Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 16 JULY 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 16 *July*, 1884.

Questions.—Petitions.—Formal Motions.—Practice as to Formal Motions.—Insanity Bill.—Registrar of Titles Bill—second reading.—Elections and Qualifications Committee.—United Municipalities Act Amendment Bill—committee.—Divisional Boards Endowment Bill—committee.—Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill—committee.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked the Colonial Secretary—

What was the result of the action in the Supreme Court ordered by this House to be brought against the publisher of the *Brisbane Courier?*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. W. Griffith) replied—

The publisher of the *Brisbane Courier* was prosecuted in pursuance of the order of this House, before the Supreme Court. The case was tried on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of April last, before His Honour Mr. Justice Harding and a special jury, who returned a verdict of "not guilty."

Mr. MELLOR asked the Minister for Works—

Has the £15,000 set apart for divisional boards been appropriated?—if so, on what basis has it been given?

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

The £15,000 voted in aid of bridges will be divided equally amongst the various divisional boards. The whole amount has not yet been paid over to them.

PETITIONS.

Mr. PALMER said he had been entrusted with a petition signed by a majority of the inhabitants of Georgetown, on the Etheridge River, praying that the survey of a railway from Herberton to Georgetown might be instituted. He had read the petition, which he believed was in conformity with the rules of the House, and ended as usual with a prayer. The reasons which

the petitioners gave for their request were—first, that the export of gold from the Etheridge during the last eleven and a-half years amounted to £710,000.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must not make a speech in presenting a petition. All that he can do is to present the petition, state the allegations contained in it, and move that it be read by the Clerk or be received.

Mr. PALMER: I move that the petition be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read and received.

Mr. FOOTE presented a petition from the widow of the late John Pettigrew, of Ipswich, and others, for leave to introduce a private Bill to enable the trustees, for the time being, of the will of the said John Pettigrew to dispose of certain trust properties described therein; and moved that the petition be received.

Question put and passed.

Mr. MOREHEAD moved that, for the information of hon. members, the petition be read.

Question put and passed.

Mr. FOOTE handed in the usual Treasury receipt and notices in the *Gazette* and newspapers, and moved that they be received.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked if it was not somewhat irregular to move that these papers should be received?

The SPEAKER: It is customary when presenting a petition of this kind to produce at the same time a receipt from the Treasury, certifying that £25 has been paid into the Consolidated Revenue, and also to produce the *Government Gazette* and local newspapers containing the necessary advertisements as prescribed by the Standing Orders. It is not necessary to move that these papers be received.

Mr. FOOTE said he might explain that he only received these papers since the House met, and he understood that they had to be presented when the Bill was being brought forward. It was simply an error on his part, a very trifling error, which the hon. member need not have made so much of. He was quite sure the hon. member need not have gone to the trouble of having the petition read. He regarded it as an act of discourtesy on the part of the hon. member——

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that there is no question before the House.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. BLACK—

That there be laid on the table of the House a list of renewed leases under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, which have expired, or will expire, on the 30th June in each year, from 1882 to 30th June, 1890; giving names of runs, districts, lessees, annual rentals, and areas.

By Mr. JESSOP—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copies of the surveyors' reports, with plans of all railway surveys made to St. George.

PRACTICE AS TO FORMAL MOTIONS.

The SPEAKER said: I may state, for the information of hon. members, with regard to formal motions, that if, when a motion tabled by an hon. member is called from the chair, the hon. member is absent, and the motion is not called "not formal," it is my intention when he is in his place to call the motion over again, so that he may not lose the opportunity of submitting it to the House.

INSANITY BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the Insane.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

REGISTRAR OF TITLES BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—This Bill provides for the separation of the supervision of the working of the Real Property Act from the department of the Registrar-General. That is all there is in the Bill, but it makes several provisions necessary to carry that into effect. It is proposed that the Governor in Council may appoint a Registrar of Titles, and that, when he is appointed, all the duties of the Registrar-General with respect to the Real Property Act and the registration of deeds shall be transferred to the Registrar of Titles. The 6th clause relates to another matter. In the office there are a number of records sent up from New South Wales, the originals of which, under the laws of that colony, are admissible in evidence, but the copies sent here are not under any law in force. It is merely an accident arising from Separation, but I have seen very considerable inconvenience arise on many occasions from the want of this clause, which is put in to remedy the defect. With respect to the object of the Bill, I may remark that it has been the opinion of many persons for a very long time that it is desirable that the Real Property Act should be a separate department, which it really is, although nominally under the Registrar-General. In fact, the Registrar-General cannot possibly supervise the immense amount of work he has to do, and also supervise the working of that branch. It has been hinted that this Bill has been introduced in consequence of some dissatisfaction with the manner in which the present Registrar-General has performed his duties, but that is entirely erroneous; and although I was not always in favour of a measure of this kind, I have for some years arrived at the conclusion that it would be desirable. A table was circulated this morning showing the operations of the Real Property Office, and the immense extent to which the business has increased.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I have not seen it.

The PREMIER: It was circulated this morning with the papers, and, I believe, other copies have been sent for now. I will show the increase which has taken place in the business since 1878. In the year 1878, the total number of transactions under the Real Property Act was 6,035, and in 1883 the number was 12,033, showing that the operations actually doubled in the five years from 1878 to 1883. During the first six months of this year the transactions amounted to 6,900, indicating a very large increase again in the current year. Another mode of comparison is by taking the number of certificates of title issued. In 1878 there were 3,067, and last year there were 5,495. That does not include the total increase. The total number of new certificates of titles issued, or endorsements on old ones, in 1875, was 5,131, and in 1883, 9,669. With respect to the revenue of the office, the receipts were, in 1878, £5,499, and in 1882 they were £8,690. For the first half of this year the receipts were £5,069, while the actual expenditure for the whole year is £3,628. This shows that the department is a branch of Government business from which the country derives very considerable profit.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Improper profit.

The PREMIER: Perhaps so. I think it would be very proper to reduce some of the fees; and I do not think that the country should make such large profits out of the department. It is proposed further, by another Bill now before the House, that the Registrar-General shall not only have to do with statistical matters, which of themselves are almost enough to occupy his time, but shall also have charge of patents and trade marks, which will require a very considerable amount of attention. The present system, as I have before pointed out, is extremely unsatisfactory, and it is proposed that that work shall devolve upon the Registrar-General, and that the work in connection with the Registrar of Titles shall be under the charge of an officer distinctly and separately responsible for the business. That is all that there is in the Bill, the rest of the provisions contained in it being merely details to give effect to the measure. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I of course cannot pretend, nor do I pretend, to have the technical knowledge that the hon. member has with regard to this Bill, but I do know how it is regarded outside. I know that this Bill is regarded simply—and I speak perfectly plainly—as a measure to give a billet to the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan. Hon. gentlemen may laugh, but I am simply stating what is the opinion of a large number of the outside public. Whether they are right or whether they are wrong it is not for me to say; but such is the rumour, and I convey it now to the Premier as the opinion of the public. I myself have not heard any sufficient reasons brought forward by the Premier to lead this House to think that it is necessary to add to our already over-weighted Civil Service another very expensive department. I assume that there is no intention of abolishing the office of Master of Titles, and that that officer is still to be kept on as the consulting devil of the Registrar of Titles and the Registrar-General. The new office of Registrar of Titles is, I assume, a distinctly new one, in addition to those already in existence, with a high salary attached to it; but I do not assume that that officer, whoever he may be, is to be a lawyer.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I am very glad the laymen are going to have a chance at last, and that the lawyers are not going to have all their own way. So far as the appointment of the hon. member for South Brisbane is concerned, I may tell the Premier, if it will clear the way, that I have no objection to it.

The PREMIER: I never thought of it.

