on the principle that it was better to have half a loaf than no bread. He considered it was an unjust and unfair Bill. It was a piece of thorough class-legislation. If kanakas were to be allowed to work on the sugar plantations, why should they not be allowed to work on sheep and cattle stations or on farms? He believed the hon. member for Wide Bay could inform the House that many small farmers in his district, who could not afford to pay for the services of white men, had employed kanakas to assist them, and with some success. He believed that kanakas in no way entered into competition with white labour. Did anyone mean to tell him that they had labour enough of any sort or kind for a colony of such an immense extent of territory? Would anyone say that the labour of the whole of the South Sea islanders and hundreds of thousands of Europeans could not be usefully employed here? Why on earth shut it out at all? Surely the value of the labour would remain in the country and add to its wealth. The employment of every three or four, or at any rate five, of these islanders gave employment to an additional white man. He could speak from experience in the matter, having some eight or nine years since employed kanakas in the lowest grade of work that any man could be put to—that was shepherding. They were good and profitable servants to him, and, moreover, they were thoroughly reliable. They did not attempt to rush away when new goldfields were discovered. They really made openings for a higher class of labour than they could themselves perform. If, as the hon. member for Ipswich said, the plantations were paying very well now, they were only returning some of the money which had been spent on them. As for stations, his experience was that they were not paying particularly well at the present time. He knew that the development of the interior would go on much faster, and more money would be brought into the colony, if the employment of that class of labour were permitted there. The agitation which arose in the interior against the kanakas was got up by a few shortsighted storekeepers and hotelkeepers who did not think it right that the men should receive their earnings at the nearest seaport. They imagined that they had been defrauded out of the earnings of the islanders, but they wholly omitted the consideration that the value of the islanders' work over and above the paltry wage they got was left as an accumulation —as additional wealth to the district. With regard to the amendment of the hon. member for Maryborough, it seemed thoroughly unconstitutional. When an islander had worked his three years he ought to be a perfectly free man. He could not see why, after the expiration of his time, the sugar-planter should again step in and have the sole monopoly of his employment. He failed to see how they could interfere with his liberty in any way. If an islander chose to hire himself out to a farmer, a baker, a butcher, or a squatter, how could they hinder him? To do so would be to interfere with the liberty of the subject in a gross way. If the case was tried at home, it would not, he believed, hold good for one moment. The Bill was a piece of very unjust class legislation, and if he accepted it at all it would be on the ground that half-a-loaf was better than no bread. Even if the Bill got through this Chamber, he did not think it would pass the Upper House, for they surely could not reconcile it with their principles.

Mr. BAYNES said that, as far as he was concerned, he would rather have no bread at all than half-a-loaf under such legislation as this. It was a disgrace to the Committee to legislate on human beings as if they were mere brutes; and nothing else than the wiping off of the Act from the statute-book would satisfy him. In American newspapers of the olden time he had seen advertisements which read very much like the following clause of this Bill:—"Any person who harbours a labourer without reporting the fact to the nearest inspector or to an immigration agent shall be liable on conviction thereof to a penalty not exceeding £20." That was slavery and nothing else. If men were imported here and told they were not at liberty to go beyond certain bounds, they were slaves. Legislation of that kind was prejudicial to the colony—he knew personally that it had injured the colony to a great extent. When in the United Kingdom he was frequently met with the remark, "You have a species of slavery there; how can you expect a constant flow of immigrants?" He explained to the best of his ability that it was not slavery: at the same time, he felt that it was nothing else, and nothing would please him better than to see the abominable statute wiped off their books. As long as such a statute remained in existence immigration would never be a success. The present condition of immigration, considering the inducements which this great colony held out, was a disgrace to the Administration. The Colonial Secretary said last

night that to keep a man after he had served his time was slavery pure and simple; and he believed that was the feeling of a majority of the Assembly. He trusted hon. members would put aside all idea of profit, and legislate for the benefit of the country rather than their own pockets. If he never made another shilling in his life he would not make it by black labour. At the same time, he did not see why sugar-planters should not enjoy the benefit of it, but let them have it free;—do not legislate for kidnappers, but let the Imperial Government watch the seas.

