Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 25 *October*, 1880.

The Mail Contract.—Goldfields Act Amendment Bill—third reading.—Railway Companies Preliminary Bill—committee.—Treasury Bills Bill.—Duty on Cedar Bill—second reading.—Customs Duties Bill—second reading.—Duty on Queensland Spirits Bill—second reading.—Marsupials Destruction Bill—committee.

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

THE MAIL CONTRACT.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said he had received a telegram from London, which, being a matter of some importance, he begged to read to the House at this stage of the proceedings. It was as follows :—

"Finally Telegram received Proceeding vigorously with necessary arrangements Rely on our doing full justice to contract requirements.

"(Signed) MACKINNON, London."

GOLDFIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL —THIRD READING.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS AND MINES (Mr. Macrossan), the Bill to amend the Goldfields Act of 1870 was read a third time, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council with the usual message.

RAILWAY COMPANIES PRELIMINARY BILL—COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of the clauses of this Bill.

The HON. S. W. GRIFFITH said he thought this was the proper time to propose the clause he had prepared to follow clause 34 as passed. It was a provision with a view of securing that the contractors, if a joint-stock company, should be properly registered, and with sufficient paid-up capital. He had altered the phraseology of the clause so that it should fit this particular part of the Bill, and proposed that it should read thus:—

> If the contractors are a joint-stock company, such company must be a company incorporated according to the law of some part of Her Majesty's dominions, and registered in Queensland according to law; and before they are allowed to begin the construction of the line they will be required to produce to the Minister a certificate signed by the Auditor-General that it has been proved to his satisfaction that the company has a capital, subscribed in good faith and by responsible persons, equal to one thousand pounds for every mile of railway agreed to be constructed, and a paid-up capital, actually available for the purposes of the construction of the railway, equal to not less than one-tenth of such subscribed capital.

He had inserted the name of the Auditor-General, thinking that officer was the proper person to perform the duty specified, but he was not particular about it. It might be made the Under Secretary to the Treasury, or the Registrar-General. It was a matter purely relating to the investigation of accounts. All he wished was that it should be done by some official irrespective of political influence. The provision which he now proposed was one that was adopted in the State of Massachusetts, and, as he stated to the House on the second reading of the Bill, it was a provision that caused no hardship to the company. A company to carry out the transcontinental line would require a very large capital. The subscribed capital as proposed would not be one-fourth of the actual capital that would be necessary. He apprehended that a company of that kind would raise a good deal of money on the security of debentures, but they ought themselves to have a subscribed capital equal to £1,000 for every mile of railway agreed to be constructed.

The PREMIER said, as he had intimated before, he had no objection to the principle of this clause, nor indeed to the clause itself as a whole. There was no *bonâ fide* company that would not be able easily to perform the conditions required. At the same time, he must say he did not think the clause was of much use, and the only objection he had was to the part which specified that the certificate must be signed by the Auditor-General. He (Mr. McIlwraith) should object to that, and should propose the insertion of words that would merely require the matter to be to the satisfaction of the Minister. The Minister had the power to get his proof from the Under Secretary to the Treasury, the Registrar-General, or any other officer. He would move as an amendment to omit the words "produce to the Minister a certificate signed by the Auditor-General that it has been proved to his satisfaction," and to insert the words "proved to the satisfaction of the Minister."

Mr. GRIFFITH did not think the amendment was an improvement. This was entirely a matter of business, and he could not help thinking that all political influence should be excluded. From the experience of the working of such companies, it was found to be absolutely necessary to deal with them exclusive of political influence. The construction of a line of railway was a matter of Government policy and might be left in the hands of the Government to negotiate, but there were many things which should not be left in their hands. Any Government in power might be open to the same influences and pressure as had been put upon Governments in other parts of the world. They had seen in America, where this system had been carried out, how great was the necessity of a safeguard of this kind. In Massachusetts what he now wished had to be proved to the satisfaction of a board. He was not aware that was done in Canada, but the experience there tended to show that the power should not be left too much in the hands of the Government for the time being. In that country a company desirous of constructing a railway by means of land grants possessed political influence, and did not scruple to increase it by paying to the head of the Government an enormous sum of money to be used for the purposes of a general election. This influence might be used anywhere. A company formed to carry out a line of railway from one end of Queensland to the other would be an enormous institution, and if it succeeded would own nearly as much land as all the rest of the colony put together. A railway from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria would cause to be alienated to the company nearly as much land as was alienated in the rest of the country. It was necessary, therefore, that a check should be put in of a purely business nature, and this was why he thought some permanent officer should be named—he did not care who or what he was, so long as the officer was not political.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said he had the greatest respect for the Auditor-General and the Audit Office if they would confine themselves to their legitimate business, but putting the Auditor-General into this clause was virtually making him the leader of the Ministry. Auditors-General were prone to take a great deal too much upon themselves; their tendency was not to confine themselves to the department in which they were useful, but, as they had seen within the last two years, to go far beyond their duties, and to assume to themselves the functions of directing the Government upon their financial arrangements. He objected to that, and believed the hon. gentleman himself, if he were in office, would be one of the first to object to such interference with Ministerial duty. It was not complimentary, either, to the politicians of the colony to say that they were not to be trusted. The hon. gentleman might feel in his own mind that he could not be trusted, and so his inner consciousness might have given rise to this amendment; but he (Mr. Palmer) did not feel this way. They did not expect to remain in office for ever, nor did they wish to do so; but they wished to give their successors the same right as themselves to deal with any such matter as this, which must rest with the Ministry of the colony, and not with any officer who was irresponsible. He should be sorry indeed if the Premier took this clause as it stood. The amendment the Premier himself had proposed was a very proper one, and he hoped it would be carried. Auditors-General must be taught that they must confine themselves to the legitimate duties of their department, and not attempt to interfere with matters in which they had no concern. He hoped the Committee would therefore support the amendment.

The PREMIER said he did not think it was a clause of any great importance. The condition

demanded was one with which any company could comply; but what he objected to was the reference to the Auditor-General, who was put into the clause to do purely Executive functions which belonged to the Government. The hon. gentleman who moved it said that the person granting the certificate should be outside all politics, but those remarks had no application to the case. The work ought to be done by someone who was responsible to Parliament. The reason adduced by the leader of the Opposition for proposing this clause could not have been founded upon what he had learnt respecting the railway lines in America, for the men connected with the biggest swindles in railway construction in that country were public officials and not members of the House.

Mr. REA said that the persons connected with the nefarious railway transactions in America were men occupying precisely the same positions as those occupied by the Ministry here.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he agreed that the Executive functions ought not to be given to anyone outside of the Ministry: but this was not an Executive function. The Minister for Works for the time being might not be a particularly good judge as to whether the company had got *bonâ fide* paid-up capital or not. Such a Minister would be very likely to be deceived unless he was practically acquainted with business. He might be deceived by false vouchers. Why was an Auditor-General appointed at all, except it was that some person particularly conversant with the business was better able to discover the truth with respect to the disbursement of public money? He was now asking the Committee to impose a safeguard, and he was anxious to have a real guarantee that the capital was subscribed. As to the objection to the Auditor-General, he proposed him simply because he was an officer of Parliament and discharged business appertaining to accounts. He very much suspected that if it had not been for the difference of opinion which was known to have taken place between the Government and the present Auditor-General this proposition would not have been objected to. He quite agreed with the hon. gentlemen opposite that the Auditor-General should be kept to his proper functions, but what was proposed in the clause was his proper function. It was not a political matter at all, and could be properly performed by a permanent official. In England certain things were required to be done by all railway companies, and must be proved to have been done to the satisfaction of the Board of Trade; but the officer who supervised such matters was a permanent official, and not the president of the Board of Trade.

The HON. J. DOUGLAS said he looked upon the signature of the Auditor-General as an additional guarantee that the alleged subscribed capital was available. The Auditor-General had, at the present time, to discharge functions in connection with the Ministry which were not political. He had, in combination with the Government and Treasurer for the time being, to sign debentures. Under the provisions of the law the Auditor-General was required, at certain times, to count the securities and to see that the debentures which were said to be in custody were really there. In connection with the Treasury notes the Auditor-General had to see that those which had been withdrawn from circulation were destroyed. All these were functions which really attached to the Auditor-General's office. They were mere technical details. Of course the Minister for the time being would be responsible to Parliament for the agreement and its ratification. They were primary responsibilities, and all that it was proposed in the clause now before the Committee was that an additional guarantee should be forthcoming. It was a very justifiable demand, and not at all open to the objection taken by the Colonial Secretary. For himself, he should support the clause as it stood.