Mr. MOREHEAD: As I have said, I certainly should not object to the hon. member for South Brisbane getting the appointment; but as the Premier has said that it is not to be so, there is nothing more to be said on that point. I shall, at all events, be sorry if the hon. member should be debarred from getting the appointment by anything that has fallen from me. I should like to know from the Premier—and I am quite sure he will tell us—what salary this new officer is to get. It appears to me that the Government are determined to go in for an enormous expense in the Civil Service. We are now asked to appoint an officer who will get a salary as large, I presume, as that of the Registrar-General—namely, £700 or £800 a year. I suppose the intention is to place him on the same level as the Registrar-General. Now, the argument with which the Premier tried to persuade us to accept the Bill was, that the Registrar-General's department was actually a paying institution; that the country derived a clear profit by the difference between the fees received by the office and the sums paid in salaries connected therewith. That may be so; but, if it is so, it only proves that the fees should be reduced. We know the way in which we are hampered. Every hon. member in this House and every man outside, who has had anything to do with the office, knows that we are hampered there in every way. We have to pay very well for any work we have done in that office; in fact, we have to pay exorbitant fees. The fact that we pay exorbitant fees is proved by the excess of revenue over expenditure. There is no other department which can show in one way a more pleasing state of affairs, and in another way a more displeasing state of affairs. We have to pay more for the work done than in any other department in the colony. I am of opinion that if the proposed alteration in the offices had been required it has not been done suddenly, and that the same necessity was in existence five years ago. The Premier was then Attorney-General, and should have remedied it at that time. Now he comes down with this proposal, which certainly appears to hon. members on this side, as well as, I believe, to many hon. members on the other side, and to a large number of the outside public, to be a measure brought in to give a Government billet to a friend. I am perfectly certain that, in the remarks made by the hon. gentleman, sufficient cause has not been shown why this addition should be made to the already over-swelled Civil Service of the country. I maintain that we have a more over-swelled Civil Service than any in the Australian group; and also that we pay more and get less from the Civil Service than in any other colony. I am quite sure the Minister for Works will endorse every word I say in that direction, at any rate. I do not for one moment express an opinion as to the legal points referred to in the remarks made by the Premier; I know nothing about them. I have so far kept tolerably clear of the law. I do hope that the Government will give us some fuller and better reasons for this addition to our Civil Service—this highly salaried official, as I suppose he will be. He must be an official paid as highly as the Registrar-General—at least I assume that; and I should like the Premier to tell whether it is so.

The PREMIER: We cannot fix the salary until the Bill is passed.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman says the salary cannot be fixed until the Bill is passed. Well, I presume the two officers will be put on the same footing; that is, I think, a fair assumption from the wording of the Act. Before asking hon. members, who are the custodians of the public purse, to pass this Bill, I say again that, as it is to be a considerable addition to our already over-swelled Civil Service, more reasons ought to have been given in its favour. Of course it is useless for me to say we will oppose the second reading of the Bill. The force of numbers is on the other side, but the force of numbers may sometimes be a source of weakness instead of strength. At any rate, I as one sitting on this side of the House protest against the taxpayers of this colony having to pay for an addition to the Civil Service of a highly paid officer without sufficient reason having been given by the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) said that the hon. gentleman who had just sat down had laid unnecessary stress on the increase to the Estimates of expenses that would be made by the Bill. He could not surely have paid attention to the remarks of the Premier

in introducing it. The Premier pointed out that there had been a large increase of business in the office during the past five or six years. The hon. member for Balonne asked what was the necessity for the alteration, or rather the re-adjustment in the department. The answer was given in the tables.

Mr. MOREHEAD: We have only just got them.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said they were of such an explicit nature that "he who runs may read." It did not take very long to ascertain their meaning. It would be seen that there had been a constantly progressive increase in the business under the Real Property Act, particularly during the last five years. That in itself was a sufficient reason for enabling the business of the Real Property Office to be carried on in such a way that it would not encumber the office. The Registrar-General had a great deal of departmental supervision, much of which was not really exercised by him but by the Deputy Registrar-General. With regard to what had fallen from the hon. member for Balonne, the new office would probably be filled by an officer at present in the department.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Hear, hear!

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that he mentioned that without in any way disparaging the hon. member for South Brisbane, who would make an excellent Registrar of Titles; but his name had never been mentioned in connection with the office; and he was quite certain the hon. member had never canvassed or sought for it in any way, nor aspired to it. Neither, as far as he knew, had the hon. member for South Brisbane sought for any other office under the Government. It was intended that the officer performing the duties should be one who was at present in the Real Property Office. That being so, there would not be such a large addition to the expenditure as the hon. member appeared to think; probably the increase would be £100 or £150 a year addition to the officer's salary.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why were we not told that?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the departmental re-arrangement was absolutely necessary at the present time. The Registrar-General should be relieved of some of those duties he was supposed to perform, as they to a certain extent interfered with his duties as statistician of the colony and other work. The hon. member for Balonne had taken exception to the increase on the Estimates, and said that the fees at the Real Property Office should be reduced. He was of opinion that those fees were remarkably moderate for the services which were performed to the State. If they looked over the schedule of fees charged by the Real Property Office, they would find that there was scarcely an instance in which there was any ground of complaint. The argument of the hon. member for Balonne on that point might just as well be applied to the Stamp Office, where also a larger amount was received than the working of the department cost, and insist that there ought to be a reduction in the stamp duties. They might carry that argument to an absurdity and say that, in any department of the State which produced more than the amount of working expenses, the fees should be reduced. Under the amendment of the Real Property Act which was passed a few years ago, the fees for dealing with real estate were remarkably moderate, something like 7s. 6d. or 10s. for obtaining a new title to land, the principal item in the cost of a transfer being the stamp duty. He was entirely opposed to the reduction of the tariff under the Real Property Act, believing that the charges were fair and equitable. He believed that a man who possessed property ought to contribute to the general revenue in proportion to the value of his property which he held under the care and protection of the State. The present Bill was one which would tend to render the department more efficient, and thereby expedite the transactions there, and, as hon. members were aware, expedition and security were the two great essentials in dealing with real property. He trusted the Bill would pass without any objection.

Mr. CHUBB said he was very glad to see the Bill introduced, not in regard to the question of creating a new billet—that was outside the question—but because he had for many years been of opinion that the system of having the real property branch under the Registrar-General was a great mistake. And now that it was proposed to separate it from his department, he thought that they might well progress at a much more rapid rate, and he was further of opinion that that branch of the Public Service should be placed under its proper head—which was the Attorney-General. As matters stood at present, when the Attorney-General's opinion or advice was required, the Registrar-General had to take it from the Master of Titles through the Colonial Secretary, which was a very roundabout way of doing business. He trusted that the Colonial Secretary, who he heard was overburdened with work, would see his way to place the Real Property Office under what he (Mr. Chubb) conceived to be its proper head. In the Bill before the House, there was a provision to the effect that office copies of transcripts of deeds registered in New South Wales should be admissible in evidence or proceedings before any court of justice, but there was no provision made for issuing a deed of grant in the name of a person deceased, as had been done in a short Bill in New South Wales.

The PREMIER: I do not think you can do that in this Bill. I hope to bring in a Bill to deal with that separately.

Mr. CHUBB said it could be done in one clause. By that simple provision they were enabled to issue a deed of grant in New South Wales in the name of a deceased person, and a great deal of trouble was thus avoided; and he would propose a clause to the same effect in the Bill under discussion. Whether the Bill created a new officer or not, it certainly gave him a new title, and he would be very glad to hear that the officer at present administering the Act (Mr. Mylne) would receive the billet. Of course the Government could appoint whom they liked. But there was no necessity that the Registrar of Titles should be a lawyer, for if he had the advice of a competent Master of Titles the work of the department could go on perfectly well and correctly. Therefore there seemed to be no necessity for adding another officer to the Service, if the gentleman who was now in charge was made the Registrar of Titles. He was very competent to discharge the duties of that office, as he had been in the office ever since the Real Property Act was in force, and had a thorough knowledge of that law. For those reasons he would support the Bill.

Mr. NORTON said he confessed he could not follow some of the arguments which had been used in favour of the Bill, more particularly the argument used by the Colonial Treasurer in reference to the reduction of fees, when he stated that they might just as well propose not to charge such high stamp duties, as to reduce the high tariff in force at the Real Property Office. There was a wide difference between the two; the stamp duties were revenue, but the charges at the Real Property Office were not a revenue tax. Offices of that kind, he held,

should not be conducted for the sake of making a profit out of those who had to use them, but the charges should be such as would enable the department to be worked without, in any case, any charge having to be made on the general taxpayer. If the fees were sufficient to cover working expenses that was all that was required; they ought not to be higher than that. There was one objection he had to the Bill, and that was in reference to the proposed division in the office. He believed it was impossible to divide any office into two separate branches without incurring a heavier expense than would be necessary in an office under one head; a greater number of clerks would have to be employed in two offices than would be kept in one office. He believed that the whole of the business done in those two offices could be just as well and just as conveniently done under one officer, if a greater number of clerks were employed than at present. There was no doubt that the system could be worked just as well, and very much more economically. The Colonial Treasurer had defended the charging of large fees; but he (Mr. Norton) maintained that if the effect of those fees was to make a larger profit, then a larger sum had been extorted from the people who went to that office than ought to have been. The high charge was an extortion, and an extortion which ought not to have been tolerated. He might say, referring to what fell from his hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, that he had heard of the report mentioned by him long ago, and had read it over and over again, and so had lots of other people. There was one matter he would like to refer to, which was a little outside the question, yet closely connected with it, and that was the placing of papers in the hands of hon. members immediately before Bills were received. There were papers which were not intimately connected with the Bill, but which would have a bearing upon it, which were only placed in their hands within the last few days, and yet they were supposed to know something of them and were obliged to give up a certain amount of time to them. It was simply impossible that they could consider all the papers which were placed in their hands, at once, and he might tell hon. members on the other side of the House, and on the Treasury benches, that there was one report which had been presented to members lately, in which there was a discrepancy of some £90,000 between it and the report which was issued last year. He remembered that, because it showed the necessity there really was for members to carefully look over all papers of that kind put into their hands; he should be prepared at any other time to tell them what that matter was.

