

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 15 JULY 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.*Tuesday, 15 July, 1884.*

Savings Bank Trust Accounts.—Message from the Governor.—Petition.—Questions.—Brisbane Valley Branch Railway.—Stanthorpe to Border Railway Extension.—Wharf Line, Cooktown Railway.—Patent Law Consolidation Bill.—United Municipalities Act Amendment Bill—second reading.—Public Officers Fees Bill—second reading.—Divisional Boards Endowment Bill—second reading.—Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill.—Adjournment.

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

SAVINGS BANK TRUST ACCOUNTS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following letter from the Auditor-General :—

“ Audit Department, Queensland,

“ Brisbane, 11th July, 1884.

“ SIR,

“ In compliance with the provisions of the 6th clause of the Savings Bank Act of 1870 (34 Vic., No. 10), I have the honour to report to the Legislative Assembly that the Government debentures and other securities held in trust for the Savings Bank by the President of the Legislative Council, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the Colonial Treasurer, were duly inspected, counted, and audited on the 1st instant, and that they were found correct.

“ The enclosed statement shows how the funds of the Savings Bank were invested on that date.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ W. L. G. DREW,

“ Auditor-General.

“ The Hon. the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.”

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor, transmitting a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the Insane.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith), the message was ordered to be taken into consideration in committee to-morrow.

PETITION.

Mr. ARCHER presented a petition, signed by the chairmen and secretaries of eighteen of the Divisional Boards of Queensland, and under the seals of those divisions, praying that, where practicable within those divisions, camping reserves of 640 acres might be surveyed and set apart for the use of travelling stock. He moved that the petition be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read and received.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works—

1. Have the sidings been completed which the late Minister consented to construct on the line between Moolboolan and Mount Perry, and the formation of which was stopped by the present Minister?
2. If not, how does the matter stand at present?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) replied—

The Chief Engineer was instructed on 28th April to construct the sidings referred to; and he now advises me that one is completed, another is under construction, and the third is not yet commenced.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works—

When will the Minister be prepared to ask the approval of the House to the plans of Extension of Railway from Howard to Bundaberg?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

As some alterations are contemplated at South Bundaberg, I am unable to give a definite reply to the question until the Chief Engineer, who has just returned from the Wide Bay district, reports on the matter, as he has been instructed to do.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works—

1. What position does Mr. J. Thorneloe Smith now occupy in connection with the Railway Department?
2. Have his services been dispensed with?
3. If so, on what conditions?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. None.
- 2 and 3. The office previously held by him—Deputy Chief Engineer, Southern Division—was abolished from the 30th June last.

BRISBANE VALLEY BRANCH RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the Proposed Extension, Section 2, of the Brisbane Valley Branch Railway, as laid upon the table of the House, 21st February, 1884.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

—said he hardly thought that much explanation was required from him on the subject. It was pretty well understood that, unless branch lines were carried to a sufficient length, they were always unprofitable. The first section of the Brisbane Valley Branch Railway had been completed for a distance of nineteen miles, and was now open for traffic. The second section would terminate at Esk, and the total distance would be forty-one and a quarter miles, rendering available some of the best land in the district. None of the branch railways could be expected to be remunerative until they were carried further. Of the money voted for the line—£105,000—£75,000 had already been expended, and the construction of the second section would have partly to be provided for out of loan. He

might also mention that when the line reached Esk it would be within sixty miles of Nanango, and would be of considerable benefit to that district. It was unnecessary to say more on the subject, and he would leave the motion in the hands of the House.

Mr. NORTON said that when he called out "Not formal" to the motion he did not do so with any desire to oppose the plans, but because he thought it only proper that a Minister, in proposing motions of that kind, should give some information to the House with regard to them. The plan now submitted by the Minister for Works was one with which he (Mr. Norton) had had something to do at the time. Of the two surveys made for the line it was always his own opinion that the route finally decided upon was the one which should be adopted, and he himself gave orders to the Engineer-in-Chief to that effect. Under those circumstances he had no opposition whatever to offer to the motion.

Mr. BLACK said he did not intend to oppose that particular line of railway, which was probably a very good one; but during the recess the country was distinctly given to understand that without the Land Bill being passed there would be no loan; and that, without the loan—amounting, they were told, to something like £6,000,000—there would be no railways. The House ought therefore to pause before sanctioning any particular line of railway until it was put in possession of the general railway policy of the Government, as connected with the extension of the existing lines. Until then, it would not be right for the House to sanction any particular line of railway. On those grounds, he thought, they were perfectly justified in asking the Government to withhold the line now under discussion, because, if they once gave their sanction to it, it would no doubt be the first line to be constructed as soon as funds were available. He did not consider that it would be at all fair to the different portions of the colony, if an exception were made to a line which was of especial benefit to one portion of the colony only. On those grounds he opposed the passing of the plans and specifications of this particular line until they had further information about the railway policy of the Government.

Mr. KELLETT said he did not think the argument of the hon. member held good in the particular instance before them. They had been told by the Minister for Works that there was £105,000 voted on the last Loan Estimates for that railway. Only £75,000 of that had been expended, so they had a balance of £30,000, which was quite sufficient to start the work and go on until there was a loan, or until there was a Land Bill passed, or the money was found in some other way. The line had been delayed for a long time from one cause and another, and it was to be hoped that there would be no more delay, but that it would be pushed forward as fast as possible.

Question put and passed.

STANTHORPE TO BORDER RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Southern Extension from Stanthorpe to the Border, as laid upon the table of the House, 22nd February, 1884.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

—said he did not think there was a single member of the House who did not look upon this as a work which it was very desirable should be carried out as quickly as possible. The New South Wales Government

were pushing on their line, and he had been assured that they would be ready to open it to Tenterfield within two years; therefore there was very little time to lose in carrying on the work which was to connect our railway system with that of New South Wales. It had been decided by the respective Governments to make the junction at Ballandean Gap, which was 11 miles from Tenterfield, and 232 from Brisbane. The preliminary survey was completed in 1878, and the working sections and plans were now in hand. There had already been £60,000 voted for this particular extension, and the Government proposed to make provision for the balance on the next Loan Estimates.

Mr. ARCHER: What will the balance be?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the extension would be from Stanthorpe to the border—about fourteen miles. He did not know that he would be justified in giving the estimate of the engineer, because it might affect the tenders when they were called; but there would be a considerable sum to provide for, no doubt at least another £20,000.

Mr. NORTON: It is more than fourteen miles—double that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had not the exact distance; he knew it was eleven miles from Tenterfield to the proposed junction.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was forty-two miles by the ordinary road from Stanthorpe to Tenterfield.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was not quite sure of the exact distance between Tenterfield and Stanthorpe; but he was positive that from Tenterfield to the junction it was eleven miles. He did not think it would be advisable for him to give the amount of the Chief Engineer's estimate of the cost of the line. Under any circumstances the money must be procured. They could not afford to allow all the traffic of that part of the colony to go to New South Wales.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. gentleman had gone about in one of the wildest ways to ask the House to sanction the plans and book of reference of a railway they had ever had anything to do with. The Minister laid the plans upon the table of the House, and then said what was equivalent to telling hon. members that if they wanted to know anything about the line they might find out for themselves. Fancy a Minister telling the House he thought it was about fourteen miles that had to be constructed, but he did not know if it was double that distance! He (Mr. Norton) knew it was nearly double, if not quite. He thought that when the Minister came and asked the House to sanction the plans he ought surely to tell them what it was they were wanted to sanction, and give them some sort of idea what money the House would have to provide. What did it matter to them whether it was eleven miles from the junction to Tenterfield or fifty? They had not to pay for that. The Minister for Works, in New South Wales, of course would be required to tell that to the House there; but what he (Mr. Norton) and other hon. members wanted to know was the distance this colony had to construct. He believed the distance from the junction to Tenterfield was twelve miles, and not eleven. He was not quite sure of it; and he was quite certain the Minister for Works was not sure. The matter had been under consideration for a long while, and he had never heard until now that the Government of New South Wales and Queensland had decided upon the point of junction. He did not know whether the hon. the Minister for Works knew anything about a decision of that kind; perhaps he would tell

the House whether he had received any communication from the Minister for Works of New South Wales.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a letter in which the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales agrees to the point of junction.

Mr. NORTON: When?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot tell the date.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. member evidently knew nothing about the matter. That was the long and short of it. He simply asked the House to agree to plans that he himself knew nothing about, and that the House knew nothing about. They were merely placed on the table of the House and hon. members could make them out for themselves. He (Mr. Norton) knew that up to the time the hon. gentleman took office no definite arrangement had been come to between the two colonies as to the point of junction. All that had taken place on the question up to that time was that the Chief Engineers of the two colonies had met together; that they went over the line, he believed; and that they had decided to recommend the place mentioned as the point of junction. Beyond that there was nothing definite settled, and was that sufficient to justify the Government in asking the House to agree to this line being carried out? He did not suppose there was a single hon. member who objected to the line being made, provided they knew what they were doing in agreeing to it. It certainly showed the importance of making such motions "not formal," when they found the hon. the Minister for Works in such a wretched dilemma that he could not tell the House what he wanted carried out. He should like some further information on the subject, and should say no more until he heard what the Government had to say on the matter.

The PREMIER said the affectation of ignorance assumed by the hon. member for Port Curtis was rather amusing. Possibly, however, the hon. gentleman might be ignorant, but, if so, it must be because it was his predecessor in office who directed the plans in question to be prepared, and perhaps he did not know of them, or they had passed out of his mind before he went into office. On looking at the plans, he (the Premier) found that they were prepared in 1881; they had been waiting ever since for parliamentary sanction, and he thought it was quite time that they were approved of. He remembered calling the attention of the late Government on several occasions to the necessity of immediate action being taken for the extension of this line, so that our line might be at the border as soon as the New South Wales line reached there, and he was always told that there was plenty of time. It was said that the New South Wales line would not be at Tenterfield for ever so long, but now they knew that it would be there probably during the present year; and it was quite time that Queensland pushed on if they wished to be at the border as soon as New South Wales, so that there might be railway communication between the two colonies without any delay on their part. The plans were laid upon the table last session, but, for reasons to which it was unnecessary to advert, the motion for their approval was not pressed; but now he did not think there was anything to justify delay in the matter. The plans, which were prepared, as he had said, in 1881, had the approval of the then Minister for Works. Then the hon. member for Port Curtis came into office, and saw no necessity for altering them; and his successor, the present Minister for Works, also approved of them; and he thought that, taking into consideration the lapse of time that had taken place, the fact that there was no difference of

opinion on the part of successive Ministers as to the route, and knowing that the Government of New South Wales had agreed to the proposed point of junction, there should be no further delay.

Mr. NORTON: Have they agreed?

The PREMIER: Yes, they had, and there was nothing more to be done except get the formal vote of the House. The propriety of constructing the line had been admitted by the late Government and all parties in the House, and the only question now was whether they should not be ready with the line when the New South Wales line reached the border.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. the Premier had charged his hon. friend the member for Port Curtis with an affectation of ignorance, of which he certainly could not accuse his hon. colleague the Minister for Works, for the ignorance was absolute, perfect. It was too clear to be an affectation, if indeed the hon. gentleman was ever affected, which he (Mr. Morehead) very much doubted. He thought his hon. friend the member for Port Curtis was wise in asking the House not to allow the motion to go as "formal." They had not got much information from the hon. the Minister for Works, who evidently knew very little about what he asked the House to adopt, and the hon. the Premier did not know much more. He (Mr. Morehead) did not know that the late Government approved of those plans—that they were ever passed by the Executive—whatever the late Minister for Works might have thought of them. At any rate, before the House was asked to go into such enormous expenditure, they should have something more definite to go upon as to the route, than the fact that a letter appeared to have been received by the late Government from the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales on the subject. No further communication had taken place between the present Administration and the Government of New South Wales, as to whether the point mentioned was to be the point of junction. He thought that when they were asked to go to enormous expense to continue a line twenty-eight miles in length, when they could touch the border in four or five miles, very good reasons should be given by the Government for bringing forward such a measure. He thought he could show that the line would not benefit the colony very much. They were asked to extend the distance between the border and Brisbane very considerably, and he would ask the hon. member for Carnarvon to bear him out in this, which he had found from business experience: that by a short line to Brisbane they would get a large amount of trade, but by extending it almost parallel with the border they would not only not benefit this colony, but benefit New South Wales, by inducing the traffic not only of that colony, but of Queensland, to go to New South Wales; and that more especially if the existing rates of carriage in Queensland were maintained. There was a letter in the *Courier* on that subject yesterday, and he could bear out every word that was stated by Mr. McLean, and every business man could do the same; and instead of the colony deriving benefit from the point of junction being at the place indicated, it would probably result in injury by reason of the trade of the southern part of the Darling Downs and neighbouring territory being diverted into New South Wales, unless they were prepared to very materially reduce the rates of carriage, not only upon this line, but upon all the lines in the colony. He thought, therefore, that the resolutions should be postponed until the present Government got a definite answer: an answer which would constitute a binding contract from the New South

Wales Government, that the line was being taken to a point at which the New South Wales line would join it. He would ask the Government further to make themselves absolutely certain—not to take the judgment of a preceding Minister, but to make quite sure that they could not make a better bargain for Queensland than the one contained in the proposal brought before the House that afternoon. No one desired more to see this line constructed than he did, but he wanted to see it done at a minimum of cost and maximum of benefit, and he did not think that would be obtained under the present proposal. It had not been proved, either by the Premier or Minister for Works, that the colony had got all the advantages it would obtain, and he hoped, therefore, the Minister for Works would withdraw the resolution for the present; at all events, any agreement he might make with the New South Wales Government, if at all a fair one, would meet with the approval of the House.