Mr. BAILEY said the hon. member (Mr. Baynes) had made some remarks as to the freedom which planters should exercise with regard to the employment of coloured labour. The harassing way in which planters had been treated in that matter had so disgusted many of them that there were those who would not much regret if the labour were totally abolished. They had been so harassed and tormented, subjected to inquisitions and visits of commissioners who ran into their places, picked up a stray blackfellow to whom they put a few leading questions, and disgraced the employer. Men who had been subjected to that sort of thing were getting so disgusted with their meddlesome legislation that they would not much regret the abolition of the labour. They kept it up now because it was necessary, not because it was cheap. It was a dear kind of labour, but it was the only labour of the kind that was available. They were the only men who would do a monotonous kind of labour every day from one year's end to another, and upon whom the employer could depend at all times. If the planter with his cane ripe were to be deserted by his employees, it meant sudden and immediate ruin — he was entirely at their mercy; — and that was where the grievance came in. If it were not that planters must have labour on which they could depend, they would prefer white labour to black. It was all nonsense to say that cane could not be grown without black labour. There was no work at all in connection with the growth of cane that he (Mr. Bailey) could not do. He could earn a living at it to-morrow if necessary, and had done so before. He could grow cane at a price it would amply repay any planter with a mill to purchase it, and had recently made an offer to do so. If that were so, surely they might hope that the time would soon come when there would be enough suitable white labour in the colony to enable them ultimately to dispense with black labour altogether. The future effect of this black labour would be to demoralise and degrade labour generally. The white man who was able to sit down and watch several kanakas working would be reluctant to do any work himself—he would get out of the habit of working. If they raised up a class of white overseers and black labour, they might as well stop immigration at once. He did not think the small farmers were to blame for employing black labour. Hardly one of the farmers who did so did not regret the necessity for it. Equally with the planter, they could not obtain that monotonous labour essential to the success of farming in some parts of the colony. At the same time, it was rather unfair to those farmers who, from choice or necessity, were either unable to employ black labour or did not choose to do so. These men were subjected to unfair competition. He hoped the day was not far distant when, if they did not abolish Polynesian labour, they would give it no more protection than was given to any other description of labour in the colony.

Mr. KELLETT thought the measure, instead of being called a Bill to regulate the introduction and treatment of labourers from the Polynesian islands, should be intituled a Bill for granting a bonus to sugar-planters. The sugar industry had been favoured for many years. The planters were protected by an import duty of £5 per ton; they paid nothing upon their exports, and he thought the time had now come when protection should be taken away from them. He knew of one man at West Moreton with a sugar plantation of 70 acres. A gentleman went to see this plantation the other day, and it was noticeable that the work was done by white labour. The planter was asked how he was getting on. He had not started long, but he said he was doing very fairly, although he had nothing to brag about. He was asked how his crop compared with maize, whereupon he said that half a crop of sugar was better than the best crop of maize. If a man could do as well as that, why should they continue to extend such encouragement and protection to sugar-planters? The sooner they got rid of this Bill and abolished the existing Act the better. The black labour was of no benefit to the colony at large, and it had already stopped many white men from coming into the colony, for the simple reason that they could not afford to compete with men who could work for a much less rate of wages. He did not wish to do harm to an existing industry; but if an amendment were brought forward with a view to the exclusion of black labour at a certain period he would support it.

Mr. KATES said it had been remarked that white men could not work upon sugar plantations; but he had seen Europeans working with the thermometer at 100 degrees in the shade without any complaint. He believed the sugar-planters had already been well looked after by the Government; and he did not see why, for the sake of this class, they should disgrace the whole colony. It would be well, at the expiration of a few years, to abolish Polynesian labour altogether, if they wished to preserve a steady stream of white immigration.

Mr. GROOM said he was anxious to know what would be the feelings of the British public on reading such a paragraph as the following, which had appeared in the columns of the *Western Champion*:—

"STOCK MOVEMENTS IN THE WEST.—A mob of sixteen kanakas passed through Blackall on Wednesday from Ruthven Station, bound for the nearest port. They were in prime store condition, and showed evidence of careful treatment on the part of the drover in charge."