The PREMIER: What is it?

Mr. NORTON said it was in the Commissioner for Railways' Report. He had simply noticed that there was a discrepancy of £90,000 between it and the report presented last year. He had not had time to go into details to see where the error was; but still it was there. A great many of those reports might have been presented to hon. members a week or two ago. The effect of delaying them was that they felt bound to give them some sort of attention, and had not time to give the attention to the Bills placed in their hands that they ought. He should oppose the second reading of the Bill, notwithstanding that it would be no use doing so, simply as a matter of principle, because there was nothing to show that the appointment was necessary.

Mr. ALAND said there was one matter that the hon. gentleman who had just sat down had alluded to, that had, he thought, been improved upon, and that was with regard to getting those reports. He remembered that the hon. gentleman, some two or three years ago, drew attention to the matter, and stated how much more convenient it would be if members could get those reports. The hon. member would acknowledge that there had been an improvement in that respect since. In reference to the Bill before them he did not think it had really been shown that it was going to entail any very large amount of expense upon the country. Although the business was done now, as he took it, under the headship of the Registrar-General, still the whole of the office-work was kept separate and distinct. There were in the office a number of clerks who were kept to their distinctive work. One set worked at the Real Property Office affairs, and the other part in the statistical branch. If he for one moment thought that the object of the Bill was to create a new office for some particular friend, he should certainly be very much opposed to it. He did not think that the report in question could have spread very far and wide; at all events, that very respectable newspaper—he said it in all sincerity—the *Daily Observer*, had not made mention of it in its "*On Dit*" column, and he gave that paper credit for generally giving the public all the items of news of things which were likely to come to pass. He agreed with the hon. member for Port Curtis in the remarks he made in referring to what the Colonial Treasurer said as to the matter of fees. There was certainly a great distinction between the fees collected under the Stamp Act and the fees which were payable for those real property transactions. He did not know what the cost of the Stamp Office was; but he could not help saying to himself the other morning when he went into it—he had some two or three pounds to pay and the whole transaction only took a minute or two, and there seemed to be nobody in the office except one gentleman and a boy—that the expense of keeping up that establishment must be very small indeed. They had to remember that those stamp duties were collected for revenue purposes, and they were supposed to pay the expenses of other matters which did not come within the scope of that Bill. He should support the second reading of the Bill, and was very glad indeed to find that the services of an old servant of the country were going to be rewarded in the present instance.

Mr. FRASER said he was very glad that the Bill had been introduced. When he first heard of it he was alarmed, thinking that in all probability it was intended to make a position for a legal gentleman; nor could he see the necessity for it, seeing that under the Act there was provision made for a Master of Titles. As to the question of fees, that was a matter which scarcely came within the consideration of the Bill. There were one or two things he should mention in supporting the Bill. It had always been a matter of perplexity to him how it was that those two departments came to be associated at all. What connection was there between the department of the Registrar-General and that of the Real Property Act? With the large business at present being done in that office, it was utterly impossible for the Registrar-General—even supposing he were conversant, and he did not say he was not; but supposing he were completely conversant with all the details of the Real Property Act—it was impossible for him to superintend all the transactions in the office. He was held responsible, but the work was done at present, with the assistance of a competent Deputy Registrar. They were not responsible. They were simply responsible to the head of the office, and he maintained that the responsibility should rest with the parties who did the work, and who ought to be paid for it. He was under the

impression that there had been a very great improvement in the time and manner of despatching business in that department recently; and when, as was proposed, the department was placed under a separate head—a man thoroughly conversant with the details of the office, and competent to perform the duties—the despatch of business might still be considerably improved. It did not necessarily follow that, because the two offices were to be separated, an increase in the number of clerks would be required. As the hon. member for Toowoomba had pointed out, there was no connection whatever between the work of the two departments, and excepting in so far as the despatch of business was concerned an increase in the number of clerks would not be necessary, though if the accommodation of the office was increased there would be fewer complaints as to the delays in doing business in the Real Property Office. He thought the time had fully come when the separation intended by the present Bill should be carried into effect, and he was really surprised to hear the opposition offered to it from the opposite side of the House. So far as he could discover, there was no solid foundation for that opposition. He agreed with the hon. member for Bowen that the Bill was necessary, and he hoped it would be carried through the House without alteration.

Mr. JORDAN said he was very glad to hear the Colonial Secretary, in referring to the Bill, say that the change it contemplated in connection with the Registrar-General's Office must not be interpreted in any way as a reflection upon the way in which the duties of that office had heretofore been discharged. He admitted at once that the increasing business of the Real Property Office, which, as the Colonial Secretary had pointed out, had doubled or nearly doubled within the last few years, might be a sufficient reason for the change now contemplated; and he was certain that if the change was not required at present in consequence of the increased business of the office, it certainly would be before very long. It was only a question of time. He differed rather from those gentlemen who had never seen that there could be any advantage in the connection of the two offices—the General Registry Office and the Real Property Office. There were very important advantages derived from the connection of those two departments. Though both had been conducted separately on the whole, there still had been advantages, which he need not take up the time of the House in particularising, arising from the connection of those departments. He was very glad to hear the Colonial Treasurer say that the arrangements which were in contemplation in connection with the change were such as certainly very highly commended themselves to his (Mr. Jordan's) judgment. The gentleman who had been in charge of the statistical branch of the Registrar-General's office was a highly zealous, energetic, and competent officer, and thoroughly capable of managing the statistical business of the colony. The gentleman who it was intended should fill the position of Registrar of Titles under the Bill was, in every way, a very competent person for the position, and a gentleman of whom he had the highest opinion. He was a very competent officer to trust with the administration of the Real Property Act; and he was especially delighted to learn that that gentleman, after, he thought, some eighteen years' service in the colony, was to be placed in the position contemplated by the Bill. An hon. member had referred to delays in the office, and he might say that the word "delay," in connection with the Real Property Office, had been in everybody's mouth for a great many years. There were reasons for it years ago, because there were then unnecessary delays in the transaction of public business in that department; but he took leave to say that all reasonable grounds of complaint in that direction had been done away with for the last six or seven years in that office. There had been no delays in that office during that period which were unnecessary, and any delays that had arisen during those years had been caused by a want of information on the part of lawyers, agents, and other persons having business to transact there. What used to take three weeks before had been, within the past seven years, despatched in three days, and what used to take three months had been despatched in a fortnight or three weeks, and there could now be no ground for complaint on the score of delay. With regard to the matter of fees, he rather held with what had been said by the hon. member for Balonne on that question. He thought the business of the Real Property Office in the colony should be transacted at the least possible cost to the public. On that ground, considering that the revenue of that office was so much larger than the expenditure, he thought the time had come when those fees might be reduced. They knew that the Amendment Act of 1877 did reduce the fees in real property transactions, inasmuch as transfers by endorsement were now taking the place of ordinary transfers, and that was a saving of 10s. on each transaction, as what used to cost 17s. 6d. cost only 7s. 6d. now. The fees on the releases of mortgages were also considerably reduced by the action taken by the Colonial Treasurer in 1877. He still thought there was room for further improvement in that respect. As a revenue of some £4,000 a year was derived from that office, over and above the expenditure upon its working, it was high time the fees should be reduced. He would heartily support the measure.

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

ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE.

The following members of the Elections and Qualifications Committee were sworn at the table, namely:—Mr. Aland, Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Jessop, Mr. Scott, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Buckland, and Mr. Foxton.

UNITED MUNICIPALITIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL—COMMITTEE.

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

On clause 1—"Repeal of section 6 of 45 Vic., No. 11, constitution of joint boards"—

Mr. MOREHEAD said that as the Bill would only affect two or three thickly populated constituencies, such as those represented by the Colonial Treasurer and the hon. members for Fortitude Valley and Bulimba, he should like to hear an expression of opinion from those hon. gentlemen as to the advisableness or otherwise of the proposed change in the law. If they took no exception to it, he certainly should not, especially as the Bill would not affect any other electorate beyond those he had named.