Mr. FOXTON said, after what had fallen from the hon. member for Balonne, it was necessary that he should say something. He sincerely hoped that the Minister for Works would not take the advice of the hon. member, and withdraw the plans, even for the time being. That there was an urgent necessity for the construction of the line he thought had been already shown. The hon. the Premier had told the House that before very long—possibly before the end of the present year—traffic would be running into Tenterfield from Newcastle. Before very long after that it would run right into Sydney. He knew, at all events, it would be running into Tenterfield within a very short period. Everything, he believed, was prepared, except the mere laying of the rails, and it only required the opening of the line from Armidale to Glen Innes to enable the contractors for the Glen Innes and Tenterfield line to bring through the rails for the purpose of completing that line. As a matter of fact, even the stations were completed already all along the line, and everything was in a forward state. Seeing that that was so, he thought the Government were only doing what was right in pushing on the Queensland line, which could not be completed to the border within less than a couple of years. The distance, as he knew it, was between twenty-five and twenty-six miles from Stanthorpe to the proposed point of junction, and it was about twelve or thirteen miles from the border into Tenterfield: so that they had about twice the length of line to construct in order to effect the junction between Stanthorpe and Tenterfield that the New South Wales Government had. Consequently, it was only reasonable to suppose, especially as the country to be traversed by the New South Wales line was very easy, that they would effect the construction of their portion of the distance in a very much shorter time than Queensland would. No one could deny that the junction would be a benefit, not only to this colony but to the colonies at large, because it was an intercolonial undertaking, which would give railway communication right through to Melbourne, and very soon to Adelaide. No one could deny that that was a consummation much to be desired, and he thought that the House was quite able to go upon the assurance of the Minister for Works and the Premier, and also upon the decision arrived at by the engineers of each colony with respect to the point of junction. What more did hon. members require? If the engineers had agreed upon a point of junction, who was going to impugn their decision? It was a matter in which they were especially qualified to give a decision, and if they were not considered the

most competent persons, why were they called upon to decide? He had, in addition, something more to urge. There were two roads by which Tenterfield might be reached from Stanthorpe. One was by what was known as the present coach road, going by way of Sugarloaf, Bookookoorara, Boonoooonoo, and a place called London Bridge, and trending somewhat to the east; the other went very much to the west of that, and he should imagine that the two roads were as far apart at one point as twelve or fifteen miles. The last-named road was the one which the line proposed to follow, going down into the valley of the Severn, and to the head of Accommodation Creek. This was a much easier route. The intervening country between the two roads was perfectly inaccessible, and it was some of the wildest country he had ever seen. The road of which he had spoken as the present coach road was, as far as this colony was concerned, a good road to the point at which it touched the border—that was about ten miles from Stanthorpe; but the country on the other—the New South Wales—side, going by that route was as bad as going over the Main Range. He would not say it was impossible, but it would be impracticable to take a railway over it. When another route of a so much better character presented itself it would be absurd to suppose that the road to which he had alluded could possibly be chosen. That was the route which the hon. member for Balonne referred to as being preferable to take, but he could assure the House that nothing would be gained to the colony by adopting that route, because at the point to which he alluded, for the first twenty or thirty miles across the border the country was of a barren and sterile nature; nothing was produced there. There were a few tin-mines—alluvial workings—but nothing to speak of, and they would gain nothing by adopting that route, for, under any circumstances, we should always have the trade of the district immediately across the border in that direction, because the country travelled in going from Tenterfield was so precipitous and mountainous. He thought very few would deny that as soon as the connection took place there would be an increase in the traffic on that line. Whichever way it went, there was not the slightest doubt that, as soon as communication was complete, the traffic—even the through passenger traffic—would be very considerably increased, and he ventured to say that the line would pay as well as any line in Queensland. He said that unhesitatingly, and if anyone, in a few years hence, was bold enough to impugn that statement, he was confident the returns would prove the correctness of it. Who would suppose for a moment that it would be to their advantage to construct a shorter distance for a paying line? The more they had of a paying line the better; as long as the line was paying, the more they had of the profits the better. That the proposed line would pay, and pay very handsomely, there could be no doubt, the opinion of the hon. member for Port Curtis to the contrary notwithstanding. The hon. member for Bundamba said they would have to assimilate their tariffs before it would pay. He did not agree with the hon. member, for the simple reason that the distance from Tenterfield, or rather from the border to Newcastle, was considerably more than from the border to Brisbane, and it would take a large differential tariff to make up for that distance, more especially if there was a direct line from Ipswich to Warwick. There was not the slightest doubt that the difference in the distance would be reduced by the direct line to the extent of some sixty or eighty miles at least.

Mr. STEVENSON: What are the distances?

Mr. FOXTON said he could not say exactly, but he thought he might safely remark—well, hon. members might laugh, but if the hon. member for Normanby questioned his statement, perhaps he would give the distances. At all events, he (Mr. Foxton) would say that the distance from Brisbane to the border was certainly not less than 250 miles; and he was quite sure that from the border to the port at the other end of it was double that distance, or thereabouts.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What are the distances?

Mr. FOXTON said he would like to know if the hon. member could tell the distances.

Mr. STEVENSON: We want the information.

Mr. FOXTON: The distances he had given were, he believed, about right. He would like to have heard from the Minister for Works whether he had been able to arrive at any understanding with the New South Wales Government as to the method by which the break of gauge difficulty was to be surmounted. That he considered a matter of some importance to Queensland. Various proposals had been made, but it was premature to mention them at the present time. He should be glad to know, however, whether any agreement had been made; and if so, what means it was proposed to take, or whether any steps were to be taken for that purpose. A petition was being signed in the Tenterfield district, requesting the New South Wales Government to construct a line on the narrow gauge from Tenterfield to the border, so as to make Tenterfield the place where the break of gauge should take place. That, of course, was done simply in the interests of that small town, and it was very doubtful whether even the New South Wales Government would look favourably upon such a proposal.

Mr. ARCHER said he admired the courage of the hon. member for Carnarvon in rushing into the breach to help the Minister for Works. The hon. member had given them rather a long speech, but neither he nor the Minister for Works, nor the Premier, had answered the question the Minister for Works was asked, as to the cost of the line. That was what originated the whole debate. Nobody in the House doubted that the line must be finished to the border. All the arguments that had been advanced had been in favour of that; there was not even an old woman in the country who did not know that the line must connect with New South Wales, and, therefore, there was not the slightest necessity for arguing that question. The question put to the Minister for Works was as to the cost; but the hon. gentleman had neither told them that, nor had he been able to tell them the distances. He said he knew nothing about it, or that it was so-and-so, or he thought so. He (Mr. Archer) admitted at once that the hon. member for Carnarvon knew more about it than anyone else. He knew the names of the places, and the distances, and the difficulties of the line; but he knew nothing about the question that was the original cause of the debate. The cost was what hon. members wanted information upon. The hon. member for Carnarvon had of course done his duty in coming to the rescue of his electorate, seeing that it would be a great pity if the expenditure of money there were stopped for a single day; but it would be far better if the Minister for Works would give them full information before the whole thing were passed. They wanted to know several things: the distance of the line to be constructed on the Queensland

side; the cost, or rather the estimated cost; and also what arrangement had been made with regard to the gauge as mentioned by the hon. member for Carnarvon. Would it not be better, in the interests of the colony, that either the New South Wales gauge should be continued to Stanthorpe, or the Queensland gauge carried into New South Wales? It was said that a certain sum had been voted and a certain sum expended; but was that sufficient to go on with? And if there was a balance they wanted to know what amount was required before the work could be finished. Not a single answer had been given to those questions; in fact, he believed hon. gentlemen on the other side were willing to give the Minister for Works anything that he said was necessary for the work. For his own part, he was so anxious that that railway should go on quickly—that New South Wales should be connected with Brisbane by rail—that he was not going in any way to obstruct or prevent the work going on. But the extraordinary thing was that they could not get an answer to the question they asked. As the hon. member, the Minister for Works, admitted—the hon. gentleman was perfectly frank in the matter—he knew nothing about the matter; that was to say, he stated that he had not inquired particularly about it. Then the Premier got up, and he said nothing at all to the question; and then the hon. member for Carnarvon addressed the House to show that it would be a good thing to be connected with Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, and all those places.

Mr. FOXTON: At once, without delay.

Mr. ARCHER: Just so, without delay. They were all as convinced of that as the hon. member for Carnarvon. They only wanted to know what the line was to cost. At first, they were told that the length was twelve miles; then, that it was supposed to be twenty-six miles. The hon. member for Carnarvon did not know whether there was any arrangement as to the break of gauge, and that was a question which he (Mr. Archer) thought the Minister for Works ought to answer. He thought the Ministerial side of the House would agree with hon. members on that side that the information asked for ought to be given before they approved of the plans laid before the House.

Mr. BEATTIE said he was just as anxious as anybody for the immediate construction of the line under consideration, but he must certainly express his surprise at the answer given by the Minister for Works to the question put to him as to the expense that would be incurred by the construction of the railway. If there was an agreement, as he understood from the hon. member for Carnarvon, that the Government had given their Engineer authority to make arrangements with the Engineer-in-Chief for New South Wales, he thought hon. members ought to know something about it. He (Mr. Beattie) had seen a great many communications in reference to that line; and it was a vexed point between Queensland and New South Wales where the junction should be. If it was only twelve miles that the New South Wales Government had to construct, and through good country, as they were informed by the hon. member for Carnarvon, it was rather too much to expect Queensland to construct twenty-six miles over bad country. Therefore, he thought they ought to be told what was the arrangement entered into by the two engineers. The Minister for Works said he had not made the necessary inquiries; he (Mr. Beattie) supposed, because the hon. gentleman thought the information would not be asked for. It would probably be a most expensive line to construct. He did not intend to oppose the adoption of the plans and book of reference; at

the same time he thought the hon. the Minister for Works should give the probable cost of the construction of the twenty-six miles of line to be built by Queensland, as against the twelve miles to be constructed by New South Wales.

Mr. SCOTT said they ought to have distinct information as to the proposed junction at Ballandean Gap. It was well that they should understand whether that was to be a new township, or whether it was a suitable place to make a new township; and whether the Queensland gauge was to be taken into New South Wales, or the New South Wales gauge brought into Stanthorpe. He did not think there was much chance of the latter taking place, as the New South Wales line would have to be carried twenty-six miles over the border, whereas the Queensland line would only have to be extended twelve miles into New South Wales to reach the proposed point of junction. The House ought to know whether Ballandean was a good place for a township, and where the break of gauge was to take place. Possibly the Minister for Works would give some information on that point.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought it had been so thoroughly understood that the railway system of this colony must be connected with New South Wales, that he confessed he had not gone very particularly into the matter, especially as the late Government had placed a sum of money on the Loan Estimates for the construction of the line in question, and had imported the whole of the material, rails and fastenings, which were now lying in the railway yard. With reference to the junction, he could assure hon. members that there was a letter in the office from the Premier of New South Wales, wherein that gentleman agreed to the point of junction agreed upon by the Engineers of New South Wales and Queensland. The matter was so simple that, knowing that everyone must agree to the connection of the two railway systems, he did not prepare himself with many particulars about it. He believed that the very best route had been selected, according to the report of the surveyor, Mr. Phillips. With reference to the break of gauge, he consulted Mr. Stanley on that point, and that gentleman thought it would be impossible to work the two systems satisfactorily, unless Queensland had the line one day and New South Wales the other. It would hardly do, however, to have the traffic manager of New South Wales managing a line in Queensland, or the traffic manager of Queensland managing a line in New South Wales. The people of Stanthorpe and the people of Tenterfield could not agree upon the matter, as Tenterfield people wanted their town to be the point of junction; they were quite satisfied to allow Queensland to carry their line to Tenterfield, but they did not believe in New South Wales continuing their railway to Stanthorpe. He did not think it would be possible to come to any conclusion on that subject. He dared say that the hon. member for Port Curtis had seen the letter in the office from the Premier of New South Wales, agreeing to the point of junction.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Seeing that the late Government had placed the money for the line on the Loan Estimates, and that the material had been lying in the railway yard for the past eighteen months, he did not think it necessary to come down to the House armed with the particulars of that letter. As he had before stated, the lines of New South Wales and Queensland must be connected.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Let us know about the cost.