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

The Committee divided:—

AYES, 5.

Messrs. Douglas, Griffith, Rutledge, Thompson, and Rea.

NOES, 19.

Messrs. Macrossan, Palmer, McIlwraith, Beor, Perkins, King, Cooper, H. W. Palmer, Beattie, Archer, Kingsford, Sheaffe, Amhurst, Morehead, Lumley Hill, Weld-Blundell, Low, Stevens, and Norton.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put and passed.

New clause, as amended, agreed to.

Mr. REA said as this was perhaps the most important Bill that had ever been presented to the House, affecting as it did both the lands and the works administration of the colony, he thought it was desirable that a clause should be inserted to ensure that any Ministry initiating such contracts as were contemplated should have the confidence of their constituents. People out of doors would expect that a Ministry who gave away seven millions of acres of land should show that they had the confidence of the country. He therefore moved that the following new clause be inserted:—

No provisional agreement or contract for any line of railway such as that referred to in the official correspondence with Messrs. Kimber and Company, and involving the granting of seven millions of acres of the public lands of this colony, shall be signed and concluded by any Ministry in this colony, unless each of the Members of said Ministry has within twelve (12) months preceding such signing presented himself to his constituents for re-election and has been so re-elected to this House.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not see in what way the proposed clause would give the country any additional security; and the effect of the clause would be to prevent any Ministry from entering into a contract after they had been twelve months in office. He could not assent to the proposal.

Mr. REA said a newly-elected Ministry, or one which had been elected nine months, would have complied with all the requirements of the clause. A great deal had been said about Ministers possessing the voice of the country, but if they declined to accept the clause there would be considerable doubt about the matter.

Question put and the Committee divided.

There being only one teller for the "Ayes," the question was resolved in the negative.

Mr. REA said, on looking through the Bill it appeared to him that there had been a great oversight on the part of both sides of the House. The Bill was no doubt intended to be a guide to intending contractors in making such tenders as had been shadowed forth in the correspondence laid before the House, but there was no indication in the Bill of the line of country which such a railway as appeared to be contemplated would take. The contractors were therefore without chart or compass. Without such indication the Bill would be utterly valueless, except perhaps to Baron Erlanger or contractors who might have the ear of the Ministry. Without a knowledge of the line of country to be adopted it would be impossible for the intending contractors to make a survey. To give the Ministry an opportunity of giving a definition of the direc-

tion of the line, he would move that the following new clause be inserted :—

Provided that within four months of the passing of this Bill the Minister for Works shall cause to be published in the *Government Gazette* a notification of the line of country through which the Carpentaria line will pass, as a guide to intending contractors, naming the principal runs through which said line shall pass.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was doubtful whether the object of the clause could be carried out. A survey would probably be necessary to show whether the line should start from Roma or from Mitchell, and that could not be made within four months. Then it would have to be decided what course the line should take between the eastern and western rivers. At present little seemed to be known except that the line would take a generally north-western course, and it would be impossible to say what runs it would go through. He should advise the hon. member to withdraw the clause.

Mr. REA said he was willing to alter the clause so that the Ministry should only be required to give a mere suggestion, but he should protest against a line being carried straight to the South Australian border in order to increase the value of runs there.

Question put, and the Committee divided.

There being only one teller for the "Ayes," the question was resolved in the negative.

Mr. REA moved the insertion of the following new clause—

That in any preliminary contract entered into for a trunk line to Carpentaria the northern portion of such line, commencing at the Gulf of Carpentaria, shall, for the first five years, never exceed one-fifth of the length of line completed in the southern portion commencing at and counting from Mitchell as the starting point.

He apprehended that if some such provision were not agreed to the contractors would commence at the southern end, and when they reached South Australian territory discontinue the line. By that means they would double and quadruple the value of the runs there, and the people of Brisbane would be no nearer to their object than they were before.

Question put and the Committee divided :—

AYES, 2.

Messrs. Rea and Douglas.

NOES, 17.

Messrs. Macrossan, Palmer, Perkins, McIlwraith, Beor, Stevens, Kingsford, Thompson, Beattie, Norton, Sheaffe, Amhurst, H. W. Palmer, Hill, Morehead, Weld-Blundell, and Low.

Question, consequently, resolved in the negative.

On clause 35—"Act not to limit rights of Parliament to amend"—

The PREMIER moved that the clause, as read, stand part of the Bill.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he should like to ask the Premier whether he considered it necessary that the Government should be represented on the boards of companies which might be formed under the provisions of the Bill. He (Mr. Douglas) thought that it would be desirable for the Government to be so represented. Practically the Government would go into partnership with any company constructing a line under the Bill; therefore it would probably be desirable that somebody possessing the confidence of the Government and having the power of a director should have a seat on the board. It seemed to him to be desirable that the Government should, in that way, be made cognizant of the whole of the transactions of the company. The proportion of the capital which the Government supplied was the land, and that was a very appreciable proportion of it. It was anticipated that, in virtue of that contribution to the capital of the company, the company would interest themselves in the introduction of people who would buy land from them and occupy it. When speaking on the second reading of the Bill he made the same suggestion, and he should like to know whether the Premier had given any consideration to it.

The PREMIER said he had not given the matter any consideration—in fact, he did not remember that the hon. member had referred to it before. The proposition was one of the most extraordinary that he had ever heard of. What business had the Government to be represented on the board of any company? It was for the company to do their own business in the best way they could. A representative of the Government on a board of directors would represent another interest, and how could he be expected to act in accord with the other directors conscientiously. What would a representative of the Government do, or what could he do? He did not understand what the hon. member wanted to get at.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that what he had suggested was carried out in connection with some Indian guarantees. He did not understand the statement that the Government and the anticipated companies would be opposed to each other, seeing that practically they would be in partnership. The company supplied the money and the Government the land;—therefore they were both equally interested in the success of the enterprise. He did not think that there was anything unreasonable in that view of the case. The Premier could not have noticed what he said when he spoke on the second reading of the Bill, or he would not have said that he had not heard the question referred to before. He (Mr. Douglas) stated that he anticipated that the Government would be represented on the boards of railway companies, and that it was an essential part of their functions to see that they were properly represented on the boards of companies in which they were so much interested. What the company did the Government would to a great extent be held responsible for—the public would look on the Government practically as the responsible parties. To be effective of good the companies would become the chief emigration agents in London. That was what resulted from the formation of railways in the United States of America by private companies on the land-grant system. The companies had become the most efficient agents for the transference of population from the United Kingdom to the new country. He hoped that one of the primary objects of companies formed under the Bill would be to introduce population. It was through the introduction of population that he anticipated that they would be able to get the best value for their land. If they simply looked to people already in the colony as purchasers of their land their area of competition would be very small indeed; therefore it would be to their interest to introduce population. From that point he thought there were good reasons for the views he had put forward.

Question put and passed.

Clause 36 and preamble put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN having reported the Bill with amendments,

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Bill was recommitted for the purpose of considering a proposed new clause, of which notice had been given.

Mr. GRIFFITH moved that the following new clause, to follow clause 31 of the original Bill, be agreed to :—

A provisional agreement made under this Act may be made subject to the conditions that, at the expira-

tion of the period of twenty-one years from the time appointed for the final completion of the railway, the line, together with the land upon which it is constructed, and all sidings, buildings, rolling-stock, and other things appertaining thereto, or used therewith, shall become the property of the Crown. In that case the agreement shall also be subject to the following conditions, that is to say—

(1.) Upon the survey of the blocks, as hereinbefore provided, the Minister shall from time to time select the alternate blocks to be retained by the Crown.

(2.) The remainder of the blocks, hereinafter called the "contractors' blocks," shall be set apart for the contractors.