Any stranger unacquainted with the colony would imagine that there were stockowners dealing in kanakas. He thought it would be well to introduce a clause into the Bill limiting the importation of kanakas to a period of three years. He understood that an amendment of that kind was to be moved later on in the Bill. If that were the case he would have great pleasure in supporting the mover. This black labour had undoubtedly done the colony injury, and would continue so to do. If the amendment to which he had referred were agreed to, the planters would have an opportunity within the next three years of providing themselves with suitable labour. The sooner Queensland wiped this stain off her character the better.

Mr. AMHURST said the proposal of the hon. member for Toowoomba simply showed that he knew nothing of the subject. He would say that down south, with a protective duty of £5 or £10, sugar might be produced by white labour; but to export it would be perfectly impossible. When he first came to the colony the sugar industry was just begun, and he did not believe there were more than five or six hundred people in the Mackay district, but now the population was between six and seven thousand, and the

majority of them were dependent upon the sugar industry. It did not interfere in any way with other agriculture, for numbers of Europeans were employed in the growth of corn and other products. There was no doubt it could not be grown as profitably as on the Darling Downs, but the fact remained that it had to be grown; it would not pay to import corn to feed the number of horses and cattle on the sugar-plantations. He mentioned this to show that the sugar industry did not edge out all other agriculture, but that the two had to be worked together. Hon. members ought to treat this subject seriously, and he hoped they would do so. The climate of the North was much more suitable to the growth of sugar than the South, and hon. members should consider this before they shook the confidence of capitalists with reference to the North. If the House did not intend to encourage the employment of kanakas they would have to pay the forfeit.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY hoped hon. members would excuse him if he pointed out that they were discussing the question more as if it were the second reading of the Bill than as if it were in committee. They had been two nights on the general question, although it had been discussed over and over again. Hon. members should confine themselves to the amendment on the clause. They would never get through any business by saying over again what ought to be said on a second reading. If they really wished the Bill to go through they must confine themselves to the business before them, and to pass the clause either as it was or in an amended form, otherwise there would be no chance of ever getting it through. He was not inclined to waste the time of the House when there was a great deal of business to do. This was the second night the Bill had been before the Committee, and they had not passed the second clause because they had been discussing questions which had little to do with the amendment. If hon. members were determined to stonewall the Bill, and it looked very much like it, let them say so and he would withdraw it.

Mr. PERSSE called the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the fact that the supporters of the Government were not likely to stonewall the Bill in any shape or form, yet it quite deserved any discussion that it had received up to the present. Although it was not the second reading of the Bill, but they were going into it clause by clause, there were grave objections to the manner in which it was brought in, and it had not had the discussion it ought to have had.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that the Bill having passed its second reading was now in the hands of the Committee. He was only too glad to find that the Colonial Secretary had not got the second clause passed. He hoped it would not be passed, and would do all that lay in his power not to throw the Bill out but to alter it, and the alteration he would make would be in perfect conformity with the views he had held ever since he came into the colony. He would test the feeling of the House and the country by proposing a poll-tax, the same as existed with regard to Chinamen, giving three years' notice. His amendment read—

"From and after the 31st day of December, 1880, before any islanders shall be permitted to land from any vessel, the master of the vessel shall pay to the Collector of Customs, or other officer of Customs authorised on that behalf, the sum of £10 for every such islander, such sum to be paid into the general revenue of the colony.

"2nd. If any master shall neglect to pay any such sum for each islander, or shall land or permit to land any islander at any place in the colony before such sum shall have been paid for or by him, such master shall be liable for every such offence to a penalty not exceeding £20 for each islander so landed or permitted to land."

This amendment would bring the matter to a point. The hon. member for the Logan had stated that the feeling against kanakas was caused by their being employed in the towns; but he maintained that the feeling was against them all over the country. If they were allowed in the country they must also be allowed in the towns—that was an argument which was unanswerable. They competed with white labour in the sugar plantations, and in the bush as much as they did in the towns. Why should differential legislation be made in the colony—one law for the rich and another for the poor? The hon. member for Cook said it was admitted that the labour was necessary; but he (Mr. O'Sullivan) asserted that no one but the hon. member had admitted it. Nor was it a fact. The only thing that could be said in favour of it by those concerned was that it was cheaper. He hoped the amendmend he had suggested would be carried. If the kanakas were not to be allowed to spread over the colony, it would be better to keep them out of it altogether. He should claim the right to keep one—or two or three, if he chose, though if he did so he should be liable, according to this measure, to be fined twenty pounds, half of which would go to encourage informers. He fully endorsed the eloquent and able speech of the hon. member for Burnett—the trade was, no doubt, slavery, and they would not have it.