Mr. BLACK said he thought the House was entitled to more full information than had been given up to the present time. The hon. Minister for Works told them that there was a communication from the Premier of New South Wales agreeing to the point of junction of the two lines, and he understood him to appeal to the late Minister, whom he (Mr. Black) understood to say that he was not aware of there being any such binding communication in existence. For the purpose of giving full information, it would be only right that the motion should be adjourned for a time. The hon. Minister for Works was undoubtedly not in possession of all the information which the House was entitled to receive, and there was no necessity for delaying the matter beyond one or two days. He should certainly move the adjournment of the motion in order to enable the Minister for Works to give the House more full explanation on the subject, and he also thought that the House was bound to receive some information from him as to what the cost of the extension was likely to be; for that purpose he moved the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. KATES said that the connection between the two railway systems had been talked about for the last two or three years, and, when the time had arrived, obstacles were thrown in the way from the other side of the House. They were all agreed that the connection between New South Wales and Queensland was necessary. The hon. member for Balonne had told them that there might be another line much nearer, between Brisbane and New South Wales; but that line might cost half-a-million of money. There was £66,000 voted for the extension from Stanthorpe to the border some two or three years ago, and as to the distance he was inclined to think that the Minister for Works was correct; he did not think the distance was twenty-six miles.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Minister for Works says so himself now.

Mr. KATES: The Minister for Works said fourteen miles.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It has since come up to twenty-six.

Mr. KATES said the nearest point, called the "Dog Trap," was only fourteen or fifteen miles. But that was not the only question. They had another line before them which they would have to construct in the course of time, and that was the western line from Warwick to Goondiwindi, Thargomindah, and the South Australian border. That was a line that was necessary, as they were at present losing half their traffic into South Australia and New South Wales, and the sooner they made that line the better. They would not only secure their own traffic, but would tap that of South Australia. He saw no reason why the hon. member for Mackay should delay the construction of the line.

Mr. ALAND said he could hardly see the necessity of the motion which had been moved by the hon. member for Mackay. He thought that, whilst the Minister for Works in his opening speech was not perhaps so very explicit, and did not give the House all the information it would like to have, still, putting the speech of the hon. member for Carnarvon and the reply of the hon. Minister for Works together, they had been given a pretty good idea as to the necessity for the line, and as to its cost. The hon. Minister for Works said it would cost fully £100,000.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He never said anything of the sort.

Mr. ALAND said he understood the Minister for Works to say that a certain sum had been voted for the line, but that it would not be suffi-

cient for the purpose, and the extension would cost fully £100,000; but it would not be for him to state exactly how much it would be. There was one thing which ought to have been made a little more clear than it had been, and that was the point to which the line was to go. He could not altogether accept the *ipse dixit* of the hon. member for Carnarvon when he said the surveyors had agreed upon the point. He did not think that was enough; the speech the hon. member made did supply the House with some particulars as to the desirability of that particular point, as he pointed out that in the one instance the line would have to be made, or rather he said it could not be made through very poor country, whilst in the route which had been selected it would pass through practicable country, and good country. He would like also to mention that a few months ago the leader of the Opposition, when the plans were laid on the table of the House, promised that no opposition at all should be given to the line; and he did not suppose, if the Minister for Works had proposed the question then, that any more information would have been given. The eulogies the hon. leader of the Opposition threw at the Minister for Works were quite deserved.

Mr. NORTON said they had heard nothing in connection with the line which was at all satisfactory. They all admitted that it would have to be made, and hon. members on the other side seemed prepared to agree to the plans without caring one straw what money was required, or anything else. The Minister for Works had not told them whether any other survey had been attempted, and surely the House was entitled to some information in regard to that. They were to consider, it seemed, the construction of not fourteen miles but nearly double that, whilst New South Wales was to construct only twelve miles; and they were not even told whether there was any other route by which the two lines could be conveniently brought together. He knew something about the matter, but it was not his business to tell the House anything about it: it was the Minister's business when he asked them to accept the plans. But, apart from that, the hon. member said that he knew there was a letter in the Works Office from the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, consenting to the point of junction, and said he (Mr. Norton) must know the same. What he knew was that there was no agreement at the time the hon. gentleman went into office which would bind either Government to any particular point. Shortly after he (Mr. Norton) went into the office, a letter was laid before him, from the Minister for Works (Mr. Macrossan) to the Minister in New South Wales, relating to some matter in connection with that point of junction. That letter was unanswered. It was laid before him (Mr. Norton) by the Commissioner for Railways, who pointed out that no answer had been received; and another letter was sent to the Minister in New South Wales asking that Mr. Macrossan's letter might be answered. The result was that the Premier of New South Wales, who then had no Minister for Works, and was himself acting as Minister for Works as well as Colonial Secretary, replied—he could not give the exact words, but they were to the effect that he understood that an agreement had been come to between the engineers of the two colonies that that particular point at Ballandean was the best point of junction. It was something about as definite as that. No further communication that he knew of took place.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a letter from the Premier of New South Wales agreeing to the point of junction,

Mr. NORTON said, if the hon. member said there was another letter, they came to something definite to go upon; but when the hon. member said he (Mr. Norton) must know something about it, he simply said he did not. He thought the proposal of the hon. member for Mackay was a reasonable one. The House should be definitely informed as to what would be about the amount of money required, and where the money was to come from. He thought the debate need only be adjourned until to-morrow to give the hon. member time to ask the Chief Engineer one or two questions, in order that he might come into the House prepared to give that information which he (Mr. Norton) said every member of the House should receive; whether they cared for it or not, they should get it, as the country was entitled to it, and they as members of that House neglected their duty if they came there and consented to approve of plans brought forward as those under discussion had been. He hoped the Minister for Works would consent to the adjournment of the debate until to-morrow. The members on the Opposition side of the House were treating the subject as a matter of business; while the members on the other side seemed to think it was some scheme to obstruct. They did not appear to care whether they got the information asked for or not, and it was not his place to tell them they should have it; they ought to know that for themselves. No member on the Opposition side of the House was opposed to the construction of the line—they simply wished to get certain information concerning it; and he thought the Minister for Works would do well, under the circumstances, to consent to the adjournment of the debate until to-morrow, in order that the information they asked for might be given to the House.

The PREMIER said he had been trying to find out while the debate was going on what information hon. gentlemen opposite really wanted. Did they want to know what money was voted for it, and how much was spent?

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

The PREMIER said one hon. member wanted to know that. The fact was, he did not think they wanted to know anything; they simply wanted to wait until to-morrow. He might tell hon. gentlemen that £60,000 had been borrowed for the construction of that line. His hon. friend had mentioned that the permanent-way material for it had already been bought, and was now, and had been for some time, lying idle in the railway yard. That had come to £13,000, so that there was about £46,000 available for its construction. His hon. friend had also informed the House that he did not care to mention the exact estimate of the cost of the railway per mile, because that might cause some inconvenience in calling for tenders; but the whole line he said would cost upwards of £100,000. If hon. members wanted to know the distance from the border to Newcastle, he could tell them that it was 438 miles, and the distance from the border to Brisbane was 232 miles, *via* Toowoomba. There was the distance and the cost, as far as could be obtained at present. An hon. gentleman appeared to want to get a copy of Mr. Stuart's letter, but that seemed to him a singular reason for an adjournment of the debate. It was now three years since the plans laid on the table had been prepared, and the route during that time had not only not been cavilled at, but it was generally admitted to be the best route. Knowing, as he did, that the matter had been promised by the late Government over and over again, on the same plans and the same route, and that the money had actually been

borrowed after those plans were prepared, his hon. friend (the Minister for Works) naturally did not think that a great deal of information would be required by hon. members. But seeing that the Minister for Works was not prepared with details, and that the Commissioner for Railways was not present to give details, hon. members opposite appeared to want fresh information, which they thought could not be given. If hon. members would tell him what it was they wanted to know, he believed he could tell them before he sat down; though, he thought, they really did not want to know anything.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman had not answered any of the material objections raised by the Opposition side of the House. There was one material objection which he had not touched—an objection which was endorsed by hon. members on the other side, especially by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley—and that was, that they had no information whatever as to the definiteness of the bargain, or whether there was a definite bargain between this colony and New South Wales as to the point of junction.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You have been told that over and over again.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the Minister for Works said they had been told that over and over again, but all the hon. gentleman had told them was that there was a letter from the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales in his office, which might bind or might not bind; at any rate it said he agreed to the point of junction mentioned. He (Mr. Morehead) thought the colony should have a very much more binding agreement than that before they went into such an expenditure. The Premier had said for the Minister for Works that the line would cost about £100,000. He did not want to say that the Minister for Works had not said that, but, so far as the Opposition side of the House was concerned, nothing reached them about the £100,000 until the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Aland, spoke of it. If the information had reached them from the Minister for Works they would have scouted it, as he was perfectly certain that the line would cost a great deal more than £100,000. With regard to the statement that the late Government were pledged to the extension to the border, they were in no way whatever pledged to the proposed extension. They were in no way pledged to run a line thirty-six miles down their border to join a line constructed by the Government of New South Wales. He was pleased to hear the hon. Minister for Works say there would be a border town—a sort of Albury, he supposed—because it showed there was dissension in the camp. The hon. member for Carnarvon had spoken of Stanthorpe, which had been languishing for so long; and that it should be the place at which the break should take place seemed to be the claim of that distinguished electorate—the smallest, so far as the number of electors was concerned, in the colony. He hoped when they had a new Redistribution Bill there would be a piece added on to it to make it an electorate which a man might aspire to represent. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Bundamba, who said that unless some change were made in the rates in this colony they would not gain traffic by extending their railway to the border, but would lose it. That was absolutely true. They would lose traffic by every mile they made of railway extending to the border, unless they modified their rates of traffic. Even after establishing that junction, desirable as it was in every way, unless they reduced their

rates so as to compete fairly and honestly with New South Wales they would have no chance of retaining in the colony the business that naturally appertained to it. Every man of business, everyone who had anything to do with the railway traffic of the colony, would agree with him on that point. He hoped the Minister for Works would consent to postpone the motion till to-morrow. There was no intention on the part of the Opposition to obstruct it. They were all anxious to see the junction between the two colonies effected, but they wanted certain information before passing the plans. They wanted to know primarily what would be the cost of the line. The reason given by the Premier as to why the amount was not disclosed was simply disingenuous—namely, that it was not considered desirable to give information to any possible tenderers. That reason was too absurd. There had never yet been a railway proposed to the House without an estimate of its cost being placed before them. What had the House to do with the tenderers? Nothing. But they did want to know what amount of the taxpayers' money would be required for any special purpose; and they wanted good and sufficient proof that the work could be done for the amount estimated. It was the first time such an argument had been introduced into debate on that or any similar subject. Secondly, they wanted to know whether a definite arrangement—a distinct agreement—had been entered into between the two Governments as to the point of junction, before the proposal could go further. If the Minister for Works was right in his rendering of the letter received by the department from the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, there would be little difficulty in supplying the second item of information. There could also be no objection to his stating fully and fairly the probable cost of the undertaking. It was quite reasonable, therefore, to ask for the postponement of the motion till to-morrow, especially as the Minister for Works must know very well that any adverse criticism on the part of the Opposition was not urged with the intention of obstructing a work in which they all believed, and which they all wanted to see successfully carried out.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he thought that when a Minister proposed a public work of that kind it was only just that members, and especially new members, should be afforded all reasonable information. He (Mr. Midgley) approached the present subject in the position of knowing very little—indeed, nothing at all—about it; and he might be asked to vote just in the same way for the next proposal, and so on indefinitely. There was no information before the House as to what would be the cost of the proposed line, and they might be committing themselves to an unknown quantity which perhaps would result in delay, or injustice being done to other public undertakings of almost equal importance. He felt disposed, on the understanding that the adjournment would not be for longer than a day or two, to vote for the adjournment of the motion. He had never been to Stanthorpe but once, and that once made him feel that he should never want to go there again. If the country through which the proposed line was to pass was anything like so rough as the country he had to pass through to get to Stanthorpe, the cost of construction would be a very large and serious item. All hon. members, he supposed, would like to see a speedy completion of their intercommunication with the other colonies, but they were certainly entitled to the fullest information before committing the colony to so large an undertaking. He had no objection to the line itself; he believed it to be an important and an

urgent one; but, in the absence of even approximate information as to the cost, the Minister for Works might justly, in consideration of their ignorance, consent to the adjournment of the motion for a day or two.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) said that if the work proposed were a new one he could quite understand the objection raised by hon. members as to the want of full information from the Minister for Works; but the proposed extension was a long-meditated link in their railway system. They all knew what the cost of the Stanthorpe line had been, and it was simply proposed to extend that line to connect it with the neighbouring colony. Hon. gentlemen opposite who were loudest in their objections had had the consideration of that extension before them for several years, and he had not the slightest doubt that the hon. member for Port Curtis knew, perhaps quite as well as the Minister for Works, what the probable cost of the work would be. Hon. gentlemen seemed to forget that money for the service had not yet been voted. The House was simply asked to approve of the plans and specifications; the amount required to carry them out would come up for consideration on the Loan Estimate, and that would be the time when the exact information could be given which hon. members were now so anxious to obtain.