The PREMIER said that he would give an explanation of how this clause would work in respect to Brisbane. Suppose there were a joint board representing the Divisional Boards of Booroodabin, Woollongabba, Ithaca, and Toombul, the Shire of Toowong, and the Municipality of Brisbane. Brisbane being the largest of these bodies, its representation would be increased proportionately, subject to the specified limitation. By the Bill no one municipality could have a majority of the whole board. Of

course, the object of the Bill was to do away with the present rigid rule that all should have equal representation. He thought everybody would agree that in this particular instance it would be absurd that Brisbane should only have one vote ; and it would not be right that Brisbane should have more votes than all the other five ; so that the only question would be whether three or four would be the proper number. He did not think it mattered much. In a representative body people were always ready to give and take.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : No, no !

The PREMIER : Perhaps in this House sometimes they were a little angry and not disposed for a while to give way ; but the principle of give-and-take was the basis of all legislation. He was sure in a representative body of that kind they might rely upon the members as a general rule giving and taking. He had referred only to the case of Brisbane, but similar cases were bound to arise—in Rockhampton, for instance — almost immediately. Townsville was another place where the same question would arise.

Mr. NORTON said he had no doubt these boards would be quite ready to give and take ; but as a rule they would be more willing to take than to give. He believed the hon. member had introduced the Bill with a good object, and that it would have a good effect. The only doubt he had in his mind was whether there should not be some more definite limit to the number of representatives which it was proposed to give any one division or municipality. He thought that if the town of Brisbane were represented by three members it would be sufficient. It would save a great deal of inconvenience if the maximum number were specifically fixed.

The PREMIER : The object of the Bill is to remove that rigidity.

Mr. NORTON said he agreed that the present Act was too rigid, and he thought it was quite right to give greater consideration to the more powerful divisions or municipalities, but at the same time imposing a limit which could not be passed. He submitted to the Premier whether it would not be better to fix three as the greatest number of members which should be allowed to any one body under the Act. He hoped the hon. member would take the suggestion into consideration.

Mr. BEATTIE said the hon. member for Port Douglas had just mentioned a number that was submitted to the Colonial Secretary by the conference of chairmen of divisional boards who had had the matter under their consideration for the last eighteen months. Some eighteen months ago there was a conference representing the divisional boards in and around Brisbane to consider the desirability of introducing various amendments into the Divisional Boards Act as suggested by the Government. Amongst other matters brought under the notice of the conference—of which he had the honour to be chairman—was the desirability of introducing some system of general supervision over the licensed vehicle traffic. That matter had never been allowed to drop. They came to certain resolutions which were something similar to the proposals the Colonial Secretary had submitted in the Bill, only they defined the number of members. He might mention that the representatives of the divisional boards never looked upon the fees received for licenses as revenue. They were quite willing that the whole of the money received for licenses should be spent in supervision, believing that the ratepayers who contributed to the repair of the various roads throughout the different localities would thereby get greater convenience in the improvement of the vehicles and in other ways. Having expressed those opinions the conference put them in writing and submitted them for approval, asking the Municipal Council to join the various divisional boards, they of course being the largest receivers of license fees—in fact, receiving a great deal more than the whole of the divisions combined. The Municipal Council, no doubt thinking they were watching over the interests of the ratepayers, were afraid they were going to lose a large amount of revenue. The conference was very anxious to impress upon them the fact that they did not look upon these fees as revenue at all. The divisional boards themselves did not want the preponderance of representation on the board ; but they thought that if the city of Brisbane had three representatives it would be a fair proportion. The conference suggested—he thought the letter was sent to the hon. the Colonial Secretary—that there should be a representative from each division of the city—from South Brisbane, from North Brisbane, and from Fortitude Valley. Every portion of the city would then be represented, and they would have a fair share of representation. He thought, himself, that if this Bill passed the ratepayers would reap the advantage in better supervision over the vehicle traffic. At the present time the whole thing was in a state of confusion—that was, outside the city boundary ; inside the boundary, of course, they had their inspectors, and all the rest of it. The divisional boards felt that they were unjustly treated in the manner of carrying out the Divisional Boards Act. He hoped the Bill would be carried and put into force as soon as possible, because he believed it would be a great improvement on the present system. Although the hon. the Colonial Secretary stated yesterday that it would be better than a transit commission, his (Mr. Beattie's) experience of all committees had been that the duties were generally left to two or three, and he had, therefore, come to the conclusion that, when an executive duty had to be performed, the smaller the committee the better the work would be attended to. Therefore, rather than a large committee should be appointed he should prefer to see the whole matter placed in the hands of even one man. He would be an autocrat, of course, but still he (Mr. Beattie) believed that the work would be much better done under such a system than if they had a committee of nine or ten. It had been said, and very properly, by some persons, that if a transit commission were appointed it would run away with some of the money, but he had not the slightest objection to that, because if they carried out the business to the satisfaction of the ratepayers he considered it would be money well spent. Of course, if the gentlemen composing the commission occupied honorary positions, so much the better. He hoped the Bill would pass, but at the same time he thought, with the hon. member for Port Curtis, and also from the opinions expressed by various divisional boards, that, as far as the city of Brisbane was concerned, it would be well represented on the united municipality if it had three representatives.

Mr. CHUBB asked if it was the main object of the Bill to allow a body like the Municipality of Brisbane to have as many as half the representatives in the united municipality ?

The PREMIER : Unless there are more than three component municipalities.

Mr. CHUBB : In that case he would point out that this might happen. Under the Act, a chairman or president had to be elected—in all probability he would be the Mayor of Brisbane—

and in the event of an equality of votes he would be able, by the exercise of his casting vote, to carry anything against the other members of the board. If that was so, it should be amended.

The PREMIER : Read the Bill again.

Mr. CHUBB : It is quite possible.

The PREMIER : If there were only three boards—one a municipality, and two others—that might happen, but it was not going to occur near Brisbane. It was provided against by the words, "and if there are more than three component municipalities, shall be less than one half such whole number." If there were four component municipalities, three would have more members than the other one. It would prevent any one body predominating on that account. With regard to the proposal to limit the number to three, he thought the same objection applied to that as to fixing the number at one. He would give an illustration : Suppose there were three boards joined, perhaps not for the purpose of regulating traffic, but for constructing a main road, it might be convenient that the board should be larger than four members. It might consist of eight, four for the larger division and two for each of the others. If they limited the number to three, they would in that case have three, two and two, and practical difficulties might arise. Suppose there were seven component municipalities, it might be advisable to increase the representation of Brisbane. Seven or eight might be joined for the purpose of supervising the tramway about to be laid down, and many other cases that could be conjectured. He thought that with the safeguards inserted in the Bill there was no possibility of any one body having preponderating influence, especially as power was carefully reserved to the Governor in Council to regulate the matter. A more safely guarded system could scarcely be devised.

Mr. ARCHER said the objection raised by the hon. member for Bowen had occurred to him, and he had intended to propose an amendment, to the effect that the number of representatives should never be more than one nor less than half of the joint board, but he found it would not work.

Mr. FERGUSON said he wished to know how the Bill would apply in a case where there were only two component municipalities. For instance, about two years ago the Fitzroy Bridge, at Rockhampton, was proclaimed to be under the authority of the Municipality of Rockhampton, and only a few months ago it was again proclaimed out of their jurisdiction. The Government had taken no steps since to put it under the control of either of the Rockhampton municipalities, and it remained under the control of neither. How would the Bill apply in a case like that? One of those municipalities was young and had a very small revenue, and the other was old, having been established for twenty years, had a very large revenue, and expected to have more power than the younger one. Then, under the Bill, would the divisional boards in the neighbourhood, which used the bridge—it being a main road—as much as either municipality, be compelled to come in and share the expense of maintaining it?

The PREMIER said what the hon. gentleman referred to was provided for in the amending Act of 1882. It was a clause which he proposed himself, having reference to the joint control of roads and bridges. In the case of the Rockhampton bridge, either of the municipalities might be called upon to pay their contribution towards the cost of maintenance, and if they did not agree, then the matter could be referred to the Minister for Works, who decided for them. In the case of a bridge on a line of road or main thoroughfare, more distant divisions might be asked to contribute; and if they declined, that also was decided by the Minister in the same way.

Mr. FERGUSON said that was exactly the information he wished for. The divisional board declined to pay their share of the maintenance, and, as there was a young municipality situated between the Municipality of Rockhampton and the division, of course that removed them further from the bridge. If the Act had been put in force they would have been compelled to contribute.

The PREMIER : They may be made to contribute.