(3.) 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 fifty miles in length, has been constructed faithfully and of sound materials, according to the plans and sections approved by Parliament, and is complete and fit for public traffic:

(*a.*) One-half part of the contractors' blocks shall be granted to the contractors in fee-simple, and the part to be so granted shall be alternate blocks to be selected by the contractors:

(*b.*) Leases of the remainder of the contractors' blocks shall be granted to them for the term of twenty-one years at a peppercorn rent, subject to the condition that, if the contractors shall fail to complete the railway, or if at any time during the term of the lease the contractors shall make any default which shall entitle the Minister to take possession of the line, the lease shall be forfeited and the land comprised therein shall revert to the Crown; and the waiver of a forfeiture for any default shall not operate to prevent the enforcement of a forfeiture for any subsequent default of the same kind:

(4.) If at the expiration of such term of twenty-one years no such default shall have been made, the lands comprised in the leases shall be granted to the contractors in fee-simple.

(5.) In the event of the line being purchased by the Governor in Council during such period of twenty-one years, the value of the railway for the purposes of such purchase shall not exceed the then present value of the probable net profit which would be earned by the contractors from the use of the line during the period which would elapse between the time of the purchase and the expiration of twenty-one years from the time appointed for the completion of the railway.

The principle of the clause was very plain, and he thought little need be said to prove its desirableness. He had suggested twenty-one years as the term after which a line should fall into the hands of the Government. That term might be considered too short, but at the end of that term a line ought to be a paying concern if it were to be of any use at all. It did not follow that the leases would be of the same duration. Many of the leases would fall in before the line was completed. The leases granted for the first section would fall in seven years before the twenty-one years had expired, and so on. The term might be lengthened to thirty years if hon. members thought it desirable, but he did not. He would like to add to the clause a proviso to the effect that all persons tendering should make an offer within the terms of that clause, because he was desirous that the system should get fairplay, and that they should see what difference there would be in the cost of construction.

The PREMIER said he had no objection to the clause as printed. He thought the term of twenty-one years quite long enough. As an alternative proposal the clause would rather improve than hurt the Bill. One unnecessary condition, however, was that the contractors should not receive the whole of the land immediately after the final completion of the line. That was hard upon the contractors without being of advantage to the Government. He did not see of what advantage the provision could be, except that it afforded security that the contractors would work the line. It was not at all probable that a contract would be let upon terms which would make it worth the while of the contractors to abandon the line immediately after its construction.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Do the Government consent to make the alternative tenders under this clause necessary?

The PREMIER: That would only give unnecessary trouble. I think it should be optional.

Clause put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill with a further amendment.

Report adopted, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

TREASURY BILLS BILL

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee, and a resolution was agreed to affirming the desirableness of introducing a Bill to authorise the issue of Treasury bills.

Resolution reported and adopted. Bill presented and read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

DUTY ON CEDAR BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said the principle of this Bill had already met with the approval of the House. The expediency of putting an export duty on cedar was recommended by a select committee which sat in 1875, and if the reasons for doing so had great force at that time they had still greater force now. The bulk of the trade was carried on by men engaged in business in the neighbouring colonies, and direct with those colonies, and Queensland derived very little advantage from it. Probably that of itself might not be a sufficient reason for putting on an export duty; but it must be considered that the quantity of that valuable material was limited. There was no reason why this colony should not act as a seller of the material. An additional reason for putting on an export duty was that the inimical legislation of the other colonies had affected our trade for many years. In New South Wales and Victoria a duty was imposed on manufactured or sawn timber, while log cedar was imported duty free. The effect of that was directly to discourage the sawing or manufacture of timber in the colony, and to encourage the export of cedar in logs. Were there no other reason than that for the action the Ministry had taken it would be quite sufficient. He did not believe the duty would have the effect of discouraging the trade in timber cutting, although it might have the effect of putting it more into the hands of Queensland men. It was intended to impose a duty of 2s. per 100 superficial feet, and quite as much timber would be cut down whether it was exported or not, and there would be quite as much employment given to the men in the colony engaged in the business. Last year the quantity of cedar exported, if it had paid duty at the rate of 2s. per 100 superficial feet, would have yielded to the revenue £4,519. The first clause in the Bill imposed the export duty, and the other clauses showed how the Act was to be worked, especially with regard to vessels engaged in the trade. Customs officers resided at very few ports whence cedar was shipped, and arrangements were made for the manner in which the captain should get his clearance from the nearest port before he went to the cedar ground, and how he should get his clearance afterwards. Clause 7 was the usual clause in a Bill of that kind to make it work. The matter having been well discussed in Committee of Ways and Means, he would now simply move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there could be no objection to the principle of the Bill. He would call the Premier's attention to the fact that there was no provision made in the second clause with respect to notice being given before timber was shipped, although in the third clause it was provided that if timber was shipped contrary to the provisions of the Act it was to be forfeited. That provision without the other would be quite useless, for if it was exported it would be beyond their reach, and the ship might not come back. The important thing was that notice should be given before shipment.

Mr. BEATTIE said he perfectly agreed with the Bill. At the same time, he should like to see a clause inserted, if possible, to prevent the indiscriminate cutting down of cedar. That question was seriously considered by the select committee to which the Premier had referred. He had reason to believe that in the splendid cedar forests in the North the timber was cut down indiscriminately, and the same was the case in the South. On his own wharf, at that moment, there was cedar only twelve inches thick—cut in the South—and whoever cut cedar so young deserved to be prosecuted. He hoped an attempt would be made in the Bill to prevent such wicked waste of a valuable material.

Question put and passed, and the second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said the object of the Bill was to alter the duty on certain articles and impose others—to change the present fixed duty on acids, boats, leather, and screws to an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent.; to change tallow and stearine from the present *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. to a fixed duty of 1½d. per pound; and to put on the list of articles exempt from duty the article hemp. The only change of any considerable importance was that on tallow and stearine. At the present time, as he had informed the Committee of Ways and Means, while tallow came in under the *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent., stearine candles paid a duty of 2d. per pound, and the consequence had been that stearine had been imported for the manufacture of candles in the colony—an arrangement which was altogether to the advantage of the neighbouring colonies. The amount proposed to be imposed was perhaps too little; still there ought to be some margin between the raw material and the manufactured article. Had this duty been imposed last year, there would have been an addition to the revenue of £2,000. He moved that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. FRASER said that no reason had been assigned for altering the duty on leather, and the alteration of the tariff in that item would, he was satisfied, be a serious blow to the industry. A large amount of capital and machinery were now employed in the industry, which was a growing one, and had not yet fully secured for itself an independent footing in the colony. He failed to see how any advantage could be gained by the alteration, and he trusted that in committee the Premier would see his way to omit the item from the Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that although there would be no opposition to the second reading of the Bill, the Government must be prepared in committee to have their proposals considerably canvassed. It was intended to take that opportunity of discussing the details of the alterations in the tariff. He entirely objected to the alteration of the duty on leather, for which not a single satisfactory reason had been given; and he wanted to know what earthly reason there was to alter the duty on acids, boats, and screws? As to boats, the duty would be really less than before, in spite of the return laid before them which attempted to show that it would be larger. He did not want further information now, but when the Bill was in committee he should require a good deal of information on the subject.

Question put and passed, and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

DUTY ON QUEENSLAND SPIRITS BILL —SECOND READING.

The PREMIER, in moving the second reading of this Bill, said the present duty on spirits manufactured in the colony was 6s. 8d. per gallon, and it was proposed by this Bill to alter that duty to 10s. per gallon—the same as was paid on all spirits imported, with the exception of brandy. Another object of the Bill was to increase the duty now paid upon methylated spirits methylated in bond. There was no authority for charging any duty for methylated spirits in bond except the Act under which 6s. 8d. a-gallon was charged upon all other spirits manufactured in the colony. The matter, however, seemed to have got a good deal of consideration from the Government that existed in 1871, when an Executive minute was passed allowing colonial-made spirits to be methylated in bond on payment of 6d. a-gallon only, which was now considered too little, and in this Bill it was proposed to increase it to 2s. a-gallon; 6d. per gallon scarcely paid—in fact, did not pay the Government for the supervision of the methylation. Of course, it was an advantage to have spirits methylated in bond, because it would be done under the eyes of the Customs officers, who would see that the methylation was complete so as to render the spirit entirely unfit for drinking purposes. He could see no reason why the duty on spirits manufactured in the colony should not be the same as that imposed on spirits introduced from other countries. He believed the present system had led to an immense amount of bad spirit being put into the market; and there was no earthly reason why colonial spirits should be protected to the extent of 50 per cent. as they were at present. Had the duty proposed been in operation last year it would have yielded between £18,000 and £19,000, and he believed that that would go on increasing. He did not think the Bill would interfere at all with the colonial industry of the manufacture of spirits, as the great bulk of it was made for export. It would no doubt interfere with local trade, but that was not a matter of very considerable moment; and he believed the advantages to be gained, quite irrespective of the money consideration, would be very great indeed. It would prevent an immense amount of bad spirits from going into the market, which did so under the present duty. He moved that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he could not see that the Bill had any other object than to increase the revenue. The hon. gentleman said the result would be to prevent a large quantity of bad spirit from going into the market, but he (Mr. Griffith) could not see how that was going to be brought about. If profits could not be made in one way they would have to be made in another. A certain effect of the Bill would be to discourage the manufacture of spirits in the colony, which he did not consider a desirable result. He did not think they made too much spirits in the colony, or that they might not make more with advantage. He could not see how the hon. gentleman's argument applied unless all the bad spirit was kept for consumption and all the good