Mr. NORTON: When the contract is given.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it would be unfortunate if any delay took place in sanctioning the extension. He had always been an advocate for connecting their railways with a general Australian connection system. The Government would certainly not place themselves in a false position by accepting a contract for a work of so costly a character, until they came before the House and obtained a certain money grant to carry out the undertaking. Hon. gentlemen opposite, therefore, showed an unnecessary caution, and made an unnecessary demand for information which would be forthcoming in due time. No doubt at the present time they knew pretty well the extent of the information which they could obtain. There was no desire on the part of the Government to maintain any reticence on the subject; but he could quite understand why the Minister for Works—the service having been before the country, and especially before the hon. gentlemen opposite, for so many years—did not think it necessary on the present occasion to enter into full details, especially as the money for the service would have to be asked for on another occasion. He trusted the House would strengthen the hands of the Minister for Works, and enable him to push on with this service. He exceedingly regretted that the House had not authorised him to proceed with the line last session, as there were then a considerable number of people in the colony wanting employment. He (Mr. Dickson) was at that time very desirous indeed that the railway lines should be proceeded with, especially railway lines such as that proposed, which were a necessary complement to the existing lines.

Mr. ARCHER said that this was simply talking round the subject. They asked for information, and that information was not to be given; but they were told that the railway line was very much needed. It was needed for several reasons: first, because it would connect them with New South Wales; and the hon. member who spoke last had told them that he very much regretted it was not approved of last year because so many men were then in want of work. He denied both facts. He denied that there were many men in want of work last year. There were some persons

out of work knocking about Brisbane at the time, but when they were brought face to face with the Colonial Secretary they had very little to say for themselves. The Colonial Secretary was able to tell the House, very much to their satisfaction, that if those men liked to take the work offered and not seek for fine fat billets, they could get employment whenever they were inclined. Besides that, supposing there had been three or four hundred men in Brisbane out of work, was that really a reason why the House should rush into an expenditure which they did not know the extent of, in order to give those men work? They had not yet heard a word in answer to what they began with. Every time anyone on the other side of the House got up and argued in favour of the proposal of the Minister for Works that the plans and specifications should be approved of, reasons were given to show that the line was wanted. No one denied that. The Opposition were just as anxious as the members on the other side of the House that the line should go on; in fact, the gentlemen on his side of the House were those who got the money voted for the line. But if those gentlemen had been sitting on the Treasury benches, they would have been able to give all the information wanted about it. They would not have come like dumb dogs before the House, and asked for a thing without giving a reason. They were not contending against the necessity for the line, and they did not want to hear anything more on that point. They only wanted information; and as the hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches had come utterly ignorant of the matter laid before the House, they simply asked for twenty-four hours' adjournment, so that they could get an answer to their questions. The Minister could get it up to-morrow. There was not the slightest doubt the Commissioner for Railways knew all about it, and the Chief Engineer knew all about it; and the Minister had only to go and ask the proper questions and get the proper lessons. It was not right for the House to enter into anything when they could not get the information they wanted about it. He insisted that they had the right to ask for information, not only as to the expense of that part of the railway which had to be constructed, but also what was the nature of the agreement which had been made with the Government of New South Wales. Surely the hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House did not for a moment think they could deny that that was a just question to ask, and one that ought to be answered! He was satisfied that if the occupants of the Treasury benches fought the question, and went to a division, there were so many men who knew the honesty and soundness of the principle that it would be decided in favour of an adjournment, so that the Ministry could explain those things which required a little more explanation. The Opposition would then not oppose the line a moment longer. There was not the slightest reason why they should oppose it. Their side of the House was as eager as the other that the line should be carried out. Simply let the Minister for Works inform himself on those matters about which the House wanted information—let him lay those matters plainly before the House; and if those matters were full and complete, that side of the House would immediately consent to the question now before them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could assure the hon. member the Government would do nothing without the authority of the House. The hon. member knew very well that £60,000 had already been voted for the extension of this line.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Not for this line—for the railway towards the border.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is the railway towards the border.

Mr. MOREHEAD: There may be fifty railways towards the border.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could assure the hon. member that the present Government would not do as the previous Government did when they built the South Brisbane Branch Railway, before there had been a shilling voted for it. He pledged his word to the House that no contract would be entered into if the money were not already voted to cover it. He maintained that the work ought to be pushed on at once. They knew what the cost of the railway from Warwick to Stanthorpe was, and he did not suppose the first section of the new line would pass through more difficult country than they had been going through. He had no doubt it would cost between £4,000 and £5,000 a mile. There was a sum of money available, and why should not tenders be called for a portion of the line, and the work commenced at once? He ventured to say that New South Wales would reach the border before they did.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Because they give information when it is wanted.

Question—That the debate be adjourned—put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 13.

Messrs. Archer, Chubb, Norton, Black, Morehead, Hamilton, Midgley, Macfarlane, Ferguson, Donaldson, Scott, Palmer, and Salkeld.

NOES, 24.

Messrs. Miles, Griffith, Dickson, Dutton, Sheridan, Bale, Smyth, Brookes, Isambert, Jordan, Mellor, Buckland, Foote, Kellett, White, J. Campbell, Foxton, Moreton, Fraser, Macdonald-Paterson, Aland, Kates, Beattie, and Grimes.

Resolved in the negative.

Original question put and passed.

WHARF LINE, COOKTOWN RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the Wharf Line, Cooktown Railway, as laid upon the table of the House, 9th July, 1884.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

—said this was a short branch line extending fifty chains from the present terminus to the wharf about to be erected for receiving railway plant and material. The contractor would construct this branch at the same rate as the other portion of the line—£4,500 per mile. It was very necessary that the branch should be built, because it would save a great deal of labour and expense in conveying railway material from the wharf along the line; and he hoped the hon. member for Port Curtis would not throw any impediment in the way of it being carried out. He could assure the hon. gentleman that it would not involve the country in any tremendous outlay.

Mr. NORTON said he had no objection to offer to the motion, as the hon. gentleman had given them some reliable information respecting the proposed line; but he would point out that if they were going to be treated as they had been just now, and a Minister gave no information upon the motion he brought forward, hon. members who, individually, might have the information, were still bound to protest against the matter being proceeded with until that information was given by the Minister, who was the proper person to give it. That was the position he took up; but if hon. members were prepared to vote large and indefinite sums of money without any information whatever, then God help the country! that was

all he could say. He thought it was now quite clear how it was that when the party who now occupied the Treasury benches came into office they always managed to create a great deficit every year, and that when the other side came in they always made a surplus. He did not intend to oppose the line, but he should like to know from the Minister for Works whether there was any portion of the contract given to Bashford and Company, that was not authorised by the House?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; it is all authorised.

MR. NORTON: Unless his memory was at fault, there was a bridge over the Normanby River included in the contract that had not been approved of. He understood that the portion approved of was up to the river, and that the bridge was included without the consent of Parliament. The railway would have been of no use at all unless it crossed the river, and no provision had been made for that, because the plans were only authorised to the river and there was no means for drays to get to the end of the line unless it crossed the river.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS said the plans, sections, and books of reference were laid on the table of the House by the hon. member himself, and the tenders called for by him. Beyond that he knew nothing about it, and all he had to do was to accept a tender. The hon. member might have been in the habit of doing crooked work, but he (Mr. Miles) went straight. If the plans had been laid on the table by himself he should have been able to answer all questions, but he was not going to take any responsibility for the doings of his predecessor.

MR. ARCHER said the House was perfectly satisfied that the Minister for Works knew nothing about the railways he had proposed, but he must say he had never heard such a speech in that House before. Because a previous Minister called for tenders for certain works, the hon. gentleman accepted them, and then asked what had he got to do with the matter. If hon. members on the other side of the House were going to put up with that kind of thing he should be astonished. If the hon. gentleman was not a little less reticent, the Minister for Works in Queensland would be the common talk all over Australia. It was the hon. member's business to know all about the work; his speech was an utter absurdity and was beyond argument. Nobody ever intended to oppose the motion, but he could not help expressing the hope that that would be the last speech of the kind the House would ever hear from a gentleman occupying the position of the Minister for Works.

Question put and passed.

PATENT LAW CONSOLIDATION BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend and consolidate the law relating to Patents for Inventions, and the Registration of Designs and Trade Marks.

THE PREMIER, in moving that it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend and consolidate the law relating to Patents for Inventions, and the Registration of Designs and Trade Marks, said he took that opportunity of saying a word or two. The Bill was founded on a measure which passed the Imperial Parliament last year, and which had been sent by the Imperial Government to the colonies for their consideration. It was a very great improvement on the law as it hitherto existed, which had been extremely unsatisfactory both here and in Great Britain. Here we had been almost without any patent laws, and the provisions of this Bill would be found to be very

useful indeed. He would call attention to two very material alterations—first, with respect to fees. At the present time an applicant must pay £20 for the registration of an invention. That was not too much in the case of a valuable patent, but in the case of small ones it was large. Instead of that it was proposed to allow the expenditure to be spread over the whole period during which a patent lasted, or the applicant might pay the whole sum at once. Another important alteration would be found in Part V., where it was proposed to take advantage of the Imperial Act, under which an arrangement might be made between Great Britain and foreign countries, and Great Britain and the colonies, for the protection, in any of them, of a patent registered in another country or colony. That was to say, if a man applied for a patent in Great Britain he might have twelve months to make an application here, and for that time he would be protected. In the same way the Imperial Government might and would protect a patent registered here, for a corresponding period. The scheme proposed seemed to him to be perfectly simple and feasible, and he hoped it would be carried out.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the resolution was adopted.

THE PREMIER presented the Bill, which was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

UNITED MUNICIPALITIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL—SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER said: In rising to move the second reading of this Bill, I do not think it necessary to make a long explanation as to its provisions. Hon. members are aware that the United Municipalities Act of 1881 was introduced by a former Minister for Works (Mr. Macrossan), with a view of enabling adjoining municipalities or divisions to be associated together as a joint board for the purpose of doing jointly some work that had to be done in more than one division or municipality. The purposes for which they are to be formed are enumerated in the 2nd clause of the Act:—

"1. For the formation and maintenance of main roads, or roads excepted from the control of any local authority under the laws in force for the time being, relative to the government of municipalities.

"2. For the carrying out of any public work, or the making of any by-law, for the common benefit of a united municipality.

"3. For any other purpose not inconsistent with the powers conferred, and obligations imposed upon, local authorities by the laws in force for the time being."

Up to the present time there has been no instance in which the Act has been actually put in operation. In one instance, where at least it seemed as if it might have been put in operation, the provision, on consideration, was found to be unsatisfactory. The case I refer to is that of the Municipality of Brisbane and the surrounding divisions, and shire, with respect to the regulation of traffic. Under the Local Government Act, the Municipality of Brisbane has power to regulate the traffic in the city of Brisbane; and under the Divisional Boards Act every division near to Brisbane has equal power; so has the Shire of Toowong. Thus you have, near to where I am standing now, the Municipality of Brisbane, the Divisions of Booroodabin, Ithaca, Toombul, and Woollongabba, and the Shire of Toowong, all having equal power to regulate the traffic which passes through them, and all within a distance of about three miles. Of course it is absurd that each should have separate power to make separate

by-laws and levy separate taxes upon vehicles passing through; and to remedy that the machinery provided by the United Municipalities Act seemed better than appointing transit commissioners or anything of that kind, to which there are many objections. I think it better that the matter should be dealt with by a representative body. The difficulty arising under the provisions of the Act of 1881 was, that it is too inflexible, too rigid. By the 6th section of that Act, which provides for the constitution of joint boards, it is provided—

"That the governing body of every municipality shall be a joint board, consisting of the chairman for the time being of every local authority having jurisdiction within such united municipality; provided that whenever a united municipality comprises less than three component municipalities, the joint board shall be composed of the chairman and one member of and elected by each local authority having jurisdiction as aforesaid."

They would all have an equal voice. Now, the result of that in the case of Brisbane and the surrounding localities would be that the one that has the largest ratable property, and in which the greatest amount of traffic exists, would be represented by only one out of five or six votes, so that it would practically have no voice in the matter. I think that the Act is too rigid, and that some more flexible provisions are required. I have, therefore, introduced, as a substitute for section 6, the 1st section of this Bill, which provides that—

"The governing body of a united municipality shall be a joint board, consisting of a representative or representatives of every local authority having jurisdiction within such united municipality."

"The number of representatives to be appointed for the several local authorities shall be prescribed by the Governor in Council by the Order in Council constituting the united municipality, and may from time to time be varied by a further Order in Council."

The following rules are laid down as to the number:—

"The number of representatives for each of the several local authorities need not be the same, but the number of representatives for any one local authority shall never be more than one-half of the whole number of members of the joint board; and if there are more than three component municipalities, shall be less than one-half of such whole number. In determining the number of representatives for each local authority regard shall be had as far as practicable to the ratable value of the property within the several component municipalities."

That is a basis which can be ascertained with sufficient accuracy by the Governor in Council before making the order. Then the representative or representatives of each local authority are to be elected by it from its own body, and if a local authority does not do this, the Governor in Council may appoint them; while if any person elected or appointed refuses or neglects to act, the proceedings of the joint board shall not be affected. The real difference between the Bill and the present Act is that, instead of the number being one for each board, it will be fixed by the Governor in Council. Under the 2nd clause, which provides for the disposition of the revenue of joint boards, any surplus revenue, after meeting the necessary expense for the carrying out of the public work or administration of the by-law, shall be divided among the municipalities in such proportions as the joint board determines. If there be no such determination, the money will be divided in proportion to the rates collected by each municipality. Each municipality has to publish an account of its rates, so that the money can be divided by a simple rule of three. It may be said, "Why not divide it in proportion to the ratable property?" But that is a matter very difficult to ascertain exactly; although the Governor in Council will

be able to ascertain it with sufficient accuracy before determining the number of representatives to be appointed. I think the Bill will work, and will remove difficulties that have existed up to the present time. I trust, therefore, that there will be no difficulty in passing it. I beg to move the second reading.