Mr. FERGUSON said he was glad to hear it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was gratifying to find that the House could extract a good legal opinion from the head of the Government at so little cost to themselves.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that, so far as the working of the Act was concerned, if the component municipalities were made up of more than three there could be no difficulty; but supposing there were three municipalities, and one of those was a town municipality and the other two divisional boards: the town would naturally expect to have two representatives, while the boards might have one each. In that case they would be equal, and the point raised by the hon. member, Mr. Chubb, would then come in. He should like to have an explanation from the Premier upon that point.

The PREMIER said that was a difficulty that might arise, but he did not think it was likely. He did not know of any instances where it was likely to occur. Of course it was possible, if the town had exactly the same number of members as the other divisions put together, and if also it was agreed to make one of the members for the town the chairman. Unless that was done the difficulty would not arise. The same difficulties arose now in municipalities where there were three members in favour of one man being chairman, and three in favour of another. It was a difficulty not to be overcome by legislation, and the only alternative was to allow a superior power to intervene.

Mr. BEATTIE asked what would be done in the case of there being a surplus? Suppose there were two representatives for the town and two for the other divisions, and one of the town members was elected chairman, power was thus given to divide the surplus as the town members pleased.

The PREMIER said something must be left to the members themselves.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 2—"Disposition of revenue of joint boards"—

Mr. BEATTIE asked what would be done in the case of there being a deficiency instead of a surplus?

Mr. MOREHEAD: They will not divide a deficiency.

The PREMIER said that was provided for by the 14th section of the United Municipalities Act.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—"Short title"—put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment. The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS ENDOWMENT BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS, the House went into Committee to consider this Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that clause 1—"Extension of period for double endowments to divisional boards"—be adopted.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that in his left hand he held the Bill, consisting of one clause of four lines; and in his right hand an amendment to be proposed by the introducer of the Bill, consisting of six lines. The amendment being rather larger than the Bill, and having been just put into their hands, he thought the Committee were entitled to some explanation from the Minister for Works. He (Mr. Morehead) thought the Bill was a thoroughly digested scheme—it might have been too thoroughly digested; at any rate, it seemed to require very considerable amendment. He should like to hear from the Minister for Works the reason for that change of front. Had he been bounced by the hon. member for Gympie? The thing was too absurd. They knew that that hero of a hundred fights was not one to be driven from his position. They knew that he was adamantine, and that when once he had put his foot down he would not remove it for anyone—not even for his colleagues; he would rather suffer loss of office—rather go over to the Opposition side, though that was the most distasteful thing he could do. Yet he had allowed the Bill to be tampered with, and they had now a second edition of it. That required some explanation. The proposed addition was very important; and yet the hon. gentleman had the presumption to ask the Committee to pass the clauses without making one word of explanation. The amendment had no doubt been offered to the Committee under pressure. The hon. member for Gympie had crushed the hon. gentleman—he had put him under the stampers; at all events, if he had not been absolutely crushed, considerable pressure had been brought to bear upon him. There were practically two members for Gympie; but only one winced under that statement, and he a great deal more than the subject of his crushing operation. There was no doubt, he repeated, that the amendment had been extracted from the Minister for Works by the hon. member for Gympie. He (Mr. Morehead) wanted to know why it had been brought in at all, and why, having been extracted from the hon. gentleman, it was not put into the hands of hon. members sooner, instead of just before going into Committee.

The PREMIER: It was circulated this morning.

Mr. MOREHEAD: There had been a great many things circulated that morning that had not reached the Opposition side of the House. At any rate, even if it were, it was not usual to circulate an amendment half as big again as the Bill. He thought an explanation was due to the House as to why that alteration was made in the Bill. It was quite true, as stated in the leading journal of the colony that morning—he had no doubt that the hon. gentleman, although he differed from him in many things, would understand that he alluded to the *Courier*—that it was a very bad thing, not only for the Ministry, but for the country, that the Ministry should bring in skeleton Bills to be clothed by the Committee of that House. No doubt it was a very bad thing for them to bring in skeleton or partly clothed Bills. He had no doubt that the hon. the Minister for Works could go back to the time when his ancestors used to go about in very short clothes, but they did not want their measures in Highland costume. Possibly the hon. member's love for Highland costume had induced him to bring in his Bill in Highland costume, and to now try to put a kilt upon it. If he did try to put a kilt upon it the Committee would, in all probability, insist upon fully clothing it, although that might be repugnant to the patriotic feelings of the Minister for Works.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that whilst no one in that Committee was surprised at the jocularity of the leader of the Opposition, he certainly was surprised that the hon. gentleman had not shown a little more decorum, seeing the respectable position in which he was placed. With reference to the amendment or new clause proposed, an explanation as to why it was introduced would be given when the proper time came. The hon. member knew perfectly well that the Government were pledged to continue the double endowment for a further period. He knew that perfectly well.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, he (Mr. Miles) knew that the question was pretty well discussed at the general election. With reference to the pressure said to be brought to bear upon him to induce him to give the same amount of endowment to those municipalities which were originally under the Divisional Boards Act, he thought the proposal was simply an act of justice and not any more. That provision would only be applicable to one or two cases, and he thought the bodies concerned were perfectly entitled to the continuation of the double endowment. He was quite prepared to give an explanation of the new clause when it came on for consideration.

Mr. ARCHER said that previously, in every case in which a new clause had been introduced into a Bill, notice had been given that it would be brought forward by So-and-so. The amendment itself stated that it was "an amendment to be proposed by Mr. Miles." There was no mention of a new clause, and everyone who knew anything about the practice of that Committee was under the impression that the hon. gentleman was to propose an amendment on the one clause—that, in fact, the Bill was to be continued as a one-clause Bill. He (Mr. Archer) wished to ascertain whether the Bill was to be retrospective in its operation, or whether all the municipalities which had been formed since the time the Divisional Boards Act was passed were to be included, because he did not exactly remember the date on which North Rockhampton was formed into a municipality, but he thought that that was the youngest municipality in Queensland.

The PREMIER said the new clause——

Mr. ARCHER: It is not a new clause.

The PREMIER said it was printed as a new clause, although by some error the word "amendment" appeared above it. The intention of the Government in bringing in the Bill was to give divisional boards an extension of the endowment; but it was pointed out in the course of the debate last evening that, since divisional boards had been established, whole divisions or parts of divisions had changed their form of incorporation, and that those divisions were justly entitled to some consideration. The new clause introduced merely carried out the intention of the Government to continue the endowment under the Divisional Boards Act for ten years instead of five.

Mr. ARCHER: I only ask if the clause is to be retrospective?

The PREMIER said the clause was worded so as to meet the case of divisions proclaimed under the Act which had since become municipalities.