was exported. The hon. gentleman might as well get up at once and avow that the Bill was intended to provide increased revenue from spirits. He (Mr. Griffith) did not believe it would have that effect; and the immediate result, so far as he had been able to ascertain from people cognisant of these matters and well able to judge, was that it would discourage the manufacture of spirits in the colony. It would not discourage some so much as others. It would not discourage those who manufactured rum on the sugar estates, so much as other distilleries. He confessed that he could not see any advantage in the Bill at all. If it was desired to increase the revenue, why not raise the duty on spirits all round, leaving the proportion between spirits manufactured in the colony and imported spirits the same as it was now, or, if necessary, increase the proportion and make the duty on spirits made within the colony three-fourths instead of two-thirds. There was no doubt that the present differential duty had had the effect of starting the manufacture of spirits in the colony, and it was a pity that those young manufactures should be discouraged in this way. It was unnecessary to go into the question of protection in all its phases, nor did he propose to do so; but he thought no sound reason had been shown for this change. He was sorry there was not a fuller House, because he was very much inclined to believe that the House generally did not approve of this equalisation of the excise duty with the import duty; and he should be glad to see the Bill defeated.

Question put and passed, and the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION BILL—COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee to resume the consideration of this Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the following new clause, to take the place of clause 9 of the Bill, as printed :—

> For the purpose of creating a fund for carrying out the provisions of this Act, the board of each district shall, within two months after the date of its constitution, and thereafter in the month of April in each year, make and levy an assessment of not less than two shillings on every twenty head of cattle and horses, and two shillings on every hundred sheep pastured within the district, and such assessment shall be paid by each owner upon the actual number of sheep and cattle pastured by him on his run, but in no case shall the assessment on any run be less than five shillings per annum.
>
> Such assessment shall be deemed to have been duly levied on a notification thereof being published in the *Gazette*, and in one or more newspapers circulating in the district.

Mr. NORTON said before the new clause was put he should like to propose an amendment in the fourth line—to omit "not less than." His object in moving the amendment was that all districts throughout the colony should have to pay the same assessment wherever situated. The argument against this, he knew, would be that in the outside districts there were no kangaroos or paddamelons to be dealt with under the Bill, and, therefore, those districts should be exempted from payment. But if that argument was good in that case, he thought it would also hold good generally. There were some immense districts in portions of which paddamelons and kangaroos existed in large numbers, but in other parts of that district they did not exist at all; and if it was unfair to tax the outside districts which had none of these animals, it was also unfair to tax those whose runs, although in a district where they did not exist, were situated so far from the locality infested that they were in no way damaged by the fact of the existence of kangaroos and paddamelons in the district. As the present Act had been worked it came to this: Take the Port Curtis district. In one portion of that district these animals existed in considerable numbers, but in the greater part of the district there were almost none, and the argument he used was that those who were in the part of the district which was not infested should not have to pay for the destruction of kangaroos and paddamelons on a few runs, perhaps 100 miles off, any more than those living right outside. The whole principle of the Bill, he maintained, was bad. If the question was one in which the whole colony was concerned, and he maintained that it was to a certain extent, then every runholder in the colony should pay a share towards the fund; and if it was not a question in which the whole colony was concerned let them adopt the principle that was adopted in the Bathurst Burr Bill, and provide that every man destroy those that existed on his own run. He did not see why the principle should be different in those two Bills, if they did not admit that it was a matter in which the whole colony was more or less interested. His object was, therefore, to insist upon one rate being levied throughout the colony. On turning to clause 14 it would be seen that should the funds to the credit of any district remaining unexpended at the end of any year be deemed sufficient for carrying out the provisions of the Act, the owners in such district might be exempted from payment of assessment for a certain time. He considered that unfair, for the reasons already stated. The rates should be collected all over the colony and be paid into a general fund, from which the payments for the killing of marsupials should be made. He was rather doubtful whether his amendment would be carried, but at the same time he knew there was a strong feeling among many gentlemen that the Bill should carry out that principle, or that it should be dispensed with altogether and everyone be left to get rid of the pest. As the clause was in some way connected with the principle he was advocating, he would propose that the words "not less than" be omitted, with a view of compelling runowners to pay one fixed sum.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not agree with the amendment, which was running counter to all principles of legislation recently adopted by Parliament. It might just as well be argued that the rates of the divisional boards should be the same everywhere, and be paid to a common fund. They should oppose the amendment on the same grounds as they opposed the proposal in the Bathurst Burr Bill to create a common fund for the purpose of extirpating the burr. The hon. member had shown no reason why the amounts levied in the different districts should go into a common fund. There were some enormous districts which had few marsupials or none, and he did not see why the extreme western and north-western districts should have to pay a heavy assessment to destroy marsupials in districts with which they had nothing to do. For his own part, if he were speaking in his own interests he would be likely to support the amendment. He had runs which were plagued with marsupials, and he had runs which were not. Matters of personal consideration should not, however, enter into legislation. The whole principle of the Bill was to divide the colony into districts, and to appoint boards for the districts. If, however, the assessments were to go into a common fund, what was the good of the boards? They might as well be done without.

Mr. STEVENS said he should oppose the amendment, which, if it became law, would be as unjust a thing as was ever perpetrated. Under the proposed provisions of the Bill the runs

which had few marsupials would have to pay a heavy assessment, and that was going quite far enough.

Mr. SHEAFFE said the amendment was a most unjust one. As the Colonial Secretary had remarked, the tendency of their recent legislation was to bring the colony under local government, but here was a proposal which would compel the payment of money into a central fund for the extirpation of marsupials all over the colony. It was not fair that the districts, in which there were no marsupials and no prospect of their being infested with the plague, should be taxed to keep marsupials down in districts which were covered with them. There were no marsupials in the outside districts, but the settlers had other difficulties enough to contend with.

Mr. ARCHER was understood to say that the Colonial Secretary had made a mistake in asserting that the member for Port Curtis had given no reason for his amendment. He knew that there were districts in which the marsupials were so scarce that the gentlemen living in them complained that they could not get up a kangaroo hunt; yet those districts were to be taxed. It would be much fairer that the whole country should be taxed than that the men who lived only one hundred miles away, and who were not likely to be plagued with marsupials, should be taxed, whilst those who lived one thousand miles off should escape. As long as a man's run was clear of marsupials he should not be taxed. The only way to make the Bill fair would be to make the whole country one district. If the marsupial plague was a national calamity, let the nation extirpate it; but if it was not, let those whose runs were infested combat it. The man fifty miles away, who was as free of mursupials as the man one thousand miles off, had as much right to escape taxation. Hon. members knew that under the Bill, unless extreme care was taken in drawing out the districts, there would be places where there would be no marsupials within fifty miles, and consequently there was great reason for the amendment.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he should oppose the whole country being made into one parish, and was surprised that the idea should be supported by the member for Blackall, seeing that he had so strongly supported the Divisional Boards Bill. The only way to work the Bill was by different districts, and he thought that districts should come in by petition as under the Fire Prevention Act—that they should not be forced to come under the Bill. It might be depended upon that the pastoral tenants would come in if the Bill was a good one, but he objected to the inhabitants of districts where there were few marsupials being forced to pay a tax for killing off the marsupials in less favoured localities.