Mr. WALSH said he reiterated his statement that this labour was considered necessary by a majority of the people of the colony; and the proof was the enormous cost they incurred in procuring it. They had to pay about £20 for each labourer, besides the £6 a-year and rations; and they would not go to that expense, and the attendant risk of getting that peculiar kind of labour, if they could get the labour they desired in the colony. The sugar-planters had to compete with the Mauritius, Java, and other countries, which were supplied with very much cheaper labour, and they must continue to produce sugar at a price to compete with those countries or abandon the industry altogether. The hon. member for Stanley appeared to lose sight of the fact that that there were other places besides Brisbane and its surroundings to be considered. In the northern districts it was impossible to get white men to work the plantation, whatever might be the case in the south. And was the existence of that vast rich territory to be ignored? Were hon. members to be told that because the white men could work in southern plantations, therefore black labour was not to be allowed in parts where white men could not do that kind of work? If the confidence of capitalists who had money to invest was to be continually shaken in the way it had been shaken lately, by statements made in the House, the sooner a line was drawn and the northern part of the colony separated from the southern part the better it would be for all parties.

Mr. BAYNES said it was not his intention to stonewall the Bill or prevent it from passing by any of the illegitimate means the Colonial Secretary had thought proper to suggest. He rose to take exception to the statement of the hon. member for Cook, made to-night and last night, that it was impossible for a white man to do the work a blackfellow could do. He had been a colonial for something like thirty years, and had done as much work in the bush as any blackfellow could do; he had split posts and rails himself, and he had white men now in his employ who could do a day's work equal to any blackfellow's. If he wanted a man to do a day's work he would employ a white man, and he thought it absurd for an hon. member with the experience of the hon. member for Cook to say

that a white man could not stand the Australian climate. It might be policy and profitable for some men to employ black labour, though he doubted it. Sugar had been successfully grown by white labour, and although the work might be distasteful to a white man, it was not harder than corn-growing. For some time it had been the fashion to grow sugar in the West Indies by means of black labour, and the result was that they were very much behind the Australian colonies in every respect. The more the Bill was proceeded with the more like slavery the trade looked. On the second reading of the Bill he declined to use that term, but he must admit that when a man was told, after having fulfilled his engagement, he must not go beyond a certain line, that man was in bondage, and, therefore, was a slave.

Mr. FRASER regretted the course the debate had taken, but as such latitude had been allowed it was hardly fair that those who had not spoken should be checked at this stage. The difficulty which arose was inevitable from the exceptional character of the legislation, and he agreed that the shortest and most satisfactory way would be to sweep the measure off the statute-book altogether. The hon. member for Mackay (Mr. Amhurst) had told them that if they threw out this Bill or repealed the present Polynesian Labourers Act they would crush the sugar industry. That was the very argument used in the palmy days of American slavery, and although slavery in that country had passed away, yet they found the produce previously raised by slave labour still produced there to an equal extent, and commanding the same position in the markets of the world; in fact, it could not be beaten. And were this labour done away with in this colony, he was satisfied that those engaged in the sugar industry would find means of carrying it on and of competing with the countries that had been referred to. He had never heard it admitted that this labour was necessary; he had heard it so contended by those who were immediately interested in it, but even then it was a question whether it was the cheapest kind of labour. The argument he had heard urged in favour of this class of labour was not so much the cheapness of it as that it could be depended on. They were told that sugar could not be grown in the northern parts of the colony without this labour, but he would ask had it ever been tried? He did not believe there was a solitary instance in which the attempt had been made; and the idea suggested itself that there were other occupations in the north, such as on goldfields, that were equally trying, in regard to heat and endurance, as sugar-growing, and yet they found white men able to work there and carry on successfully. The Minister for Lands last night said that there were sugar-planters on the Logan who would be glad to get out of it. Well, he (Mr. Fraser) was thoroughly acquainted with the sugar-growers on the Logan and Albert and their history, and he knew that the majority of them had done remarkably well. There had been a few failures in days gone by, arising from ignorance and other causes, but in every instance the failure had been where the industry had been carried on by kanaka labour, and the most successful men were those who did not employ that labour. There was not the slightest desire on the part of any member to inflict injustice upon those who were engaged in that industry, but seeing that almost every member who had spoken had pronounced a most emphatic opinion adverse to this class of labour, he thought the time had come when those engaged in it should take warning and see what was coming. If it was necessary to have this labour, leave it open to those who required it to get it the best way they could. He did not see why the country should give its sanction to this exceptional class of labour, which did undoubtedly come into contact with European labour. He thought the best friend the planters had was he who let them know what was coming next, because he (Mr. Fraser) was perfectly satisfied that sooner or later this labour would be entirely abolished.