Mr. ARCHER said he was aware of the difficulties under the United Municipalities Act mentioned by the hon. gentleman. The Act had not been in operation in any case, and therefore they not had the best opportunity of judging of its provisions; but there were defects, and he believed the Bill now before them would solve the problem which had puzzled several municipalities and boards. There would be no objection to the second reading by the Opposition side of the House; and when the Bill went into committee they would try to make it such a measure as would enable municipalities and divisions to carry out works which it was necessary should be carried out in different parts of the country.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: While I do not intend to oppose the Bill, I must say that the 1st clause—and I think the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, who is also chairman of the Booroodabin Divisional Board, will bear me out in my view—I think that, so far as I interpret the 1st clause, it will lead to the suburban divisional boards, which intend to unite in the proposed joint municipality, being overshadowed by the votes that will be returned by the city of Brisbane. I think that is a contingency that may occur.

The PREMIER: It is provided against.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I do not think it is. The question can, however, be fully discussed in committee. I am very glad that the hon. the Premier, in all matters connected with municipalities, continues to recognise the rights of property. Possibly, outside of them, he probably disregards them. I believe the intention in introducing this Bill is a laudable one, and I think with some amendments—and there will have to be some amendments—it will make the United Municipalities Act a more workable measure.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the commitment of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PUBLIC OFFICERS FEES BILL—SECOND READING.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: In rising to move the second reading of this Bill, I will briefly mention that it is a measure which I think will meet with the approval of the House generally, inasmuch as it tends to introduce a necessary and proper reform in the Civil Service. Several of the officers in the Civil Service at the present time are receiving emoluments in the shape of fees, of which no idea is given in the annual Estimates voted by this House, and in many cases the salary which appears on the Estimates as the remuneration of an officer does not in any way convey to the House the annual remuneration which he obtains or receives. This Bill provides that—

"All fees which shall hereafter be received by any officer in the Public Service under the authority of any Act of Parliament for the performance of any duty as such officer, shall hereafter be accounted for by such officer and paid into the Consolidated Revenue, and every such officer shall be deemed to be a public accountant in respect thereof."

To make the Bill intelligible, a schedule of fees payable to public officers has been handed round to hon. members.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Just now.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There will be time for hon. members to consider it before we resume the discussion after the adjournment for tea. The aggregate amount of fees paid to each officer cannot of course be ascertained from this, but a very fair idea is given of the emoluments which they derive from fees and allowances which they are authorised to collect under statute, but which do not go into the Consolidated Revenue—which, in fact, appertain to the recipients as private perquisites. It will be desirable to make this Bill general in its application, but I think that in the case of Customs officers, who work overtime, it will be impossible to bring them under the scope of the Bill. Customs officers who work overtime after 5 o'clock, after their day's work is concluded—

Mr. MOREHEAD: Overtime is not a fee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The fees are included in the schedule, and therefore hon. members will naturally be led to imagine that the Bill contemplates dealing with these officers as well as with other Civil servants who, under statutory enactments, are allowed to receive fees as private perquisites. I am glad the hon. gentleman has pointed out that the overtime allowed to Customs officers cannot be included as fees, which are usually to be accounted for to the Consolidated Revenue; but I deem it my duty to point this out: that I do not see that this Bill does or ought to include officers who are paid for extra services performed during extra hours of labour. The object of the Bill, as I stated, is to compel all officers in the Civil Service who are receiving fees from the public, outside their official salary—fees, which are authorised by statutory enactment or otherwise, which at the present time are being received by them as private perquisites—to compel such officers to account for them to the Treasury, and in that direction the Bill has been framed. It may be said that the Bill only deals with fees being paid into revenue, without making provision to recompense those officers proportionately, so that they should not suffer any loss of income. I am sorry that at the present time we are so entirely in the dark as to what is exactly received by each officer in the Civil Service, that we will require to see the working of the Bill for a time before we can exactly estimate what each officer is entitled to. It will be for the Government, in preparing their Estimates, if they give effect to the Bill this year—that is to say, in the shape of giving remuneration *in globo* to each officer—to approximate, as far as they can, to the income which each officer is supposed to receive. It will be a matter of time before the Government will be in possession of sufficient information to deal conclusively with the subject. There cannot be, however, any objection to the Consolidated Revenue receiving all fees from public officers, and the remuneration which will attach to those officers will of course be dealt with perhaps more completely after the operation of this Bill has been witnessed. The schedule which has been laid before hon. members deals with all fees and all remuneration paid outside voted salaries, and, while it is laid before hon. members for their information, it is not intended that the whole of them shall come within the scope of this Bill. I refer to officers of customs, landing-waiters, lockers, tide-waiters, and clearing officers, who perform work outside regular office hours, and who are paid by the public for such work. At the same time, I think it is very right that all such remuneration should go into the Consolidated Revenue, even if it is to be afterwards disbursed to the same extent as received, so that a permanent record might be made of what each officer earns, and what emoluments he receives

outside the salary voted to him by Parliament. The same remarks apply to the officers of the Savings Bank attending on Saturday nights. They receive a small additional remuneration, and it is not intended that that small additional remuneration shall be included in the working of the Bill. Nor is it intended it shall apply to the bailiffs of the small debts court, who are appointed by the bench, and are paid entirely by fees. With the exception of these three, I think all the other officers who appear on the schedule may very fairly come under the operation of the Bill. As I before stated, I believe it is desirable that all fees received by officers of the Civil Service should come into the Consolidated Revenue direct, though I think they should be paid out to them again, until the Government are in a position to deal conclusively with the matter in the way of increased salaries. I think they should go into the Consolidated Revenue until we know the extent of all fees received by each officer. Having introduced the Bill to the House, I beg to move that it be read a second time.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I think, myself, that after the remarks made by the Colonial Treasurer it will be much better if the House negatives the Bill. Not that I intend to move a hostile resolution to that effect, but I think, after the explanation of the Colonial Treasurer himself, it would be much better to negative the Bill. The hon. gentleman, by his own remarks, has shown us that this Bill, even with the schedule served out to us to-night, will require considerable amendment. He has told us it will not apply to landing-waiters and other officers in the Customs Department, as theirs are fees properly appertaining to the officers who do the work. He has further told us, and I have myself remarked the same thing, in reference to the Chief Clerk and his assistants in the Savings Bank, that those are also fair items chargeable to the State, and payable to the officers referred to. But he has omitted to tell us one thing. What about the fees paid for affidavits to the Registrar of the Supreme Court? There is no mention of them here. He is paid a salary by this House, and gets fees also. Are the lawyers to be exempted again? The hon. gentleman may look for mention of this officer in the schedule, and he will not find any. I am told, his emoluments from this source of fees amount to £100 or £150 a year. Why should he not be mentioned in the schedule? This is only one instance of omission, and there may be a dozen others. All officers receiving fees should be mentioned in this schedule, which appears to me as incomplete, and will require amendment. While admitting the propriety of all that is contained in the first, and in fact the only clause in this Bill—that “all fees which shall hereafter be received by any officer in the Public Service, and so on, shall be paid into the Consolidated Revenue”—I do not think the Government should have brought down this measure until they are prepared to tell this House what is paid to the occupants of the different public offices who received fees. In the schedule sent down to us to-night I think the Government should have told us, at any rate approximately, if not fully and fairly, what sums of money are earned by those gentlemen in addition to their salaries. I do not think myself that this Bill should go to even a second reading without some further information upon this point. Here, at the last moment, in the case of a Bill with only one clause, we have a schedule sent round to us which is itself incomplete. Surely we may talk about scanty information in this case! As the matter stands at present we do not know what are the emoluments from fees which the different public

officers are getting. The Government do not know themselves, and they merely ask us to step into the breach and stop these fees altogether. Do they propose that these fees should be voted to these officers, or are they to stop suddenly, and a record to be taken of them after a date fixed by the passing of this Bill? Is that the proposal of the Colonial Treasurer? Is there to be a sudden stoppage of a procedure which has been taking place for a number of years?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: They are to be paid into the Consolidated Revenue primarily.

Mr. MOREHEAD: As soon as this Bill is passed?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Up to the time the Bill passes, are things to go on as they have been going, and no record to be kept?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Then I think the hon. gentleman has begun at the wrong end. I think a departmental order could have done what is proposed by this Bill. The hon. gentleman could have ordered that every officer should keep a record of the moneys received by him, and if he could not have got at the information desired in that way, I am much mistaken. I am perfectly certain that a departmental order, issued by the Minister at the head of a department, to the effect that every officer in that department should keep a record of the emoluments received by him from the State, and fees separate, would secure the desired information. It appears to me that if this Bill becomes law, as it stands, it may condone almost embezzlement. I believe it would condone embezzlement on the part of an officer who, before the passing of this Bill, had taken unto himself funds belonging to the State—the clause is so very ambiguous. I believe both the principle and intention of the Bill are good. I am free to admit all that, but I think the House will agree with me that we cannot pass such a sweeping amendment upon things as they now exist, by one clause. I think the Government are trying to do things too rapidly and too briefly, and this manner of doing things will only lead to trouble in the future. I call attention to the preamble of the Bill, which says: "Whereas under the provision of divers statutes, etc." The statutes are not even recorded or recited. This slipshod legislation will lead to an immense deal of trouble, and I would ask hon. gentlemen of this House to be very careful in passing the second reading of a Bill such as this, upon a matter of the extremest importance; and a matter which, I maintain, cannot be remedied by a Bill of one clause. I agree with the Colonial Secretary that the system of giving fees to officers of the Civil Service is a most pernicious one, and one that should be abolished, more especially when we are told there is no record of them. Those fees should be paid into the Consolidated Revenue of the colony. But will this Bill remedy it? I have already pointed out, and the Colonial Treasurer has pointed out, that there are certain items in his own schedule which want amendment, and I have also pointed out that there is one item of great importance which he has omitted. I ask the Government, therefore, not to press the measure unless they are prepared to bring in amendments in committee amending such a crude Bill as this is in its present shape. They have shown that they have not grasped the whole of what is contained in the Bill. Then, again, are the Government prepared to advocate in Committee of Supply the large addition to salaries which

will necessarily follow on the abolition of those fees? Have they discovered a system by which they can find out the amount of the fees obtained by those various officers? They have told us they cannot. How do they propose to find out what the police magistrate at A or B or C receives in the shape of fees over and above the salary voted by the House? Are they prepared to put down on the Estimates this session or the next, what those increased salaries are to be? If they are, how are they going to arrive at it? The Premier has told us that to get at that sum is impossible, and that if an officer was asked the question he would be likely to state more than he had actually received. I do not mean to say that those are the hon. gentleman's actual words, but that is certainly the deduction to be drawn from them. I want to know how the Colonial Treasurer is going to arrive at the sum per annum with which he will compensate those officers who are to suffer the loss of fees. There is no scheme embodied in this one clause. Indeed, it would be hardly possible to conceive a scheme embodied in one clause except a scheme of deprivation and confiscation, both of which are, of course, well known to the present Government. How is the Colonial Treasurer going to mete out justice to those men whose emoluments by fees are abolished? How is he going to give fair play to them, and at the same time fair play to the public? Not a member of the House wishes to do an injustice to any public servant in the shape of reducing his emoluments. We want to give him the same pay in the future as he has received in the past; and we want to put his receipts from fees—probably an increasing item as years go on—into the coffers of the State. I hold entirely with the Colonial Treasurer in that view, if it can be done, but I want to know how it is proposed to compensate public servants for the loss of fees after the passing of this Bill. We are all anxious that those gentlemen should not suffer any injustice, and we are fairly entitled to ask how the amount of compensation is to be arrived at. I admit I do not see how it is to be arrived at; and I also object to the Estimates being swelled by sums being put upon them for emoluments of this kind. I would much rather abolish the fees, arrive at the probable amount which those men would derive from fees on a life policy basis, and pay them a lump sum, and let it be swept off the foot-notes of the Estimates. If the State has engaged men to accept offices to which fees are attached, the State has incurred a liability. It is the State that has made the mistake, not the individual, for the individual would not have taken the position but for the fees attached to it. I am no advocate for the existence of those fees, but I am no advocate for doing any man an injustice. Let us start with a clean sheet—abolish fees, compensate individuals for the loss of them, and let it be understood in future that salary includes all emoluments of office; and then there will be no inducement to land agents, clerks of petty sessions, registrars of births, deaths, and marriages to obtain fees from the public. Let it be clearly understood that their fees are to go into the public Treasury, and I cordially assent to it, and I am sure many other hon. members will agree with me. What I want to know is: how the difficulty I have pointed out is to be overcome—a difficulty that has arisen as much through lax legislation as lax administration—how you are to compromise with those men? I can point to men who occupy, each, the positions of police magistrate, clerk of petty sessions, registrar of births, deaths, and marriages, land agent, and postmaster, in one town. That is a state of affairs that should not exist.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOREHEAD : That is the maximum of the evil, but there are lesser aggregations of offices in very many towns in the colony, and the sooner that state of affairs ceases to exist the better. What I maintain is that this Bill of one clause will not meet the difficulty. A Bill of a more sweeping character will have to be brought in—by which those men will be in some way compensated for the abolition or destruction of rights which have become prescriptive during their lifetime. There are many officers who have maintained themselves almost solely by fees. What is to become of them? They are surely not to be turned out, after years of service, to starve. I do hope the Government will consent to amend the Bill in such a way as not to inflict injustice on anyone, which will certainly be done if it is carried in its present shape. If they come down with a well-digested scheme it will certainly receive the consideration and appreciation of both sides of the House, but we should certainly not like to see the measure pass in the crude form in which it stands now.