Mr. LOW said there should be some compulsion put upon the parties who were concerned in the question. In his district he knew some people who altogether ignored the idea of paying anything at all. They preferred hunting down marsupials with kangaroo dogs, although they all admitted that marsupials were greatly on the increase.

Mr. SHEAFFE said he maintained that the marsupial plague was not a national calamity. He represented as large a district as there was in the colony, and there were no marsupials in it —why, then, should his constituents be touched?

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if it was a national calamity every taxpayer in the colony should be taxed to extirpate it.

Mr. NORTON said an hon. member had argued that this was not a national calamity, and therefore runholders generally should not be taxed. If he studied his own individual interests he should go dead against the Bill. There were no marsupials within eighty miles of his run—why, then, should he have to pay for the clearing of the upper end of his district? That showed the want of principle in the Bill. The Colonial Secretary had said that if his (Mr. Norton's) idea was carried out a heavy tax would be imposed all through the colony. He said, however, that the present Bill imposed a heavy tax upon those who had no right to be taxed. If the tax became general it would be a light one, and that was an argument in favour of his proposal. He was told that in the Burnett district last year the marsupials existed in large numbers. A rate of 3s. for every twenty head of cattle was levied, followed within six months by two rates—one of 2s. and the other of 1s., being equal to 30s. on every hundred head of cattle. Why should the runholders who lived sixty or one hundred miles away from marsupials be taxed for the benefit of the few? A high rate was paid for the scalps, and the consequence was that those who were not troubled with the nuisance had to pay, and that those who suffered most, and who only should have gone to the expense of ridding themselves of the nuisance, made a profit. Hon. members said his proposal was unjust; but could anything be more unjust than the case he had given? There was no more reason why the men who did not suffer from marsupials should have been taxed than those who lived one thousand miles away. He regarded the marsupial plague as a calamity from which the colony generally was, to a certain extent, suffering, and, therefore, all interested in pastoral pursuits ought to contribute a moderate share towards the extermination of the animals, as they would have to do under his clause. If the scheme was not to be made general why make it at all? Why not propose, as in the Burr Bill, that every man should get rid of the nuisance by his own efforts? The only distinction between the two measures was that one dealt with the vegetable and the other with the animal pest. Was it right that because there happened to be in a district a few runs which were infested with these wretched paddamelons, that all runholders living within 100 or 150 miles should be called upon to contribute? If the Bill passed as it stood the whole colony would be taxed at first at the rate proposed, and after that there would be numbers of districts which would never pay a shilling. Those few districts in which the marsupials existed in large numbers would be put to everlasting expense, as the Burnett had been, and the others would go scot-free. He should press his amendment to a division in order to ascertain the feeling of the Committee.

Mr. ARCHER said he would remind hon. members that under the Diseases in Sheep Act the whole colony was assessed—everyone who had sheep was made to pay whether he was in danger or not; and in the same way everyone ought to be made to pay for keeping down a pest which might ultimately ruin the colony. This was not like the Burr Bill. They knew perfectly well that every man could keep the burr down on his run, but if a man killed the marsupials on his station those from the neighbouring station would take their place; therefore, there should be a law compelling everyone to kill them. The burr did not travel about with one; and therefore it was not necsesary to introduce the same system. If men who were fifty miles away from marsupials were to be compelled to contribute towards killing them, the whole country should be compelled.

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

The Committee divided :—

AYES, 18.

Messrs. A. H. Palmer, McIlwraith, Perkins, Macrossan, Beor, Low, Weld-Blundell, Morehead, Hill, Amhurst, Stevens, Cooper, Sheaffe, Dickson, Rea, Fraser, Grimes, and H. W. Palmer.

NOES, 6.

Messrs. Norton, Douglas, Archer, Griffith, King, and Hamilton.

Question, therefore, resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the clause proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he observed in this clause a very serious alteration of the present law. The clause introduced by the Colonial Secretary into the Bill provided for an assessment according to area; but he now proposed to have the assessment according to the number of stock. The following expression was made use of :—

"The assessment shall be paid by each owner upon the actual number of sheep and cattle pastured by him on his run."

Under the existing law there was the proviso—

"It shall be presumed that sheep or cattle are actually depastured upon every run, and that the number of such sheep or cattle is not less than in the proportion of one hundred sheep or twenty head of cattle per square mile."

That was the minimum number under the Pastoral Leases Act under which the run could be held. He would like to know why that was omitted. It seemed to be a most important provision, and it really was a fact that there were many runs in the country in which the minimum number of stock was not kept.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not see the necessity for it, because if men did not keep up the number of the stock required by law the run was forfeited, and there was no doubt whatever that, whether they had the stock or not, they would make the returns so that the assessment would come in all the same.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he doubted that. People were not bound to keep the number on each run. There were plenty of ways to evade the regulation—indeed it was evaded, and it did not result in the run being forfeited. He proposed to add the following :—

Nor, in the case of a run held under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, be upon a less number of stock than in the proportion of twenty head of cattle or one hundred sheep per square mile.

Question put and passed.

Mr. KING wished to point out to the Colonial Secretary that under this clause no exemption was allowed in favour of small owners. Great confusion and difficulty was likely to arise if the clause were made applicable to the holders of a few head of stock. According to the interpretation clause, a "run" meant any land, whether held in fee-simple or under conditional purchase, lease, license, or otherwise; so that a man who held a quarter of an acre of land and possessed a cow would be compelled to make a return to the clerk of petty sessions, under penalty of a fine of not less than £5 or more than £50, and he would also have to pay no less than 5s. per annum unless the town in which he lived had been specially exempted by *Gazette* notice. He thought it would be far better to exempt all small owners, and therefore he moved that the following words be added to the clause :—

Provided that owners of less than 100 head of cattle or 500 sheep shall not be liable to assessment nor to make returns of stock as required by the preceding clauses.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That has already been negatived.

The CHAIRMAN: It was withdrawn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had spoken with the boards on this subject. The clause would reach the class of men they wanted to get at. The man who only had one cow was often a man who, having only a couple or five acres of land, ran some hundreds of head of cattle on the public reserves. If the amendment were carried it would be better for him to withdraw the Bill, and he should do so. The reserves were now overrun by cattle belonging to men who paid no assessment for the destruction of marsupials or anything else, and they had become a downright nuisance to the colony.

Mr. KING said he was convinced that if some such provision was not inserted the Colonial Secretary when he came to administer the Act would be very sorry for the omission. If the Government omitted to exempt a small bush township they would find an officious constable would cause some unfortunate person owning a single cow to be fined £5 for not having made a return on the 1st of January. To compel anyone to pay £5 per annum for keeping a single cow would be simply absurd. Of course, there might be cases of persons acknowledging to only one or two cows where they really owned a small herd, but that would be quite an exception. If the clause passed in its present shape it would bear very unfairly upon men who had only one or two head of cattle, and who would be called upon to pay at a rate out of proportion to the number of their stock. The cattle of such small owners were not likely to be injured by the marsupials, as they grazed near to the townships, and it did not seem at all fair that the owners should have to pay at a higher rate than owners of large numbers of stock.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that clause 15 gave the Governor in Council power to declare any portion of a district within a certain radius exempt from the operations of the Act;—that would meet the objections advanced by the hon. member for Maryborough.

Mr. KING said the Colonial Secretary would be kept very busy under that clause in finding out small townships in the country and exempting them one after another. He could see no reason why men owning one or two cows should not be exempted.

Mr. LOW: I have known a case where a policeman left the district with 150 head of cattle and had never paid assessment on them.

Mr. GRIMES said if the amendment was not allowed the clause would press on men who never turned their cattle into the bush at all. A small farmer who kept a cow on cultivated land would have to pay 5s. per annum for that one beast. He should have great pleasure in supporting the amendment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The amendment does not say one or two head of cattle—it says 100 head.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the conventional farmer with one cow would have the marsupials kept out of his cultivated paddocks. He would therefore derive some advantage for the investment of 5s., even if it were for only two cows.

Mr. KING said if the Committee considered the limit he had proposed too high, he was quite willing to substitute another limit more acceptable to the Committee. The injustice of placing a too high assessment upon a few head of cattle when the owner was not at all affected by the marsupials must be apparent to the Committee.

Mr. ARCHER said it would, perhaps, be an easier and better plan to exempt a small area around every township.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said some townships consisted of one public-house, and such a plan would open the door to exactly what was now sought to be prevented.