Mr. NORTON said he considered this labour necessary under the present circumstances of the colony. If he did not he should have voted without hesitation against the second reading of the Bill, which was the time that this discussion should have taken place. With regard to the amendment of the leader of the Opposition, he considered it unnecessary, as that of the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) dealt with the subject as the Committee wished to deal with it. The Bill had two particular objects: the first was to protect labourers when they came to the colony, and the second to protect white labour against black labour. This black labour had been introduced for the development and maintenance of a particular industry. The amendment intended to be proposed by the hon. member for Maryborough stated distinctly the form of labour in which these islanders should be employed. If that amendment was carried it would prevent their interference with white labour in any other shape than that in which he believed the Committee wished to see black labour employed. Then the amendment of the hon. member for Maryborough went further, and aimed to prevent their employment in municipalities. He believed that the real complaint against this black labour was that the islanders had been allowed into the towns where, he believed, they had no right whatever, and took the places generally occupied by white men. He did not mean to say that the men should not be as free as possible when they came here, but they must remember that they were introduced for a particular object, and having only permitted their introduction for that object they should see that they were confined to it as much as possible. If they liked to remain in the colony after their three years had expired they should not drive them away, but their object was to protect white labour against them when their time was up. The amendment of the leader of the Opposition did much more than this—it placed them in the same position after their time was up as when they first came. If they liked to remain they should be allowed as much liberty as possible without interfering with white labour. If the amendments proposed by the hon. member for Maryborough were agreed to the objects of the Committee would be carried out.

Mr. FEEZ said when he first entered the House he alluded to this question as one which would occupy the minds of the Assembly considerably, and his prognostication had come true. No question was of so much importance as the labour question. While it was justifiable in former days to allow the introduction of black labour, it had since been admitted by gentlemen of experience in squatting that squatters could now do without them. That might be so; but the greatest fault of the Bill was that it was class legislation. They could come to only one conclusion on that point, and it was on that account that such extreme views were advocated by the various speakers. In the southern parts of the colony sugar could be grown profitably with white labour, but it was grown on a different principle. They had given up trashing, and found they could produce sugar without that process so as to make it pay, and therefore it was profitable with white labour. From Dawes Range to the southern boundary of the colony everything might be grown with white labour; but he could assure the Committee that at Rockingham Bay, Port

Mackay, Dalrymple, and other places which produced sugar luxuriantly and profitably, it was out of the question to say that the white man could do the necessary work. In order to prevent too large a body of islanders coming into the country at once, the planter should be restricted to employ only so many kanakas according to the acreage under cultivation. But if they were prevented from coming to the country, a large industry, which was just beginning to be developed, would be ruined. Large tracts of country had been taken up on the Johnstone River and other places which would never be occupied if South Sea Island labour was excluded. But he did not see why the squatter in the interior should not have just as much right as the sugar-planter on the coast to employ kanakas. The labour question was of immense consequence to the future prosperity of the colony, and one which ought to be considered most carefully.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he started from the point of view that the Committee desired to prevent the employment of Polynesians except in tropical agriculture, such prevention to be continuous from the time Polynesians first came into the colony until they went away. He could understand the Government opposing that—they did not want such a provision—but he could not understand hon. members who professed to agree with his view opposing his amendment. He would give an illustration to show what the effect would be if the amendment was negatived. A sugar-planter had 100 kanakas in his employ. Thirty were two years in the colony—they would be liable to the Act. Thirty had been on other plantations for three years but had not gone home at the expiration of their first engagement—they would not be liable to the Act. The other forty were men who had gone home and come back, and they would be all subject to the Act. All the provisions for the payment of the wages of islanders and for their proper treatment would be of no effect if the man remained in the colony at the expiration of his three years' engagement. He would also point out that there would be the greatest difficulty in proceeding against an employer for breaches of the Act, as the prosecution would have to prove that the islander was a man whose time of departure had not arrived. And he would further point out that according to the 20th section, if a Polynesian had been three years in the colony he might be employed in any part without any restriction and for any purpose. It was to remove an anomaly of that kind that he proposed his amendment. He hoped that a division would be now taken, to show how members would vote on the question.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put.