The PREMIER : I have listened carefully to the speech of the hon. gentleman who has just sat down, but I am not sure that I quite understand the drift of his observations. As far as I can follow him, he objects to fees being received by officers in the Public Service, and he also objects to their abolition. You must take up one side or the other. You must either deal with the matter on the assumption that fees ought to be received by public servants for their own benefit, or that they ought not.

Mr. MOREHEAD : This Bill does not propose to abolish fees.

The PREMIER : We must first ascertain what principle to go on. Do we propose to allow public servants to receive fees of an unknown amount and retain them for their own benefit, or do we propose that all officers be remunerated by a fixed salary? We think, sir, that it is very undesirable that public servants should be remunerated in the present uncertain manner. I have found great embarrassment of late, when it was necessary to make changes in the Public Service, and remove officers from one place to another, because, although members of the House and members of the Government were under the impression that they knew what salaries those officers were receiving, we were told that we had no idea—that it was perhaps £200 or £300 more than appeared by the Estimates. That is very unsatisfactory. The hon. member asks how we are going to compensate them. There are many ways of compensating them. It is not practicable to ascertain with exactness what loss any officer sustains by the abolition of fees, but it is practicable enough and easy enough to find out what is a fair remuneration for the work he does. Another way is to give them, for the first year, a sum of money equivalent to the amount of fees paid into the Treasury. You could ascertain that amount from the Auditor-General. But that would not be exact justice; as, in order to ascertain what would be a perfectly fair equivalent of the fees, you would have to take the average of several years. More than that, no officer has a prescriptive right to a particular position. A man may be occupying one year the position of clerk of petty sessions with large fees, and the next year it may be desirable in the interests of the Public Service to appoint him police magistrate somewhere else, and police magistrates do not receive fees.

Mr. MOREHEAD : Some of them do.

The PREMIER : It is impossible to arrive at any exact amount of compensation; but what we can do is to fix what is a fair remuneration for the work done by each officer. That is what we propose to do. The hon. member complains that the Bill is not long enough. Perhaps the next one he criticises will not be short enough. One is too comprehensive; the next is not sufficiently so. The hon. gentleman is inconsistent with himself; his speech is entirely inconsistent with the one he delivered two or three days ago. Hon. members must understand that the question has to be decided. You must either let the present unsatisfactory system go on—a system everyone admits is unsatisfactory in the highest degree—or abolish it. When you meet a difficulty of this kind, it is no use shutting your eyes to the fact that it is a difficulty; you must overcome it the best way you can. We propose that these fees shall, in the future, go into the public revenue, and we will fix the salary of each officer. The hon. gentleman says this schedule is incomplete. It is laid on the table in pursuance of a promise I gave the House on Thursday last.

Mr. MOREHEAD : We did not get it till the Bill was brought on. It was handed round with the Bill to-night.

The PREMIER : The House did not sit between Thursday and to-day, and so we could not lay it on the table before. The schedule contains, not only the amounts of fees received by officers in the Public Service under the authority of Acts of Parliament, but other allowances they are in the habit of receiving. I think it is very desirable that hon. members should have that information before them, in case they should desire to extend the operation of the Bill. The most important fees, I think, are those received by clerks of petty sessions. I must say that many of them I was not aware of before, although I thought I was tolerably well acquainted with the working of the different departments. Much of this information is new to myself, and it does not alter my opinion that the system should be abolished. Various officers have been receiving fees without my knowledge or the knowledge of a single member of the present, or, I believe, last Government or of this House, and now that such a practice is discovered there is no reason why it should not be done away with. With regard to the remuneration paid to officers of the Customs, I do not regard those as fees at all. That is a mode of remuneration fixed and approved of by Parliament.

Mr. MOREHEAD : Why are they put here?

The PREMIER : For the sake of giving hon. members information. They might want to bring these also within the scope of the Bill. Does the hon. member complain that we are giving him too much information?

Mr. MOREHEAD : Too much in one place and too little in another. What about fees for affidavits?

The PREMIER : I will come to them presently. There is another matter which is rather on the border land—fees paid to bailiffs. Bailiffs in the small debts courts are not officers in the Public Service: that has been decided by the Supreme Court; but I do not know whether bailiffs in the district courts are technically public officers. I am inclined to think they are not; but it has never been settled. With respect to affidavits, I think all public officers who have to swear affidavits ought to pay the fees into the Treasury. As far as practicable this is enforced in the Public Service, but unhappily it is still evaded. The matter is dealt with by this measure. Let it be distinctly understood that the principle is that all officers in the Public

Service are to receive a fixed remuneration for the work they do, and whatever fees are paid are to be taken as contributions to the Treasury. It will be the duty of the Auditor-General's Office to check all returns from the Treasury with the statement of fees which ought to be received; so that officers who ought to have received fees, and have not accounted for them, may be charged with them. In this way we may be able in time to adjust the salaries. But if we wait till the information is complete it will go on from year to year. There will be two things, each of which is not to be done till the other is done—we are never to abolish the fees till we know what they are, and we are not to know what they are till they are abolished—and so it will go on for ever.

Mr. MOREHEAD: But you are putting increased salaries on the Estimates. One will have to be put.

The PREMIER: On the Estimates we shall put down each officer's salary according to the amount of work he has to perform. If an officer is receiving £1,000 a year, and this House thinks he should only get £300, I do not see why we should have any hesitation about it. I do not think injustice will be done to anybody. If it should be found that any injustice has been done, this House and the Government will, I am sure, be perfectly ready to redress it. It can be done in various ways other than proposing an inordinate salary for a particular office. The powers of promotion and transfer may be made use of to avoid any difficulty of that kind. The hon. gentleman complains that the Bill is not long enough, and also that it is too comprehensive. I certainly do not understand him, but I shall be glad to receive any suggestions for limiting it; but he has not made any of that kind. I take it that unless the House has entirely changed its opinion, which was very clearly expressed last Thursday, there should be no difficulty in passing the second reading of the Bill. If any cases of injustice arise, or if any exceptions from its general sweeping operation are to be embodied in it, I am sure they will receive due consideration; but I say that as a general rule there should be no exception, unless in the case of bailiffs, where the fees paid represent the actual expenditure of time and money. But, as I said before, probably they are not officers of the Public Service. I am reminded, by seeing them mentioned in the return, that a point has been raised on one or two occasions whether they are or not; but the money is paid for a certain amount of work done either in the shape of travelling or remaining at a particular place, or paying another man to remain there, and it would be inconvenient to pay fixed salaries for such work, the character and extent of which, during the year, would be uncertain and impossible to be ascertained; work, moreover, given to men who are not practically Civil servants, even if they are so technically, which probably they are not.

Mr. BLACK said he thought the object sought to be attained by the Bill a very good one indeed. He was not aware the other day, when he moved for a return something similar to that now furnished to hon. members, that there were so many public servants receiving fees of which the Government and the country knew nothing whatever. He was then under the impression that the fees against which the public, in whose interests he certainly made the motion, were to be guarded, were confined almost entirely to those paid to land agents, clerks of petty sessions, registrars, and police magistrates. But, in addition to that, he found that the public were pretty freely mulcted on every possible opportunity when a Government officer could levy a fee, and the weak point of the whole

system was that the Government appeared to have no way whatever of ascertaining the extent to which the public were being so mulcted. He did not see any reason why, in framing the Estimates, as the hon. the Premier had stated, a sufficient salary should not be put down to pay for the services of every officer in the Civil Service. He did not think that any member of the House would for one moment contemplate depriving Government servants of salaries properly proportioned to the work they had to perform; but he thought that, in the interests of the people of the country, they had a perfect right to know what those salaries were; and he held that any fees the Government considered it necessary that the public should pay, should undoubtedly belong to the Consolidated Revenue, and not to the Civil servants. He had no particular case he could point to where the system that prevailed had been abused, but he could very well understand that very ample scope existed for public officers to take fees considerably in excess of what was laid down in the schedule before them. Another point he would call attention to was, that there were a great many fees the public had to pay, which under the proposed new system they would still have to pay, but which he did not think they should be called upon to pay. For instance, there were fees for the registration of births, marriages, and deaths, 3s. Why should the public be called upon to pay 3s. for the registration of every child born, for a death, or a marriage? He thought the public had a right to such registrations free of cost. Then there was the Assistant Duties Registrar, who got a fee of 1s. for each certificate he issued for the same thing that the public had already paid 3s. Then there were district receivers in insolvency who got various fees. He believed that many insolvent estates were swallowed up by fees.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And will be still.

Mr. BLACK: There was no attempt made to alter those things, and he thought the measure ought to be made more comprehensive; that in fact it should be a revision of the fees payable, and that those which pressed severely upon the public should be left out. He should like to know something as to what the receivers in insolvency got in the way of fees, but he supposed that was another of the mysterious items the Government had no control over. Clerks of petty sessions, he found, received, for conducting pound sales, 5 per cent. of the amount realised, and he knew that the unfortunate owners whose stock was impounded very seldom got anything out of it. All the proceeds went to the auctioneer and clerk of petty sessions. Then, why should police magistrates get a guinea for holding inquests? Surely that might fairly be considered a portion of their duty. If not, let them be paid a sufficient salary for holding them, and abolish the present wretched system of preying upon the public in the shape of fees. With regard to overtime, that undoubtedly belonged to those who performed it; and he also thought that bailiffs were entitled to fees for the services they performed. Although he should like to have seen a number of the fees, now allowed, abolished by the Bill, still he considered it a step in the right direction, and, on that ground, should support it.

Question put and passed, and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS ENDOWMENT BILL—SECOND READING.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Perhaps the same objection will be taken to this Bill as was taken to the last—namely, that it contains only one clause, but I think that one

clause will be found quite sufficient for the purposes of the Bill. It was the intention of the Government to have dealt with the divisional boards in a more comprehensive manner, as during the late general election there was an expression of opinion in some quarters that it was very desirable to abolish the rates on improvements. I have endeavoured to get all the information that I possibly could from the various boards on this subject. A letter was sent round to them inviting suggestions, and, out of eighty boards, I only received forty replies, in which not two boards agreed. The Government therefore came to the conclusion that it was no use trying to meddle any further than this Bill proposes, and that is, to continue for five years the double endowment. When the Act was passed in 1879, one of the provisions was that the boards should receive £2 for every £1 of rates collected; and it will also be within the recollection of hon. members that £100,000 was set apart as a further endowment to be distributed according to the amount of rates collected. I have had some little experience of the working of divisional boards, and scarcely a day passes but there are applications from one board or another for assistance, on the ground that they cannot possibly carry out necessary works unless the Government assist them. Therefore, the Government have come to the conclusion to recommend to the House that the endowment of two to one on the amount of rates collected shall continue for a further period of five years. I think that hon. members will admit that since this Act came into operation the seasons have been very favourable for the purposes of road-making, and if in dry weather the roads cannot be kept in order it is not natural to expect that they will be kept in repair in wet seasons. I am sure the House will agree with me as to the absolute necessity of this measure. Of course all boards are not poor and needy, but I find generally that where the population is most congregated the expenses of maintaining the roads are very heavy. There is no doubt that at some future time the Divisional Boards Act will have to be further amended, because I have found that in many cases the divisions are too small. A great amount of the rates and endowment is, in many cases, squandered in salaries. Every board has got a clerk, inspector of works, foreman of works, and, as a rule, the chairman is paid. Well, I do not object to that, provided there are funds to meet all these expenses; but the boards are only just now beginning to understand how to squander their money. There are some boards where the members, not knowing what to do with the rates, are dealing them out amongst themselves. There is the Wambo Board, who have the use of the town hall from the Municipal Council of Dalby, at a rental of 5s. a month. It is an excellent building, and the clerk of the division is also clerk to the municipal council. To make matters agreeable, one member of the board brought forward a resolution that a deputation should wait upon another member, in order to ascertain whether he was willing to sell a certain piece of land for the purpose of erecting a board office. The deputation waited upon this member, and after a good deal of hemming and hawing he was induced to sell the property for the moderate amount of £700. That is the way in which the money is sometimes squandered. I believe this is the only instance that I actually know of, and if I could put a stop to any such practices I would willingly do so. However, the Government have come to the conclusion that it is desirable and necessary that this double endowment shall be extended for five years, and I now beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. NORTON said he would congratulate the hon. member on his coming to the House clothed and in his right mind. A short time ago, the hon. member was denouncing divisional boards as a curse to the country; now he came forward and proposed that the double endowment should be continued for another five years. In introducing the Bill, the hon. member had been able to give some information. He spoke of the Wambo Divisional Board, and a transaction carried on there; but he ought to have given the House a little more information about it. The charge brought against some members of that board was a most serious one, and the House ought to be provided with full information. He hoped, therefore, that the hon. member would lay the papers in connection with the transaction on the table, in order that hon. members might have an opportunity of judging of the way in which the transaction was carried out. He also hoped that the matter was not quite so bad as it seemed; but when a Minister of the Crown spoke in the way the hon. member had done they must assume that he had had every opportunity of getting the facts. The matter, however, was too serious to be passed over by merely referring to it in the House. It was rather unfortunate that the hon. member for Dalby was not present, because he was interested in the matter, and would like, no doubt, to know something more about it, and if the members of the board required it, he would, no doubt, be prepared to defend them. The Minister for Works had spoken of the country being divided into small divisions. He (Mr. Norton) did not see how it was possible to avoid it. Some of them were too large to work—not because of their size, but because sometimes different parts had different interests. They were as widely different, in fact, as they could be, and when it was shown that such was the case, and that a subdivision could not be made for the purpose of meeting the wants of any part, he did not see how it was possible to refuse to cut them up. One case of that kind occurred near Maryborough, where a small portion of a division was cut off from the remainder by a creek. There was a good deal of complaining; and eventually, at the request of the ratepayers in it, that portion was made into a separate division. It was shown that, although the area was small, the rates in the new division were considerable, and were likely to increase very largely within the next few years. In such a case it would be impolitic, when the great bulk of the ratepayers in a portion of a division asked to be separated, to refuse to carry out their wishes. He somewhat regretted that, when the Government decided to bring this question forward, they did not go into it more largely. The Bill simply dealt with one matter in as short a form as it could be dealt with; it did not in any degree remedy the defects of the Act. There were a great many complaints, as the hon. member said, in connection with the charges on improvements, and to a certain extent they were well grounded. The Bill did not remedy them. The only way in which he saw the complaints could be properly reached was by making the charge on the annual value of each property. Hon. members must remember that the form in which the Divisional Boards Act was passed was a sort of compromise. It was originally intended, he thought, to make charges on the annual value of property; but there was some objection to that, and, indeed, a good deal of confusion in connection with the Bill altogether, and it resolved itself into the present form. He was sorry, as he had said, that the present Bill did not go further. People who took a great interest in the working of the Act had