Mr. STEVENS said he could corroborate the statement of the Colonial Secretary. In some bush townships people had hundreds of head of cattle running on the reserves, for which they paid no assessments and made no returns. He knew an instance in which a public servant who had recently resigned his appointment had possessed 500 to 600 head of cattle, for which he had made no return and paid no assessment.

Mr. LOW said the men who owned 500 sheep in small towns were just those who ought to pay, because their sheep ate up the grass which belonged to the public.

Mr. KING said he was willing to accept a smaller limit if the Committee approved of it. He had merely suggested the numbers which first occurred to him.

Mr. DICKSON said he presumed the object of the hon. member was to exempt men of small means from the burden of this assessment. To test the feelings of the Committee, and with a view to restrict the operation of the clause, he moved that the words "twenty" and "one hundred" be substituted for "one hundred" and "five hundred" respectively.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not see the reason of the opposition on the part of the Colonial Secretary to the amendment of the hon. member for Maryborough. How could the Bill be harmed by a clause which exempted the man who owned 20 head of cattle or 100 sheep? An owner to that extent had never paid any assessment hitherto, and the present Act had worked well enough. It was surely not intended to tax the man who owned one cow; and anyone who attempted to evade the Act by making a false return was liable to six months' imprisonment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he knew how the proper working of the existing Act had been interfered with. Men who had large numbers of cattle returned themselves as the possessors of twenty only—they never by any accident had more than twenty—and therefore they escaped assessment. He did not suppose that any man with one or two cows only would be asked for a return, or would be assessed in any way. He would again point out that the 15th clause provided that townships should be exempt from the operations of the Act.

Mr. KING said that if the proposed amendment were not agreed to, the man who had twenty head of cattle would have to pay the same amount of tax as the man who owned fifty head of cattle. That was the only proposal he ever heard of whereby those possessed of the least would have to pay the highest rate. The income and other taxes were so arranged that the men who had the most paid more than those who had the least.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL thought there was a considerable fuss about a tax of 5s. a-year. That would not be a heavy tax for any man to have to pay. If the tax were less than that it would not be worth collecting. It would be very easy for the small holders to make up the amount of their tax by scalps. The provisions of the Bill would enable them to earn money, and surely it could be no great hardship to expect them to pay a small tax such as that proposed.

Mr. KING: But suppose there are no marsupials in the district?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Then it will not be proclaimed a marsupial district.

Question—That the words proposed to be added be so added—put.

The Committee divided:—

AYES, 8.

Messrs. Griffith, King, Douglas, Garrick, Grimes, Rea, Dickson, and Fraser.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Beor, Perkins, Norton, Weld-Blundell, Hill, Stevens, Low, Sheaffe, Amhurst, H. W. Palmer, Cooper, and Archer.

Question, consequently, negatived.

Clause, as amended, passed.

On clause 10—"Colonial Secretary may levy assessment in the event of board failing to do so"—

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the clause would give power to the Colonial Secretary to make unlimited taxation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not see how the clause was to be altered. There was no limit to the rates which could be fixed by the boards.

Mr. GRIFFITH: But they are elected by the taxpayers.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: And so is the Colonial Secretary too. A Minister would soon find himself in hot-water if he put too high a rate on any district. You may trust the Minister not to go beyond the minimum.

Mr. NORTON pointed out that an amendment which he intended to propose in the next clause would meet the difficulty.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that they might have a Colonial Secretary who wanted to slate the squatters?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: And there might be one who wanted to slate the settlers.

Mr. GRIFFITH moved that after the word "district," line 4, there be inserted the words "at the minimum rate hereinbefore provided."

Amendment put and passed.

Upon clause 11—"Assessment to be paid to clerk of petty sessions"—

Mr. NORTON moved that the following words be added to the clause:—

"Provided also that such additional assessment so levied within any one year shall not, with the first, exceed the sum of 3s. for every twenty head of cattle, and 3s. for every hundred sheep."

There ought to be some limit to the power of the board to increase the assessment. As a rule, those who would benefit by the Bill were in one corner of a district. He proposed, further on, to reduce the rate to be paid for scalps, so that in cases were runs were infested with marsupials the owners would not make a profit.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that 2s. had already been provided as the minimum assessment for the first six months. If more funds were not wanted the board would not think of raising them. It might happen, however, that three times the amount the hon. member desired to provide as a maximum might be required, and if the board were bound by the suggested maximum they would in that case have to suspend operations for the greater part of the year, during which time the marsupials would multiply faster than ever.

Mr. NORTON said he knew of one case in which the members of the board who were elected were all interested in country largely infested with marsupials. The remainder of the district had to contribute towards the fund to clear the runs in which these few men were interested. If it happened that members of a

board were largely interested in the clearing off of marsupials they might continue levying rates till all was blue. He was not anxious that 3s. should be the limit, but there certainly ought to be a limit. At Gayndah, in the Burnett district, it had happened that the members of the board were specially interested in the carrying out of the Act, and the consequence was that the district was taxed at the rate of 6s. for every twenty head of cattle within six months.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member for Port Curtis was talking of what had occurred under the present Act, which was worked by sheep directors, who in most instances formed two-thirds, and in some cases the whole, of the board. But under this Bill sheep directors, as such, would have nothing to do with the matter. The board was to be elected by sheep and cattle owners.

Mr. NORTON: I will make the maximum 5s.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would have no objection to that, but he thought the Committee would be unwise to fix a limit.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Bill had been considered from the point of view of a few station-owners whose runs were infested with marsupials; but there were other runs in the colony with no marsupials at all, and as the owners of these constituted a large majority they were entitled to some consideration.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that where there were no marsupials there would be no assessment after the first year.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that those who had no marsupials on their runs at the present time might at some future time be infested with them.

Amendment and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 12 verbally amended and passed.

Clauses 13 and 14, passed as printed.

On clause 15—"Certain portions of districts exempt"—

Mr. NORTON pointed out that there were many towns in the neighbourhood of which there were large stations and large selections, and moved that the following words be added to the clause, "provided that such exemptions do not apply to any run exceeding 640 acres in area."

Mr. LUMLEY HILL thought the difficulty would be best met by altering the radius from twenty miles to five miles, and moved an amendment to that effect.

Mr. NORTON withdrew his amendment in favour of that of the hon member for Gregory.

Mr. LOW said he knew of runs where the scrubs came to within three miles of a township. How would the clause apply to cases of that sort?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the lessee would have to pay the assessment all the same. It was only the small holders within the radius of five miles that would be exempted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the clause was only a permissive one, and would not be applied except on due cause being shown.

Mr. KING said that as the clause was a permissive one, it would be advisable to retain the word "twenty" in it as the radius. Round about Brisbane and Ipswich, for instance, the people residing within a radius of twenty miles would not be satisfied with having to pay a mursupial tax.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that if the hon. gentleman had been driving with him yesterday, down by Nudgee, within five miles of Brisbane, he would have seen miles of paling fences erected to keep out marsupials. The scrubs there were full of wallabies and paddamelons.

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

On clause 16—"Enclosed runs not to be assessed"—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he moved the motion formally, in order to get an expression of opinion on the subject. When he first inserted the clause in the Bill it appeared a fair thing; but he had since heard many arguments showing that it was utterly unfair—and some of those arguments came from men who had really enclosed their runs with a substantial wallaby-proof fence. Some of those men said they ought not to be exempted, because, by fencing the marsupials off their own runs they had driven them on to the runs of their neighbours. He was inclined to agree that that was so, and that they ought not to escape the assessment.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said no better argument could possibly be used in favour of the clause than if it could be shown that by the erection of wallaby-proof fencing marsupials were driven on to neighbouring runs. If such were the case it was only fair that those owners should be taxed; but he maintained that it was not the case. He knew instances where there were many miles of wallaby-proof fencing—something like 300 or 400 miles, on the Peak Downs, and there was not a man there who had put up that fencing who did not say that by so doing he killed every wallaby that was in the habit of feeding on his grazing land; and as to kangaroos they were simply enclosed on the run and killed. The habit of the wallaby was to live on the edge of dense scrubs during the daytime, and at night to come out and feed upon the grazing land, and it had been found that if a wallaby-proof fence was put along the edge of the scrub the wallabies would remain outside, passing up and down, and in a short time large numbers were killed in that way. The wallabies would not travel away from the scrub, but would remain along the fence in sight of the grass land until they died. As to kangaroos, they simply lived on the grass land; they did not go into scrubs at all to any extent, and the consequence was that where a wallaby-proof fence was put they were enclosed in the run and the owner had to set to work inside to kill them. Of course, what he had pointed out would not hold good in cases of small selectors, where 100 or 500, or even 2,000 acres were enclosed by wallaby fence, because in such cases no doubt the marsupials would be driven on to the adjoining lands; but in the case of large sheepowners what he had stated had been proved by experience to be a fact. He therefore held it would be unjust that those men who had spent large sums of money in erecting wallaby-proof fences, and in killing thousands of marsupials at their own cost, should be further compelled to pay for the destruction of those animals on the lands of their neighbours who had not paid a single farthing towards their destruction.