The Committee divided :—

AYES, 21.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Macrossan, Low, Norton, Feez, Morehead, Kellett, Persse, Walsh, Lalor, Sheaffe, Hamilton, O'Sullivan, Weld-Blundell, H. Palmer, Archer, Thompson, Davenport, Amhurst, and Swanwick.

NOES, 16.

Messrs. Garrick, Griffith, Dickson, McLean, Rutledge, Meston, Fraser, Bailey, Grimes, Beattie, Horwitz, Kates, Groom, Macfarlane, Miles, and Douglas.

Question, consequently, resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN suggested that his amendment should be put and decided at once. If it were negatived he did not see why they could not go on with the Bill and take it through committee that night. It would be just as well to do that.

Mr. HAMILTON said he thought the various kinds of employment to which it was desirable to confine South Sea islanders should be distinctly stated, and that an alteration might be made with benefit in that portion of the interpretation clause which specified the kind of agriculture to which they were to be confined. According to the clause they were restricted to the cultivation of sugar-cane, coffee, spices, and any other semi-tropical products. This was too vague. The term "tropical products" might apply to any agricultural pursuit in the colony, seeing that we were chiefly in the tropics. According to this clause kanakas might even act as nursegirls ; for what were children in these latitudes but semi-tropical products? Moreover, under it kanakas could come into competition with whites in the cultivation of maize and other articles which at present were cultivated with profit by white men. Personally he had a decided objection to kanakas, and would much rather support a Bill to prohibit their introduction than to regulate it ;—as, however, this could not be effected, he would support this Bill, because it was a step in the right direction. At the same time, as the contention in favour of the introduction of kanakas was, that on account of the distressing nature of the work in connection with sugar cultivation it could not be worked with profit but by kanakas, he did not see why they should not be confined to that industry, for no such arguments presented themselves in support of their employment in other branches of agriculture which were now being carried on. With regard to coffee, tea, and spices, there might not at present be such an objection to their employment in order to afford some encouragement to the introduction of these industries. The mere fact of this clause specifying the particular agricultural pursuits to which South Sea Islanders should be restricted showed that a partial restriction was contemplated, but it would not be effected, in his opinion, if this clause were allowed to remain unaltered.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was sorry the Attorney-General was not in his place, for he wanted to know whether these islanders could not, after their three years' service, become naturalised on payment of half-a-crown or a shilling, and become subjects of Her Majesty. He believed the thing was perfectly simple ; and if so the amendment of the hon. member, Mr. King, became perfectly futile. What was the meaning of the following section of the interpretation clause :—

"Pacific Islander," or "Islander."—A native, not of European extraction, of any island in the Pacific Ocean which is not in Her Majesty's dominions, nor within the jurisdiction of any civilised power."

The islands ought to be specified and set forth in a schedule, for month after month those islands were becoming annexed by the different European Powers, and they might be landing themselves in great difficulties if the amendment were passed. Surely a kanaka, simply because he was not a subject of any civilised Power, ought not to be debarred from becoming a British subject if he chose to go through the usual process? They could place no restraint upon a man who had become a subject. It was monstrous to propose that we should have an *imperium in imperio*—a class in our midst who were to live under perfectly different restrictions from other men. No English-speaking community would submit to it for a moment. He left it to the lawyers to say whether or not his contention was sound. It was more than absurd to suppose that aliens were to be admitted, and yet to be debarred from taking advantage of the provisions of the Naturalisation Act.

Mr. LOW thought the employment of kanakas should be confined to sugar plantations, and that

anyone but a sugar-planter who employed them should be made subject to a penalty of £20.