spoken to him at different times, and had proposed different amendments, some more or less valuable. The present Bill would, he believed, fail to give satisfaction, except in so far as it continued the large endowment; it would not in any way tend to make the Act more equitable than it was at present.

Mr. SMYTH said he thought it was only fair that municipalities which had not been in existence for the time specified—five years—and which were originally divisions, should enjoy the same privileges as divisions were to enjoy under this Bill. The Municipality of Gympie, for instance, was originally a division; and he thought it was only fair that it should enjoy the proposed privilege. When it became a division the roads were in a bad state, and it was necessary to borrow £3,000 to repair them. Now, it was intended to borrow £6,000 for the same purpose, and if the municipality was deprived of the privilege it would have enjoyed had it remained a division, the taxes would be very heavy on the people.

Mr. BEATTIE said he would like to see a good many municipalities throughout the colony like Gympie. If they could only get some of the material down here that they had at Gympie they would soon put their roads in excellent condition, as at that place there was a plentiful supply of such metal as would make some of the finest roads in Queensland. He was very glad indeed to see the Government bring the present Bill in, because he believed there were a great many divisional boards throughout the colony looking forward for some assistance of the kind which it provided. Others perhaps could do without it. There was one statement made by the Minister for Works to which he must allude. The hon. gentleman stated that the various boards had been communicated with to ascertain whether, in their opinion, alterations were required in the Divisional Boards Act, and that replies had been received from some, while others had not taken the trouble to answer the circular. Having taken an active part in assisting to carry out the provisions of that statute, and having promised to give all the assistance he could to make the Act a success, he might state that the boards had cause for complaint in some instances. Some boards had found it necessary to pass by-laws for the better government of their divisions, and after passing them they sent them to the Government for confirmation by submitting them to the Executive. After the by-laws had gone through this circumlocutory process they were proclaimed in the *Government Gazette*, and were then supposed to have the force of law. The moment anything took place that amounted to a violation of those regulations, the board, by its officers, took steps to bring the delinquent to justice for the breach which he had committed. The offender was taken before the police court, and it was then found that the by-laws were *ultra vires*—that the Divisional Boards Act gave them no power to make certain by-laws, although it provided that such by-laws should be confirmed by the Attorney-General. Now, he thought that was a farce, and in his opinion the boards had good ground to expect that the Government should have taken some steps to remedy the evil. He would give an instance of how the board to which he had the honour to belong had suffered in this connection. They prepared a by-law to regulate the vehicular traffic within their division. Nobody, he thought, could fairly accuse them of being oppressive in their charge for licenses, as they only charged a sum sufficient to pay for supervision, and they did not expect to get a revenue from licenses, as the omnibuses ran for the convenience of the ratepayers.

They took an individual before the court for a breach of the regulations to which he was referring, and the man was fined 5s. But he appealed to the Supreme Court, and then the board found that they had no power to charge for a license. What was the consequence? Why, for the 5s. the proprietor of the vehicle was fined, the board were mulcted in the sum of £100. That was £100 of the ratepayers' money thrown away simply through a flaw in the framing of the Divisional Boards Act. That was a very great hardship and ought to be remedied. He hoped, now that the Premier had taken the matter in hand by introducing a Bill to amend the United Municipalities Act, the occurrence of such cases as that would be prevented in future. Some of the divisional boards expected that notice of the matter would have been taken by the Minister for Works in introducing the Bill now before the House. He believed there were many boards which required all the assistance they could get, as the population in their divisions was sparse, and there was a great deal of land from which they received very little rates. In some divisions there were large Government reserves with main roads round them, and the boards had to make the roads in a condition suitable for traffic, but received no revenue from the land. Therefore, he thought it was only fair that the double endowment should be continued five years longer.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: I have not the slightest doubt that the hon. gentleman who has just sat down will support the second reading of this Bill. He has done very well out of divisional boards. The board of which he is chairman (the Booroodabin Board) have doubled his emoluments. I do not know whether he has had any advice from the hon. gentleman in charge of this Bill. I am perfectly certain that this Bill of one clause—a one-clause system seems to have been adopted by the Government in the Bills they have introduced, or, at all events, in a number of them—will receive the almost unanimous consent of this House. I may point out this—that the Divisional Boards Act wants a good deal more amendment than is contained in this Bill. There is no doubt this is a very popular move on the part of the Government. So long as they can tap the State to feed the divisional boards the divisional boards will be satisfied; but, as I said before, a great deal more is wanted than this measure provides. The Bill will not give the relief required. It will simply put food into the mouths of those who already benefit by the Divisional Boards Act—those boards that require a considerable amount to place in the bank at interest, but which they do not utilise. We may have too much of divisional boards. I never from the commencement held that the Act was such a very good thing; I do not now hold that it is such a very good thing. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley is one who has done remarkably well out of this Bill, and knows a great deal about it. I say, without any attempt at sarcasm or saying anything unpleasant, that he is a most admirable chairman of a divisional board, but at the same time I do not know if he could have done all this unless he had received the payment, which he has from that board—payment which has been doubled lately. If we had set ourselves to work and appointed a committee of this House to see into the working of this Act, we would have arrived at a conclusion as to the results that have been arrived at here, or what we see in the public prints. I, for my part, know that in the outside districts it is not a success, and here we are asked to-night to double the period, which is a long period in the history of a young State, for which we are

to devote a sum of money for the sustenance of that condition of affairs. I am not going to oppose the Bill, but I have my own ideas that these divisional boards are corrupt like some municipalities are. I know that is not the public opinion, or even one that is generally believed in on this side of the House; but I hold that there will be as much corruption under the divisional board system, and perhaps more, as there ever was under Government management. I know perfectly well that my views on this subject are looked upon as wild and outside the realm of practical politics or the practical management of the State; still I hold these ideas. However, although I have no intention of opposing the second reading of the Bill, I still hold that a Bill purporting to be an amending Bill ought to have gone a great deal further and contained other matters which require amendment, rather than stand, as it does, simply a bribery Bill, and still further foster these boards in a direction that possibly may be an erroneous one and more damaging to the State than profitable.

Mr. WHITE said it was urgently needful that the endowments should be paid into a central fund and distributed, not according to the rates, but according to the population in each subdivision. There were subdivisions that were very densely populated and had to battle with all the difficulties of getting produce to a railway station or market, and were entirely without money to relieve them. There were other subdivisions that had scarcely any inhabitants whatever—nothing but sheep and cattle running over them, and, as the hon. member for Balonne remarked, they had more than they knew what to do with; they put it in the banks and did not need it at all. If he understood rightly, the Minister for Works said that the taxes on improvements would be given up. It looked very inconsistent; they wanted people to spend their money on country lands, and kept on tax-gatherers to watch and pounce upon them for taxes and rates on the money they spent.

Mr. MELLOR said he had not many words to say on the subject before the House, but would congratulate the Government on bringing it forward. Last session he presented a petition from nearly all the divisional boards in the colony, asking that the endowment might be continued. He was very glad that it had been foreshadowed in the Speech delivered by His Excellency that it was intended to bring the matter forward. He thought that in many instances the endowment was not enough, while in others it was too much. There were certain boards in the colony, as had been mentioned by the hon. gentleman who introduced the measure, which had more money than they knew what to do with, and spent it amongst themselves; and there were others which even with the double endowment did not know how to pay their way. He should like to see some measure introduced by which relief could be given to such boards. Hon. members would remember that there were promises made that main roads should be considered when the Act was passed; but he did not think anything had been done in the way of keeping that promise. There were boards which had main roads running to central positions and seaport towns, and it was impossible for them to keep those roads in repair. There was another matter that it would be well for the Government to take into consideration, and that was in reference to the larger works to be constructed by divisional boards, such as bridges. It was a well-known fact that the boards in some places had quite as much as they could do under the present rate of taxation, even with the double endowments, and it was impossible

for them to construct any works of magnitude. Some suggestion might be made by which such large works could be constructed: he knew very well they could not be constructed by the divisional boards, and if application was made to the Government they were generally referred to the United Municipalities Act. They had quite as much as they could do under the present system of taxation, and what could be done under the United Municipalities Act would mean more taxation. The Government would do well to take that matter into consideration with regard to certain boards in the colony. He should like to see the divisional boards carried on, on the principles they had in some parts where he came from, where he had belonged to a board since its commencement, which was spending the money in the division where it was raised. In reference to what the hon. member for Gympie had said with reference to Gympie itself there was some injustice in that respect. Gympie was formed first as a divisional board, and then they asked that it should be converted into a municipality. In doing that, there was no doubt that they would deprive themselves of relief, unless relief could be given to them as it was to divisional boards—unless they could get the double endowment conceded to them for the next five years, which was greatly needed there, perhaps as much as by the divisional boards. He was glad to hear the Minister for Works deprecate some boards. There were some boards where they spent their money in paying servants and chairmen; but that was not as it should be, and in such cases they should be visited in some way by the Minister who was in charge of the office—that was, if he possibly could do so. He should himself be glad to see the Government face the matter in reference to the construction of large works, particularly bridges, which could not be constructed by the divisional boards under the present rate of taxation.

Mr. ARCHER said that, having been a very strong supporter of the divisional boards system since it was first introduced as a Bill into that House and brought into action, he wished to say a few words on the subject. He was glad the hon. Minister for Works had introduced the present Bill, as he thought it necessary that the divisional boards should have the endowment of two to one for some years longer. He wished to say a word or two with respect to what fell from the hon. the Minister for Works the other evening, having some reference also to what fell from the hon. gentleman who last addressed the House. The Minister for Works said that it would be necessary for the Government to undertake the construction of bridges in the country, because he believed the divisional boards were unable to carry them out. If he qualified that statement to some extent he would agree with him. He believed it would be better if the hon. gentleman had said the "larger" bridges in the country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Hear, hear! That is what I mean.

Mr. ARCHER said he was glad to hear the hon. gentleman make that qualification of his statement, because, if it were known that small works of the kind would obtain the consideration of the Government, the same thing would be initiated as there had been before the introduction of the Divisional Boards Bill. They would have people coming to that House to get every little culvert made by the Government. He thought it would be better if the Government assisted the divisional boards in the construction of works of the kind over the large watercourses of the colony.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Balonne, for instance.