Mr. LOW said, if the hon. member's statement were correct, kangaroos and wallabies were greater fools than he (Mr. Low) thought they were—that they would allow themselves to starve to death by stopping in one place when they could get good grass elsewhere.

Mr. STEVENS said all owners of runs were not of the same opinion as the hon. member, Mr. Weld-Blundell. He (Mr. Stevens) had been told by one gentleman that when he had nearly com-

pleted the fencing-in of his run he had driven between 20,000 and 30,000 head of marsupials on to his neighbours' country.

Mr. NORTON thought the hon. member (Mr. Weld-Blundell) had made out a good reason why these people should be taxed. They fenced-in a number of kangaroos and wallabies and killed them, and had fenced out others that died of starvation in hundreds; and there was no reason why any person about the place should not go out and take off their scalps and make a good thing out of it.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said the hon. gentleman's observations did not affect his argument. All he (Mr. Weld-Blundell) maintained was, that it ceased to be justice if persons who had expended large sums of money for the destruction of marsupials, and who had no longer those animals upon their runs, should be called upon to pay for their destruction on their neighbours' lands. If it could be shown that a large number of wallabies had been driven off their runs, he admitted it was perfectly fair that they should be taxed; but he should like to see some proof brought forward that such was the case. There was no part of Queensland where the system of wallaby-proof fence had been tried to such an extent as on the Peak Downs, and every man there held the opinion that he had expressed. He had kangaroos on his own land that he would have to kill.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said, whether the hon. member was taxed or not, if the Bill became law he would get 9d. per head for every kangaroo he killed, and he would therefore have a great advantage over other people who have to go outside and catch them.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, if the clause was to be passed it should be made more intelligible and consistent with the other parts of the Bill. Of course, if it was going to be negatived it was not worth while amending it.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said he had an amendment to move. As the clause stood, it appeared that where a run or portion of a run was completely enclosed with a kangaroo or wallaby proof fence it should not be liable to assessment. The fact of enclosing was not of any great importance, the object being to protect the run and to destroy the marsupials on the run. There were many runs without kangaroos and wallabies on certain portions, and if the owner erected a wallaby-proof fence between the scrub on the run and the other land so as to keep out the wallabies, he would still be assessed under this clause. He (Mr. Weld-Blundell) therefore proposed to omit the words "completely enclosed," with a view to insert "protected from kangaroos and wallabies."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. KING said he would point out a further amendment which was necessary. The clause provided that the boards only should be the sole judges whether the fences were effective or not. One of these words might be left out.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the member for Clermont had succeeded in reducing the clause to an absurdity. As it now stood, any man who put a fence across part of his run where the marsupials were bad would be exempted, whilst people twenty or thirty miles away who had no marsupials would be taxed.

Question—That clause 16 as amended stand part of the Bill—put and negatived.

Mr. SHEAFFE proposed the following new clause to follow clause 15:—

Whenever it is satisfactorily shown to any board that there is no necessity for the operation of this Bill in a district, such district shall be exempt from further assessment, and all moneys then unexpended shall be repaid to the stockowners from whom they were received.

A great injustice would be done to two-thirds of the colony to have to pay even a minimum rate of 2s., and, although it might be said that it would be only for one year, he did not see why injustice should be done for one moment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that clause 14, as passed, sufficiently met the case. As for leaving to any board to decide whether the Act was wanted or not, they might as well do away with the Act altogether. Many boards would say it was not wanted, even if their districts were overrun with marsupials. The amendment ran counter to the whole tendency of the Bill, which was to extend all over the colony. Where money was not expended, and there was no necessity for expenditure, only one year's assessment need be levied.

Question—That the new clause proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put.

The Committee divided:—

AYES, 4.

Messrs. Sheaffe, King, Grimes, and Amhurst.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Norton, Low, Stevens, Weld-Blundell, Hill, H. W. Palmer, Archer, Dickson, Beor, A. H. Palmer, McIlwraith, Rea, Griffith, and Garrick.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

On clause 17—"Contributions to be supplemented from Consolidated Revenue"—

Mr. KING said that under this clause every man holding property was to be taxed for the destruction of marsupials. He contended that if the profits of the runs did not pay for the destruction of marsupials, squatting was a pursuit not worth keeping up. He failed to see by what principle of justice those persons who had no share in the profits of the runs should have to bear a share of the cost of extirpating the marsupials. It was to the interest of the people who had the use of the grass to destroy the vermin which attacked them, and if the profits did not pay for that then their industry was not worth perpetuating at the expense of the whole colony.

Mr. LOW said that he knew a scrub in Queensland which was 150 miles long and 40 miles wide, and was so dense that one could scarcely lead a horse through it. Did the member for Maryborough expect that squatters would kill all the vermin which was in that waste country? He thought it very fair that the Government should contribute something towards the destruction of marsupials.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the member for Balonne did not often trouble the House with a speech, but when he did rise he generally said something to the purpose, and he had just hit the right nail on the head. These vermin almost all came in on the occupied country from the unoccupied country—the enormous scrubs—of the Crown, and it was only fair that the Government should contribute towards the destruction of what was an unmitigated nuisance.

Mr. KING was understood to say that there was the same description of scrub in New South Wales, and marsupials were also there, but the squatters had not found it necessary to get the whole colony to assist in destroying the pest. There was some talk about a Marsupial Bill, but it was said that it was not necessary. It would be a very poor speculation to tax the people of Queensland for the destruction, not only of the marsupials which were in the colony, but also for those which came across the border.

Mr. LOW said he knew the borders of Queensland and New South Wales, and for hundreds of miles down the McIntyre River he did not know of a scrub equal to the one he had mentioned.

Mr. MESTON said he noticed when the tariff was under discussion that all the squatters in the House announced themselves freetraders, but they became protectionists on the first occasion that any objection was raised against the taxation of the people generally for their benefit. The Governor in Council should have power to exempt localities from the operation of the Act. In his own electorate every farmer had been compelled to enclose his farm with a wallaby-proof fence, and in the Dugandan Scrub the same thing had to be done. There was no necessity for taxing the West Moreton district for the destruction of marsupials. Why should the farmers of Rosewood and Fassifern be taxed for the purpose of protecting the squatter in other parts of the colony against marsupials? They had been to considerable expense already in protecting themselves, and it was grossly unfair that they should be taxed. The hon. member for the Balonne said that he was not acquainted with any scrubs in New South Wales like those out in the west. He (Mr. Meston) was acquainted with an extensive scrub in New South Wales extending from Nerang fifteen miles into the Clarence River district, and from the coast to Mount Lindsay, that was full of marsupials, and was quite as large as any in Queensland.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 18 passed with verbal amendments.