Mr. FERGUSON said he was very pleased that the new clause had been brought forward. There were more municipalities than Gympie, although the hon. member for Gympie got credit for crushing the Minister for Works. There was the Municipality of North Rockhampton, which had lately been formed in his own electorate. The new clause was, he considered, a great improvement, and he was glad that the extension of the endowment to divisional boards was to be carried out, although he was sure the people of the colony expected more amendments to be made in the Act that session than would be effected by the Bill. The Premier, in a Ministerial statement last session, stated that he intended to bring forward the amendment embodied in the Bill, and also to introduce an amendment abolishing taxation on improvements. The latter promise he had failed to carry out. The Minister for Works stated when he introduced that Bill that he had written to eighty divisional boards asking whether they would suggest any alterations in the Act, but had only received about forty replies, and that no two out of the forty boards were of the same opinion; consequently he abandoned the amendments he intended to bring forward. But the boards were not the ratepayers, and he knew that the ratepayers expected the amendments promised them. They expected that an amendment would be brought before the Committee dealing with the clause of compensation, and abolishing the taxation on improvements. He considered that it was a wrong principle to tax improvements, as all taxation should be on the land. He would take, for instance, two selectors, selecting an equal area of land—say, for the sake of argument, 500 acres each—adjoining each other, with only a fence between them, and both pieces of land being the same as far as quality and value were concerned. One man was lazy and indolent and made no improvements, and the other improved his land, fenced it in, and perhaps cultivated one-fourth or one-third of it. As soon as he did that the valuator came round, and the next year his improvements were valued at two or three times the amount of the adjoining land. That was a wrong principle. The man who was industrious and hard-working had to pay for it. There were large areas of land in the colony at present owned by absentees; in one instance 1,000 acres to his own knowledge in one block; and that land was lying idle without any improvement whatever, while the colonists who improved their land by cultivating it, or fencing it, or making dams or any other improvements, were taxed as soon as the improvements were made; but the vacant land remained still untaxed. That was where he considered an injustice was done. He did not say for a moment that the revenue ought to be reduced. The members of boards were afraid that if the principle of not taxing improvements was adopted, then the revenue would be reduced to a minimum. That was a mistake; land could be so taxed that the revenue would remain as near as possible what it was at present. There would be no occasion for a man being prevented from improving his land by fear of being taxed. To tax improvements was to put a tax on labour, as the man who improved his land was taxed as soon as he made such improvements. He trusted that the Premier would carry out what he promised in January last—which was, that he would bring forward a Bill to deal with the question, which was a very vexed one all over the colony, especially in country districts. The sooner the matter was taken up the better; it might not be for a year or two, but he was certain that the principle would eventually become law. The injustice of taxing improvements was beginning to be felt every year more and more, and he trusted that that system would soon be done away with.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that he could assure the hon. member for Rockhampton at once that the Government had no intention whatever to abandon the idea of land being the basis of divisional board taxation. The whole of the divisional boards had been communicated with by circular, inviting suggestions for the amendment of the Divisional Boards Act, and, as he had stated last night, out of eighty divisional boards in the colony, some forty replied, and scarcely two agreed on all the questions put. The Government had consequently come to the conclusion that it would be better to defer the amendment of the Bill until next session, and they would not trouble the boards further. He had no desire to indicate exactly what would be the nature of the amendments, but there was one he might speak of: he might say he agreed to some extent with the hon. member for Rockhampton, that the land was the proper source from which to derive their revenue. The hon. member for Blackall had taken some objection to the amendment he had introduced, and he was free to admit it would have been better had it been put down as a new clause, but there was not very much in the mere phraseology. He considered it desirable that the amendment should be introduced as a new clause into the Bill. The leader of the Opposition charged him with having allowed pressure to be brought to bear upon him by the hon. member for Gympie. He pledged his word that he had not exchanged a word with the member for Gympie on the subject; that hon. member had, last night, thrown out what he considered a very good suggestion, and hence the proposal introduced in the amendment. He had the matter in mind himself at the time in the case of North Rockhampton, which had been a portion of a division, and had petitioned for a separation from the division. And in that case, when the accounts came to be adjusted it was found that that portion of the division was indebted to the other portion of it to the amount of £92. When he was in Rockhampton they brought the matter under his knowledge. They had a considerable work to do in the construction of a bridge over one of the creeks, and they had no funds with which to do it. He pointed out that he thought they were wrong in separating from the division. However, the damage was done, and he only considered it was doing an act of justice to allow them to be in the same position as they were in whilst a portion of the division. Hon. members would see that was only an act of justice which should apply equally to all, and it was the whole object which the Government had in introducing the amendment.

Mr. BEATTIE said there was one thing he wished to point out to the Minister for Works in reference to the new clause. If all the divisional boards were to apply to the Government to be brought under the Local Government Act, each board which had just come under that Act would be enabled immediately to charge the ratepayers 8 per cent. upon the capital value of their land and improvements, whilst under the Divisional Boards Act the rate was only 5 per cent. There was the difficulty nuder which they at once placed themselves, and he could hardly see how the Government were going to get out of it. If they held that all divisional boards had a right to come under the

amended Act it should be remembered that, when they applied to be brought under the Local Government Act, they would at once be enabled to charge 8 per cent. instead of 5 per cent., the rate chargeable under the Divisional Boards Act. He thought it necessary to call the attention of the Committee to that point.

Mr. NORTON said he did not know whether the hon. Minister for Works had moved the omission of the 1st clause of the Bill with a view of inserting the amendment he proposed. If he had done so he had not heard him, and if he had not done so he would point out that they were discussing a clause which was not before the Committee at all. He did not like to interrupt the hon. member in his speech, but the whole of his remarks were devoted to an amendment which he believed had not yet come on. He was under the impression that the hon. member intended that his amendment should follow as a new clause after the 1st. He would like to know whether, as the hon. member had proposed a new clause himself, he intended to receive amendments from other members of the Committee; because, if so, he (Mr. Norton) had a number of amendments in his mind which he was prepared to move. The hon. member had told the Committee just now that he did not wish to shirk any amendments that might be suggested, and he took that as an invitation to propose amendments; but if the hon. gentleman intended by his amendment to postpone further legislation upon the subject until next session — to postpone for twelve months the inequitable working of the Act— he should have said so. If it was admitted that the present Act had defects, it was surely better that they should amend them. He thought the hon. gentleman's amendment was an invitation to hon. members to propose as many amendments as they pleased. If that was to be the case, however, they would require time to properly consider amendments, and they should not hurry the Bill through. He would like very much to hear the hon. gentleman's intentions on that point. There was one amendment which would be a very desirable one to make, and that was the remission of taxation upon dams, wells, tanks, and such like. He thought there should be no rates charged upon improvements for the conservation of water. They would take, for instance, the case of two selectors, one of whom took up land which was well watered, and required no expenditure for the conservation of water, whilst the other took up land where there was no water at all, and he had to go to great expense in collecting it, and was then taxed for the improvements he made. If there was one class of improvements above all others which should not be taxed it was improvements for the conservation of water, and he should be quite prepared to move an amendment with respect to that if the hon. member said he was prepared to accept it. There were other amendments which he might propose; but if it was intended to admit any it would be necessary that time should be given, so that they might be made to fit in properly.

Mr. FOOTE said he was somewhat disappointed with the Bill when he first saw it; it did not come up to his expectation; but his disappointment had been somewhat modified by the statement of the Minister for Works that it was not the Bill under which the Government intended to deal with the whole subject of divisional boards. The present Bill was absolutely necessary, because the period of the endowment had almost run out; at the same time the electorates fully expected that the Government would bring in a Bill entirely remodelling the old Act. That Act was very unworkable, and very few of the boards understood more of it than those parts which came more immediately before them. There was a general impression abroad that the Act was not working well, and that the divisions were so small that nearly all the taxation raised by each board was absorbed in paying its own officers. Indeed, so large an amount was absorbed in that way that there was very little left for other purposes. Anyone travelling about the country could see that there was very little work done: not having any money, the boards were, of course, unable to spend it. There was, for instance, the Divisional Board of Bundanba, whose district ran round Ipswich. That board had a very small revenue, the country was somewhat thickly populated and fenced in, and pedestrians and vehicles were confined to roads a chain wide. Lately there had been continuous fine weather, but when rains set in those roads were so rotten that they became almost, if not quite, impassable; and the divisional board was powerless to effect any improvement because it had no money to do it with. With reference to taxation, the general sentiment outside was that taxation should be raised from land. The districts would be disappointed if a measure to amend the Act was not brought in during the present session, and he trusted that before the session closed the Government would be prepared with a comprehensive measure dealing with the whole question.

The PREMIER said the subject of the Divisional Boards Act was a large one, and he doubted very much, looking at the prospects of the present session, whether the House would have time to deal with the whole subject. But the Government were pledged to continue the endowment, and that matter must be dealt with during the present session. At the same time he had not given up the hope that during the present session they might be able to deal with one or two other defects in the Divisional Boards Act, of which, in his judgment, the system of rating was the greatest. Six months ago the Government prepared a Bill, which he had by him, dealing with the subject, but they were not certain they would be able to deal with it during the present session. There was very heavy work before them, and the business they were taking now, while all the members were not present, was only such as they anticipated would not meet with very serious opposition. If they had time during the session the Government would deal with the other subjects, especially that of the rates, and he hoped they would be able to do so. The present Bill would not interfere with that. If the Government had brought in a Bill dealing with the whole subject of the Divisional Boards Act, a vast field for discussion would have been opened up, and every hon. member would have been entitled to move amendments in any part, and insist upon their proper consideration; and probably they would not have been able to get the Bill through at all. Under those circumstances they brought in a Bill which they were certain of being able to pass, leaving till a later period of the session, if found practicable, the introduction of a Bill dealing with the other matters. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley had referred to the possibility of an increase being made in the burdens of the country, by turning a divisional board into a municipality, the maximum amount of the municipal rate being 8 per cent.; but the hon. member had forgotten that the maximum under the Divisional Boards Act had been increased, not to 8 per cent., but to 10 per cent.