Mr. ARCHER said he did not know whether that was a creek or a river—he had only heard of it by name—but, if the assistance of the Government in this matter were confined to the larger watercourses in the colony, he believed the Minister for Works was right and justified in the statement he made. He would not say that there were no other amendments required in the Divisional Boards Act except those referred to, but he would say that they patched up the Divisional Boards Act last year, and it was not possible to bring in amendments to an Act every year. They had to wait a little to see how it was carried on. The proposal contained in the Bill before them was one which, he had no doubt, met with the approval of all the divisional boards in the colony. Some of the other questions put to the divisional boards, with regard to the rating of property for improvements, did not meet with any answer. The hon. member for Wide Bay thought that Gympie was somewhat hardly used, in being deprived of part of the proposed endowment, as, although now a municipality, it was formerly a divisional board. The hon. member now seemed to think that in consequence of that change it was hardly used, by not having the same amount of two to one granted to it, according to its rating; but he did not suppose that Gympie would have been made a municipality unless the people there had asked for it. It was their own wish, and they knew the consequences. There were other places which had undergone a similar change—North Rockhampton, for instance—and they knew the consequences of the change and they must accept them. He was glad to hear the expression of the Minister for Works that he intended to confine the Government assistance to divisional boards, as the late Government intended, to the construction of large bridges over the principal water-ways of the colony, such as the Pioneer or other large rivers. He thought the hon. gentleman was perfectly correct in saying that divisional boards should be assisted in carrying out works of that kind, but he hoped in all smaller matters the hon. gentleman would not initiate a system by which divisional boards might be encouraged to come to that House for everything they wanted. He hoped the hon. gentleman would instruct the boards to that effect, when they were informed of the continuance of the double endowment, as he believed it had been of very great advantage to debates in that House to have got the roads and bridges out of them. He believed it would be also of great advantage to the persons interested and members of divisional boards, and would prepare them for future service in that House when they came, as the hon. member for Wide Bay had come, to that House to show that there, as well as on a divisional board, he could be of great service to his country. He was very glad the measure had been brought in by the Government; it was wanted, and he would vote for the second reading of the Bill.

The PREMIER: The hon. member for Gympie has pointed out a case I was not aware of, and one which I believe my hon. friend, the Minister for Works, was not aware of, where a divisional board has become a municipality. But I am of opinion that the endowment may still go on, whether the formation of the corporation has changed or not. At the time the change was made, both the municipalities and divisional boards obtained the Government endowment for the same period—five years—of an almost uniform nature. I would advise my hon. friend the Minister for Works to remedy it. It has, I may mention, practically been remedied by a resolution brought in in 1880. A similar error was discovered under the Divi-

sional Boards Act of 1879, and a resolution was brought in by the then Government dealing with the matter, and providing that the accident of a change of the formation of a corporation and a change of boundary should not apply to or affect the endowment by the Government. I believe that is a safe principle and should apply in all cases.

Mr. CHUBB said it still remained a question whether, under the Bill introduced by the Minister for Works, boards which were created by the amalgamation of two existing boards would not be entitled to the endowment for a considerably longer period than ten years. The 71st section of the Act provided that endowments should be paid for each of the first five years after the establishment of such division; and the Act which the Premier referred to clearly provided for the case of a new division created by a division of a division already in existence; but it seemed to be doubtful if it applied to the case of the consolidation of two divisions or where a portion of one division was added to a division already in existence. It might be that the Act referred to by the Premier was sufficient. If the defect he referred to existed, it should be provided for, so that such divisions should not receive the endowment for a longer period than ten years in all.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he thoroughly approved of the continuance of the endowment of two to one, by the Government, for another five years, but he thought there should be some exceptions made. There were some divisions, such as the Rosewood, densely populated, the ratable area of which was very small in proportion to the mileage they had to maintain. The clear net revenue of the Rosewood Division, Government endowment included, amounted to £500, and they had to maintain about 500 miles of roads. What could they do with such a small revenue as that? In the Western districts, again, they had divisional boards having thousands of pounds at fixed deposits in the bank, and they could not expend the revenue they received. The reason of that state of things was that their ratable property was so large in proportion to the roads they had to maintain. Their roads ran over level country, through thinly populated districts, and were not much used, and consequently needed little repair. With the best intention to carry out improvements, there was no necessity for doing so. That showed clearly that the Divisional Boards Act, notwithstanding that it taught and encouraged the people in the art of self-government, was not equitable in its working in its existing shape. In rich agricultural districts like the Rosewood, roads were very difficult to maintain. The other day he was repeatedly asked by farmers in that district if the Government would make an alteration in the law, and particularly if the Government would abolish what was called the tax on improvements. They said they objected to pay that tax; that they would rather pay four times the amount in regular taxation levied on the acreage of the land. If that was done they said they would know exactly how much revenue was required to carry on their improvements. The divisional boards could calculate the amount to be levied per acre, without spending £50 or £100 every few years for re-valuation. His constituents did not object to be taxed according to acreage, but they did object to be pounced upon the moment they made improvements. A continuance of the endowment was clearly not desirable for all divisional boards, because some of them had already more revenue than they needed; and he intended, when the Bill went into committee, to move the insertion of a clause to the effect that its provisions should not apply to such

divisional boards as had an unexpended revenue lodged as fixed deposits in banks, or had more than £1,000 of revenue unexpended. The argument of the hon. member for Stanley, that all endowments should be paid into a central fund, was not without sense, for some regard should be paid to the mileage of roads to be maintained. Another difficulty, pointed out by the Minister for Works, was that the divisions were too small. Formerly one foreman of roads supervised as large an area of country as now contained three, four, or five divisional boards; and some of his constituents were anxious that the former state of things should be again instituted—they wanted the Government to go a step further and appoint engineers and foremen who could supervise the work of three or four divisional boards. Not that that should be an extra charge on the Government. Another thing was, that before any large expenditure was incurred it should have the sanction of the divisional board's inspector. The Minister for Works might have mentioned the case of the Thuringowa Divisional Board at Townsville, whose doings had received the severest condemnation of the inspector. The facts of that case ought to be made known all over the colony, and the Minister for Works would do well to allow the proceedings of that board to lie on the table of the House. The Government should prevent divisional boards from making ducks and drakes of their money. Paying £2 to £1, they had a right to supervise the expenditure of it; and if they had not the right they should get it.

Mr. ALAND said he was not sure that those very wealthy divisional boards to which the hon. member for Rosewood referred would agree with him that, because they had, therefore they should not be given to. He (Mr. Aland) did not see why those boards, because they happened to possess more funds than they required at the moment, should not enjoy the same privileges as the other divisional boards. It had not been shown that they had acquired their surplus funds in a wrongful manner, or that they would not be applied to their legitimate purpose. Neither did he agree with the hon. member that, when boards were entering upon works involving a large expenditure, the Government should send an officer to supervise those works and say whether they were carrying them out rightly or not. That was somewhat opposed to the principle of local government. That principle was, "Tax yourselves; spend your money as you think best, and we will not interfere with you." To meet any difficulty, there was a provision in the Divisional Boards Act Amendment Act to the effect that, if a board applied to the Government for a loan for any particular work, the Government had the power to say whether that work was really necessary or not. His object in rising was to draw the attention of the Minister for Works to the divisional boards in his district. He was unconnected with them in any way, and very few of their inhabitants were constituents of his. In the neighbourhood of Toowoomba there were three divisional boards and one shire council. Two of those boards were possessed of large funds, and were enabled to carry on their work without any feeling of wondering how they were going to make both ends meet. He did not think the Middle Ridge Shire Council was in such a flourishing state as it might be, and he was quite sure that the Gowrie Divisional Board was not. The latter was a large district, without a large amount of ratable property in it, and its roads were largely made use of both by the Municipality of Toowoomba and the different divisional boards round about. He thought it would be a good thing if the Minister for Works would cast his eye round about that locality, and see if he could not

remodel those divisional boards, so that the expenditure would be more in accordance with the needs of the place.

Mr. SALKELD said he thought the Bill was a step in the right direction. He quite concurred with the remarks of the hon. member for Toowoomba. He believed that many of the drawbacks with regard to divisional boards arose from two causes—at least, that was the case with those with which he was personally acquainted. Many of them were too small, and so had not sufficient revenue for the employment of proper officers to carry out their works; or rather they were not large enough to find employment for those officers. The second cause was that the boundaries of the divisions had been in the first instance very badly arranged, so that roads almost exclusively used by the residents of one division were not in that division. He knew cases where divisional boards had to maintain roads that not half-a-dozen residents in that division ever used at all. If something could be done in the direction indicated by the hon. member for Toowoomba, in revising the boundaries, he thought it would remove a good deal of heart-burning, and make the Divisional Boards Act work a good deal better. He could not agree with the hon. member for Rosewood in wishing to leave out from the operations of the Bill those divisional boards which had funds in hand. He did not think it necessarily indicated bad management for a divisional board to have funds at the bank; it might be the result of careful and judicious management, and, if so, it would be very bad policy for the House to inflict, as it were, a penalty upon them for it. On the other hand, some of the divisional boards that were straitened for want of funds no doubt owed their unsatisfactory position to bad management, and would have been in a far better position at the present time if they had not in many instances squandered the money foolishly. He should support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he had great pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill, believing, as he did, that unless some such measure had been brought in, a large number of divisional boards in the country, at the end of the year, would become things of the past. He should even have preferred that the Bill had gone somewhat further, and had given increased endowment to certain necessary works, such as the building and repairing of bridges, drainage, and other sanitary improvements. He was a thorough believer in local self-government, and he could not say he agreed with some of the remarks which fell from a previous speaker, that works conducted by divisional boards should be under the control and supervision of officers appointed by the Government. The members of divisional boards are elected by the ratepayers to carry out various works, and expend the money collected by rates, and he thought, if ratepayers had not confidence in the men they elected, they certainly would not have confidence in officers appointed by the Government. He had great pleasure in supporting the second reading of this Bill.

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

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT CONTINUATION BILL.

The PREMIER said: As the Minister in charge of the department which has the supervision of the working of the Marsupials Destruction Act, it is my duty to move the second reading of this Bill, although I do not profess to

be very conversant with the working of the Act. Many complaints have been made with reference to the working of the Act, but on the whole I believe it is admitted that the operation of the present law has been beneficial; that though it may have worked badly in some cases, yet it is better that the Act should be in force than not. One of the great objections—I do not say it is a valid one—is the power conferred upon the Colonial Secretary to make an assessment for any district if the district board does not do so; but I do not think that objection comes to much. If it is not necessary that money should be raised, no Colonial Secretary would ever dream of making an assessment. That clause has never worked hardly, and never will. As the law stands at present, it would expire at the end of this year. I propose, therefore, to adopt the usual form of continuation, and continue it for two years longer. We do not propose during the present year to attempt to remodel the Act; we have other matters which we conceive to be of more urgent importance. If the House thinks it desirable, the Act can be continued until the end of next year only, and then we shall have to bring it up again during next session. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: I have not the slightest intention of opposing the second reading; but I think most hon. gentlemen, especially the Minister for Works, who knows all about native dogs, will agree with me that some amendment dealing with them might have been included in the Bill. The hon. gentleman knows as well as I do that, though there may be a slight difference of opinion as to those animals being introduced in the measure, there is a strong opinion that some reward should be given for their destruction in the same way as for the destruction of marsupials. I believed the Government would have introduced a fuller measure; but, though they have not done so, I have no intention of opposing the continuation of an Act which, with all its faults, has been of great benefit to the colony. We, on this side, shall accept the Bill as another admission from that side of the House of the wisdom of those who preceded them.

Mr. KATES said he would call the attention of hon. members, especially those representing agricultural constituencies, to the great hardship suffered by farmers and selectors owing to the depredations of the kangaroo-rat. Year after year he had been asked why that particular marsupial had not been included in the Act; and he knew from experience that it was most destructive, especially after seed-time, to maize, oats, barley, and wheat, and that it was particularly destructive to potatoes. A bonus was allowed under the Act for scalps of kangaroos, and he did not see why the farmers who were compelled to contribute to the fund for the destruction of marsupials should not be protected from the kangaroo-rat. The pest could not be exterminated, but the numbers might be reduced as had been the case with kangaroos; and it was his intention in committee to move in the matter, when he hoped to be supported by members on both sides. He quite agreed with what fell from the hon. member for Balonne in regard to dingoes. One selector had told him that only for the dingoes he would be rich. Sheep had to be closely shepherded for fear of being destroyed by the dogs, and the provision for a bonus of 5s. or 10s. for every tail would be a step in the right direction.

Mr. STEVENSON said he was glad to support the Premier in passing the Bill; but he hoped, notwithstanding what had been said in connection with remodelling the measure, that he

would take some notice of the suggestion with regard to the payment for scalps. Under the Divisional Boards Act the chairman of a board had power to pay money, the same as the owner or manager of a station, by cheque; and he did not know why it should not be the same with respect to marsupial boards. As the law stood at present, a man first got a certificate stating that he had delivered so-and-so to the marsupial board; he then gave a receipt as if he had received his money, and then had to go to a publican or a storekeeper to get his paper cashed. That transaction cost him 10 per cent. of his money, and it was very hard that he should be deprived of his earnings to that extent. The last time he went north a great many men brought the subject under his notice, and he hoped the Premier would, in committee, introduce a clause providing for the payment of money under the Marsupial Act, the same as under the Divisional Boards Act.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment, intimated that the business for to-morrow would be the Registrar of Titles Bill, and the consideration in committee of the short Bills which had passed the second reading.

The House adjourned at ten minutes past 9 o'clock.