Mr. NORTON said he had a new clause to add. Under the present system more was paid for kangaroos than for paddamelons, and in some places there was great doubt which were kangaroos and which were paddamelons. In many districts the difficulty was very great, and the result was that in some districts they were paid for as kangaroos and in others as paddamelons. He proposed to insert after the word "bonus," the words "of threepence." If this amendment were carried they could do away with schedule B altogether. It might be said that it was more difficult to kill kangaroos than paddamelons. But he would point out that kangaroos might be killed in large numbers by driving them into yards. If they existed in large numbers on one run yards were constructed, and the neighbours assembled on a run and killed them in thousands; so that, after all, though it might be more expensive to shoot kangaroos and kill them that way, yet if they were driven into yards it reduced the expense very considerably. And apart from that, he regarded it as a matter of some importance that those whose runs were infested should bear their fair part in exterminating them. They would still get 3d. per head for paddamelons, but, with respect to kangaroos, whatever extra cost they were put to they would have to make up themselves. It was a most unjust thing that those whose runs were overrun with vermin should make others pay the cost of clearing them. There were some runs that were infested, and people sixty miles away had to contribute to the cost. He therefore proposed this addition to the clause. In some districts they allowed 8d. to 9d. per head for what were commonly known as long-tailed flyers—a kind of wallaby or kangaroo which was found on high hills. They were easily killed, and were comparatively harmless because they confined themselves almost entirely to the hills. It seemed to him an absurdity that, while 3d. per head was allowed for these animals in one district, 8d. or 9d. a-head was allowed for them in another. If one uniform rate were charged it would make the Act much more easily worked, and it would induce owners of large runs to pay something out of their own pockets to get rid of marsupials.

Mr. LOW said that if this amendment was carried it would simply destroy the Bill; they might as well throw it into the waste-paper basket.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not take this amendment. It was not at all a good one, and if it came in at all it should come in the schedule. He was prepared to make two rates and not one: he would meet the hon. member half-way. He was prepared to make the rate for kangaroos and wallaroos 6d., and paddamelons and wallabies 3d. That was going as far as he possibly could.

Question put and negatived, and clause, as read, put and passed.

Clause 19 put and passed, as read.

Clauses 20, 21, and 22 negatived on the proposal of the COLONIAL SECRETARY; and clauses 23 and 24 passed with verbal amendments.

On clause 25—

Mr. GRIFFITH said there was a little ambiguity about the term "such scalps," as it might apply to scalps generally, or only to those for which certificates had previously been granted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the provision was intended to be general, and he would move that the word "any" be substituted for "such."

Question put and passed.

Mr. KING said that provision should be made for the punishment of persons who attempted to pass off artificial scalps. He did not know whether such frauds had been committed under the present Act, but he had no doubt they would be attempted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that attempts had been made.

Mr. GRIFFITH moved that the following words be inserted—"or knowingly procure or attempt to procure certificates for fictitious or artificial scalps."

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved an amendment altering the term of imprisonment to which offenders should be liable, from three months to six months.

Question put and passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Mr. KING said he wished to insert a new clause. One of his constituents, who was connected with the Marsupial Board in the Wide Bay and Burnett district, had informed him that assessments under the present Act were still unpaid in that district, and that if this Bill were passed without some provision authorising the collection of such revenue the boards would lose it. Seeing that a number of persons had already paid, it would be an act of injustice to allow those who had not paid to get off free. He therefore proposed that the following new clause be inserted:—

Notwithstanding the expiration of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1877, all assessments made under this Act and remaining unpaid at the expiration of that Act shall remain due to the board appointed under this Act for the district in which the run or person by whom the assessment is due be situated, and may be recovered in the same manner as an assessment under this Act may be recovered.

Question put and passed.

Clause 26 passed as printed.

On Schedule A—"Certificate of Destruction"—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved an amendment reducing the rate of payment for the scalps of kangaroos or wallaroos from 8d. to 6d., and striking out the reference to native dogs and rabbits.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said he did not see the reason for reducing the rate for kangaroo scalps from 8d. to 6d. The rate was supposed to represent the cost of killing marsupials, and if it were reduced in the case of kangaroos he did not see why the rate for killing wallabies should not be proportionately reduced. In his opinion the reduction would nullify the whole Bill. The principle of the Bill was that such a rate should be paid as would encourage people to go out and kill marsupials as a mere speculation. The hon. member for Port Curtis had stated that large numbers could be killed at a low cost by driving them into yards, but he would point out to the hon. member that in many districts where the country was flat it was quite impossible to drive them together and destroy them in that way. As a matter of fact, it was found preferable to shoot and kill them with kangaroo dogs.

Mr. NORTON said he should like to see the amounts reduced to 4d. and 2d. There was no difficulty in driving kangaroos over flat country or thickly timbered ridges if men were employed who knew how to do their work. It was only where kangaroos were very thick that landowners could afford to kill them by driving them. He objected to the Bill because it did not provide that runowners whose runs were infested with marsupials should contribute part of the cost entailed in the extermination of the pests.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said that the hon. member for Port Curtis had shown his hand too clearly. If the hon. member's ideas were carried out, the effect would be to put an end to the destruction of marsupials except in a few localities where they could be driven. In large districts like the Peak Downs, where men who understood their work were employed, driving kangaroos had not been attended with success.

Mr. NORTON said that result had been brought about through the men not knowing how to do their work. The Bill was one without principle, and it was because of that that he objected to it. It would compel men who were in no way injured by marsupials to contribute towards destroying the animals on runs fifty or sixty miles away, and that seemed to him very unfair.

Mr. LOW thought that 8d. was little enough to offer for the scalps of kangaroos. They would find it difficult to get men to hunt them for 6d. a scalp.

Amendment put and passed.

Schedule further amended by the omission of "native dogs and rabbits," and the words "noxious animals."

Schedule B amended by the substitution of 6d. for 8d. as the price to be paid for kangaroo or wallaroo scalps, and by the omission of "native dogs and rabbits."

New Schedule C proposed by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY proposed the following new clause to take the place of clause 6 :—

> Any owner of not less than one thousand head of cattle or five thousand sheep in any district shall be qualified to be elected a member of the board of such district; and any owner of not less than two hundred head of cattle or one thousand sheep may vote at the election of members of the board of such district.

Mr. DICKSON said he should like to hear some reason given for the insertion of this clause. He objected to there being taxation without representation. He could not see why a man who had, say, one cow only should not have a voice in the appointment of the boards. If the proposal to exempt the small owner from taxation had been agreed to there might have been some reason to preclude him from having a voice in the appointment of the boards.

Mr. LOW said that the hon. member seemed to be very liberal. Suppose the hon. member had £10,000 invested in a bank, and ten others had £10 only invested in it, would he give the same influence in regard to the management of the bank to each of the ten as he would claim himself? He (Mr. Low) guessed not. The hon. member would insist on having votes in proportion to the amount he had invested in the bank.

Mr. DICKSON said he was not arguing the question of proportionate powers. He was objecting to the proposal to entirely exclude the small owner from having a voice in the appointment of boards.

Mr. REA said that in no other colony would an hon. member dare to propose such a clause. The qualifications of electors and directors should be reduced by at least one-half.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the board had a duty to perform, and he desired that that duty should be performed by men who had some interest in its performance. If the ideas of the hon. member for Enoggera were carried out, every man who possessed a cow or two would have a vote; and the board would consist of members with two or three cows each. A thousand head of cattle was a small number for a stockholder to possess now-a-days.

Mr. DICKSON said the owners of a few cattle were quite as eligible to perform the duties of the board as the owners of a large number of cattle. It seemed to him very undesirable that men should have no voice in the administration of the Act under which they were taxed. He would prefer to see large owners have a preponderance of voting power rather than that small owners should have no votes at all.

Mr. REA suggested that the qualifications of electors should be reduced to 100 head of cattle and 500 sheep. The Government clause would shut out the very class that both sides of the House had said they wished to foster and recognise—namely, the selectors of the country.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Bill was drawn upon the supposition that the area of the run would be the basis of taxation. That principle, however, had been altered, and he would point out that the field for the selection of board members would be very limited unless the words "or superintendent" were inserted after the word "owner."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not object to amend the clause as the hon. member for North Brisbane suggested, but the proprietorship would lie in the superintendent in any part in the colony.

Mr. GRIFFITH : No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was satisfied that he was correct, because he had tried the point.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the owner of a thousand head of cattle meant the owner of a thousand head of cattle and nothing else.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the words "of not less than a thousand head of cattle and five thousand sheep" be omitted, with a view to the insertion in lieu thereof of the

words "or superintendent of not less than five hundred head of cattle or two thousand five hundred sheep."

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ARCHER moved that the qualification of electors be reduced from two hundred head of cattle and a thousand sheep to a hundred head of cattle and five hundred sheep.

Amendment, and clause as amended, put and passed.

Title amended, by the omission of the words "and other noxious animals."

The CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill with amendments and an amended title; report adopted, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for next day.

The House adjourned at fourteen minutes to 10 o'clock.