Mr. BEATTIE said that "would not wash." It was 10 per cent. on unimproved property. In the Booroodabin Division they had lately made a new assessment. In one instance there were

three allotments valued at £100 a year, the assessment on which, at 8 per cent. was 24s. During last year those allotments were fenced in and a house built upon them, and the assessment was now only 23s. In a municipality, if a man put up a £5,000 building on his land, he had to pay 8 per cent. on both building and land.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was to be regretted that the Premier had allowed himself to be misled by his Treasurer. The hon. gentleman appeared to be getting on all right until the Treasurer whispered something into his ear, which he immediately seized, and which turned out to be nothing of the sort. He wanted to know from the hon. the Minister for Works, and from the Government, whether they were prepared to accept a continuous stream of amendments on the measure.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it appeared they were only to take the Minister for Works' amendment. The hon. member for Gympie made some remarks last night; and that heaven-born legislator seemed to have instilled new light into the Minister for Works, and so they got the proposed amendment. The Government said they would not accept any amendments at the hands of the Committee, but they were going to ram down their throats the Bill produced by the Government, and altered by them at the instance of the hon. member for Gympie, who had now apparently become the dictator of the House. The hon. member for Gympie was a new member of the House, and so far had not shown himself a very great legislator, though on the present occasion he had been the means of inducing, or compelling, the hon. the Minister for Works to bring down a new clause, which in the draft was called an amendment—an amendment on what, he did not know. It was certainly not an amendment on the clause. If, on the other hand, it was a new clause, the Bill must be postponed until they had it put in as a new clause. The Committee could not be asked to go on with an amendment upon nothing, and it was certainly not an amendment upon anything in the Bill. It was wholly and solely a new clause. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government might talk about printers' errors; but they had had too much falling back on printers' errors, even in the few days that the House had been sitting. It was always a printer's error, or a misreport, or something of that kind. He took it that, in amending an important measure such as that before them, consideration should be given to the whole question. The Government had promised to bring in a Bill to amend the Divisional Boards Act; let them bring in such a Bill. Both sides of the Committee were willing to consent to the 1st clause, but they were not willing to be gagged after that, and to be told that they were not to have anything to do with the amendment of the Divisional Boards Act. It wanted amendment in various ways, but they were told by the Premier that he would not accept any amendment. After it had been pointed out by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that the Premier was utterly wrong in the statement he had made to the Committee, he supposed he would withdraw it, although he had been assisted by his hon. friend the Colonial Treasurer. He (Mr. Morehead) took it that they were perfectly entitled to make the Bill a real amendment of the Divisional Boards Act, and, so far as they could, they would endeavour to do so. He was quite sure that any amendment brought in would receive serious consideration at the hands of hon. members on both sides of the Committee, irrespective of party, because the Divisional Boards Act was now a national Act, and belonged to no party; it was as national as the Constitution Act of the colony. To be told by the Premier that he would accept no amendments was simply to be told that he thought he had the weight of voting power on his side, and therefore would do as he chose. He (Mr. Morehead) did not think so. He thought there were many men on the other side of the Committee who were not so party-bound—when the question was not a party question, but one dealing with the internal government of the country, and one which had already been settled as to its primary principles—that they would not do all they could to improve the Act and make it as perfect as possible. Therefore he thought that, when the Premier told the Committee he would not accept any amendment, he made a mistake which would not redound much to his credit.

The PREMIER said he did not understand what the hon. member took exception to. The Bill was a Bill brought in to amend the law relating to endowments to divisional boards, and not a Bill to amend the Divisional Boards Act generally. The hon. member asked across the floor of the House whether the Government were prepared to accept amendments dealing with the Divisional Boards Act generally. He asked for an answer and got one—that the Government were not prepared to accept amendments of that kind. Any hon. member was at liberty to propose what amendments he thought fit, but the Government would not accept them unless they were within the scope of the Bill. Of course they could not prevent any amendments being proposed; they were bound to discuss them and come to a conclusion upon them. He thought the hon. gentleman was not asking the question for the sake of assisting in the passage of the Bill through committee. One would think that the hon. member intended to have the Bill thrown out, or render its passage impossible by loading it with amendments. The Government had not time to devote to the general amendment of the Divisional Boards Act, and they did not propose to do it now though they hoped to be able to amend it before the close of the session.

Mr. NORTON said he failed to see the force of the hon. the Premier's remarks about amendments not within the scope of the Bill, because if hon. members would go back to the last session they would remember that a Bill was introduced by the Government, and that, where amendments were introduced not within the scope of the Bill, the title was altered to bring them within its scope. With regard to what the Premier had stated as to the probability or possibility of an amending Bill being laid before Parliament before the close of the session, he did not think that if the present Bill passed there was very much chance of anything of that kind. Was it not rather absurd that when Parliament met they should hurry through a little measure of this kind, and afterwards bring in another measure to amend the same Bill? They were all agreed as to the necessity of doing something with regard to the extended endowment, and if at a later period of the session a Bill were introduced, and they understood that they were dealing with that alone, it would be a very simple matter to pass it at once. The present Bill was introduced at that early period of the session, and, after the number of promises made by the Ministry to amend the Act, he thought people would have very just reason to complain if they did not insist upon some further amendment than that now proposed. They did not want to obstruct the little thing before them; what they did want was to make it something more. If the Minister for Works had let it alone and simply passed the Bill as it stood, instead of trying to add something quite

fresh, and contentious matter too, possibly it might have gone through without any opposition. There were other amendments of far more importance than the proposed new clause, which affected very few people indeed; and why should they be asked to agree to this small matter, and pass over all the rest? He did not care whether the people of Gympie were concerned in it or not; they had no right to be considered more than the whole. He thought it would be better for the hon. gentleman to stick to the Bill as it stood. If he went on with the amendment he would undoubtedly get into a good deal of trouble about it.

Mr. SMYTH said he would not take much notice of what had fallen from the hon. member for Balonne, and the insulting way in which he had been trying to draw him (Mr. Smyth) out for the last hour or so; he would treat that with contempt, but in justice to the Minister for Works he felt called upon to state that, since the Bill had come before the House, he had not in any way tried to "get at" that hon. gentleman with reference to the amendment he had proposed. It was an amendment that affected, not only the municipality in which he (Mr. Smyth) resided, but many other municipalities throughout the colony. The hon. the leader of the Opposition appeared to be very imaginative. In the early part of the evening he imagined that a situation was being provided for the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan; and now he imagined that he (Mr. Smyth) had been "getting at" the Minister for Works. But he could tell the hon. member that he had not been sent down by the electors of Gympie to buttonhole Ministers. If they wanted that done they had sent down the wrong man. What he got he should get on the floor of the House in a straightforward manner. Several hon. members last night pooh-poohed the idea of the necessity of this clause, but when they came to look into the matter, and saw that shire councils would be affected by it, they coincided with it. If hon. members would look at the heading of the Bill they would see that it said "Divisional Boards Endowments Bill." It was not a Divisional Boards Act Amendment Bill, but one affecting endowments to divisional boards; and he thought it would suit the leader of the Opposition far better if he would go on with business, instead of grinning and making such a fool of himself as he had been making that evening.

Mr. MOREHEAD said of course he bowed to the superior wisdom of the hon. member for Gympie and admitted that he had been making a fool of himself, and he supposed he had been doing so during the many years he had had the honour and privilege of a seat in the Legislature of the colony. However, notwithstanding that he had been sat upon by the hon. member, who was given to excising one letter of a word in a manner that was not usually recognised, he should again trouble the Committee—even at the risk of making a fool of himself—at any rate in the eyes of that hon. member. What he wished to point out, as other members had done, was that this new departure on the part of the Minister for Works, in the new clause he proposed, appeared to have come from the suggestion of the hon. and learned member for Gympie. He contended that it was not an amendment, but a new clause; and, looking at it as a new clause, he would point out that the Committee had no right to consider the claims of shires or municipalities that had chosen not to remain under the Divisional Boards Act, and had altered their constitution altogether. They had made their bed, and let them lie on it. He objected to the taxpayers of the colony being taxed because those corporations had chosen to alter their position, and they were not called upon to consider them in any way. That was his view of the matter, notwithstanding that he might incur the wrath of the hon. member for Gympie. He was quite willing to pass the Bill as it stood, but he was quite unwilling to accept the proposition made at the suggestion of the hon. member for Gympie. It was a matter that was never contemplated by the Minister for Works when the Bill was introduced, and he could not justify it in any way. Let hon. members opposite not think that they wanted the vote of the hon. member for Gympie on that side. They would rather be without him. He was too dangerous a man to have on that side of the House. They did not want any dictators on the back benches on the Opposition side of the House. But, perhaps, he was taking up too much of the time of the Committee, in paying so much attention to the hon. member for Gympie. No doubt he was held in very great esteem in the place where he lived, and no doubt he was a very worthy member of society, but at the same time he went a little bit out of his way when he assumed the virtuous or dictatorial *rôle* in that Committee. At any rate, he (Mr. Morehead) was not going to tolerate it; he was not going to be cajoled or trapped as the Minister for Works must have been. He was certain that that hon. gentleman had not been bullied; and the hon. member for Gympie must have adopted very honeyed words of wisdom to get him to adopt the proposed new clause. But neither that hon. member's honeyed words nor his bounce would have the slightest effect upon that side of the House.