Mr. MESTON said he would move, in the section defining tropical and semi-tropical agriculture, the omission of all the words after "sugar-cane," and the insertion in lieu thereof of the words "and manufacturing sugar." That amendment would have the effect of restricting the employment of kanakas to sugar-growing and sugar-making. If the clause were agreed to in its present form there was no species of agriculture in any part of the colony in which kanakas could not be employed. They could be employed in gardening and in agriculture of all kinds. He had heard a great many impracticable suggestions with regard to the employment of the kanakas—as to the kind of labour for which they were fitted, and that for which they were not fitted. He could speak with some experience upon this point. To assume that a white man could not trash sugar-cane and do ordinary work on a plantation was to assume that he could not do visible outdoor work at all. To work on a plantation was no harder than ploughing, harrowing, splitting, or fencing, Any man who could do a day's slab-splitting could do a day's trashing. He had done many a day's trashing when the heat registered 110 degrees or 114 degrees in the shade. For two years he worked a sugar plantation and mill, and engaged as many as sixty men in the crushing season. He had an antipathy to the employment of Polynesians. On one occasion there were some whose term of service had expired, and who came to the plantation seeking for employment. He engaged three of them, and he believed that the worst white man he ever had was superior to those men. They were no good as firemen and no good in the field. At any rate he only kept them a fortnight, and was glad to get rid of them. The whole of the trashing was done by white men, and, really, to call trashing a labour was absurd, as it was simply amusement. How was it, he would ask, that on the Oriental steamers white men were employed as firemen because black men could not stand the heat? In fact, all the engineers on those steamers were Scotchmen. They had been told by the hon. member for Cook that the labour of kanakas was the source of accumulation of wealth; but, as had been shown by the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Fraser), if the present system was continued, the colony would, in time, be reduced to the condition of the West Indies, where there were a few wealthy sugar-growers and a large and miserable labouring population. Comparing the sugar plantations in Queensland with those in New South Wales, he might mention that he knew of one plantation in Queensland where all the people employed were kanakas, and where the highest wage was 10s. a-week; whereas in New South Wales the men were paid 30s. a week, the highest wages given being those of the engineer, who was paid £3 a-week. He had asked some of the planters in New South Wales if they could not get kanakas, and they told him that certainly they could, but they preferred to have white men. And in connection with the subject he would quote the actual results from two plantations. From one in New South Wales where white men were employed there was a surplus profit at the end of the year of £1,700, whilst from the other in Queensland where kanakas were employed the surplus profit was £3,000. But the difference between the two was this—that in the one case the wages went into the hands of white men who circulated the money, whilst in the other it went into the hands of the planter and was not diffused around in the form of wages. He was astonished that any hon. member should stand up and say that kanaka labour was a cheap labour for the colony. He considered that it should be abolished, but, in order that the planters of Queensland should not be taken by surprise, his opinion was that they should be given three years' notice, and at the end of that time all kanakas should be returned to their islands. It had been stated that in the early days of sugar growing the planters failed because they did not get cheap labour, but the fact was they failed because they had not the necessary experience. One or two who failed employed only kanakas, so that it was not a question of cheap labour, but of management and experience. He should press his amendment because he desired that, if the pernicious system were to be permitted at all, it might be restricted to the cultivation of sugar.

Amendment put and negatived; and clause as read agreed to.

On clause 3—"Not lawful to introduce Pacific Island labourers except under this Act"—

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was important that the Bill should provide for the regulation of Polynesians all the time they were in the colony, if they were not to be allowed to swarm all over the country and do whatever they liked. He moved that the words "or employ them in the colony," be inserted so that the clause would apply to all kanakas actually in the colony. At the same time, he would remark that keeping the House sitting until 11 o'clock four nights a-week was not conducive to good legislation.

Question put.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he hoped the Government did not intend to allow a division to be taken without remark. An amendment of that kind deserved notice, at any rate, and the Government were not likely to get on with business any faster by sitting in silence. He did not look for any lengthy reply, but he did expect ordinary civility. If the Government said nothing more, let them tell their followers to vote against the amendment, and no doubt that would be sufficient speech.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would make a speech. He would recommend the hon. member for North Brisbane to keep his temper, and would move that the Chairman report progress.

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

The House adjourned at half-past 10 o'clock.