Mr. BLACK said he had not intended to take any part in the discussion, as he entirely approved of the object proposed to be attained by the Bill, but he thought that, when an amendment was allowed to be introduced by a private member on the other side of the Committee, there was no reason why a similar privilege should not be allowed to members on that side. The hon. member for Gympie seemed to have got somewhat excited on the subject. While at the beginning, he disclaimed that he had had anything to do with "getting at" the Minister for Works, in regard to the proposed new clause, he went on to admit that it was in consequence of the position of affairs at Gympie that it had been proposed. He (Mr. Black) repeated that if reasonable amendments—and he admitted that this was a reasonable amendment—were allowed to be moved on the other side, he saw no reason why other amendments equally reasonable should not be accepted from that side of the Committee. Looking at the title of the Bill, it undoubtedly said that it was to amend the law relating to endowments to divisional boards; and it was only right that the endowment should be continued, in order to enable the Divisional Boards Act, which had worked in the most satisfactory manner during the five years it had been in operation, to be continued. In fact, without additional endowment it was not clear that the divisional boards would be able to carry on at all. The discussion, however, had diverged from the intention of the Bill, and, to a certain extent, they had had a general debate on the working of the Divisional Boards Act. For instance, the hon. member for Bundanba had given them to understand that the feeling of the country outside was decidedly opposed to the Act. Well, he entirely dissented from that.

Mr. FOOTE: To the working of it.

Mr. BLACK: He considered that the Divisional Boards Act had been one of the most

successful and satisfactory Acts ever passed by the Parliament of Queensland. He defied any hon. member to point out a single Act that had given more satisfaction to the public at large; but he could well understand constituencies in the South, such as that represented by the hon. member for Bundanba—which had been in the habit of log-rolling and bringing pressure to bear upon various Governments, and which had tremendous advantages over the more northern constituencies—looking upon a Bill such as this, by which fair play would be given to all parts of the colony in proportion to their contributions and their requirements, with the extreme disfavour stated by that hon. member. He could say this: that the divisional boards of the North—and he appealed to the Minister for Works to endorse what he said—were conducted in a generally satisfactory manner; but he did think it strange that, when the discussion on the Divisional Boards Act was introduced, no notice should have been taken of the communications which the Minister for Works had received from the various boards. What was the necessity to coddle the boards and ask for suggestions if the Government had no intention of taking action on those suggestions. With the object of the Bill he entirely agreed, and he did not suppose it possible that any member of the Committee, on principle, could oppose the object sought to be obtained; but he repeated that it was unfair that an hon. member on the other side should be allowed to introduce an amendment on the Bill, and that hon. members on the Opposition side should be debarred from the same privilege.

Mr. GROOM said he could not quite agree with the remarks of the hon. member for Bundanba as to the working of the Divisional Boards Act. He could only say that in the district where he resided the divisional boards had been a source of very great good, and he knew that in many cases £100 had gone a good deal further than £1,000 would have done under the Government stroke. He believed that if to-morrow the people were asked to forego the right of local self-government they would not consent. With regard to the question of rating, that was not such a very easy matter to decide, because the principle of rating not only applied to divisional boards, but still more so, and in a larger degree, to municipalities. The drone of the community, who bought his corner allotment and left it to be improved by the industry of his neighbours, was let off scot-free as it were, but the man who desired to invest his money on building allotments, and improved his property, was immediately heavily taxed to the extent of 8 and 10 per cent., as had been already mentioned. On the other hand, if taxation on improvements was abolished, where was the money to come from? He knew himself that in a great many divisions improvements formed the most valuable portion of the taxation power of the boards, and if that was taken from them other powers of increased taxation must be given in return. The question was one which required very careful consideration at the hands of hon. members. Then, with regard to the amendment under consideration, he might be permitted to draw the attention of the Committee to this fact: that Gympie was not the only place where the proposed new clause would apply. The Middle Ridge Shire Council, in the electorate of Drayton and Toowoomba, formed the 3rd subdivision of the Gowrie Division. They petitioned to be made into a shire council; their request was acceded to, and, he took it, they would obtain the privileges embodied in the new clause, which would be nothing more than they were entitled to. In the division he spoke of he knew that there was such a state of impecuniosity just now that the board had been obliged to apply to the Government for relief, and of course they had been informed that none could be given to them, and very rightly so. They were told that the Government had the present Bill under consideration, and if the House consented to the extension of the endowment, they of course would have the right of coming under the amended Act. To that extent the Government were prepared to help them, and no further. He hoped that, in dealing with the subject, the committee would give it due consideration, because if, as he had said, the endowment was not extended, and the taxation on improvements were abolished, the means of raising revenue would be very small indeed.

Clause put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved the following new clause, to follow clause 1, as passed:—

> Whenever the whole or any part of a division under the said Act has been, or shall hereafter be, constituted a municipality under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1878, the amount of endowment payable to such municipality shall be computed as if such municipality had still continued to be a division under the provisions of the said first-mentioned Act.

Mr. NORTON said he thought that the Premier had overlooked the fact when he objected to other amendments being proposed, that this amendment was not within the scope of the Bill. It was an amendment, not to double the endowments of divisional boards, but to deal with the endowment of municipalities which had ceased to be divisional boards. He raised that question because he thought it was a very important one. If they accepted one amendment which was not within the scope of the Bill, then they ought to accept as many amendments as hon. members chose to propose. He thought he was right in saying that divisions that became separated, and formed themselves into municipalities, ceased to be portions of divisions; and that, therefore, any amendment which related to them was not within the scope of the Bill, which proposed simply to amend the law relating to the endowment of divisional boards.

The PREMIER said he had pointed out that the new clause simply carried out the intentions of the previous one, and every hon. member who was really serious about the matter knew its effect. Some hon. members seemed disposed to have an evening's amusement.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Yes, at the expense of the Minister for Works.

The PREMIER said the hon. member ought to aspire to something more becoming than having an evening's amusement at the expense of anybody. The 1st clause provided for an additional endowment, and the 2nd clause provided that that privilege was not to be lost merely on account of a change in the form of incorporation. Was there anything unreasonable in that? He knew of several cases where that provision would now apply, and he hoped there would be many more. The Bill might be summed up in the way he had said: that the double endowment should continue for ten years from the first establishment of the board, and that that privilege should not be lost because of a change of form on the part of any particular body, from the Divisional Boards Act to the Local Government Act.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the hon. gentleman had stated, addressing himself particularly to him, that it was the intention of hon. members on the Opposition side to waste the time of the Committee. To that he replied that, if there was any waste of time, it was through the crass ignorance of the Minister for Works and nothing else. The Premier's own admission showed that.

He said that the new clause should have been in the Bill when first introduced. Whose fault was it that it was not? Was it the fault of the Committee or the framer of the measure? He held that they had a perfect right to point out, in the first place, that the Minister for Works would probably not have been moved in that direction, had it not been for the impulse given him by the hon. member for Gympie; and, secondly, that the view that the amendment was relevant to the Bill was a contention set up by the Premier himself. He (Mr. Morehead) maintained that—and he believed the Chairman would also hold the same opinion—in accordance with the statement made by the Premier at an early period of the evening, that no new amendments would be accepted from either side that were not relevant to the title of the Bill. It had been clearly shown by the hon. member for Port Curtis that the amendment was not relevant to the Bill. It dealt with bodies that were outside the scope of the Bill altogether—bodies that elected to cut themselves adrift from the privileges they enjoyed under the Divisional Boards Act. They had completely put themselves under a new Act altogether, and yet the Committee were asked to subsidise them under the Bill. He was perfectly certain that the Chairman would rule that the amendment was not in any way relevant to the Bill. He would again deny the statement made by the Premier, that hon. members on the Opposition side were trying to waste time, and obstruct and annoy the Government. They were simply doing their duty as an Opposition in pointing out that the Government were making grave mistakes in two directions—first, in bringing in an ill-digested measure, and then, in attempting to introduce an amendment not relevant to the Bill at all.

Mr. NORTON said he would ask for the ruling of the Chairman as to whether the amendment came within the scope of the Bill. He thought he was justified in taking the Chairman's ruling.

The CHAIRMAN: I think it does.

Mr. NORTON said he was not satisfied with the ruling; and he would, therefore, move that it be referred to the Speaker.

The PREMIER: Is the hon. member serious in asking that?

Mr. NORTON: Certainly.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN having stated the point,

The SPEAKER said: I am of opinion that the amendment proposed by the Minister for Works is quite relevant to the title and the scope of the Bill. The Bill is one to amend the law relating to the endowments of divisional boards. The 1st clause extends the endowments for a period of five years; and the amendment reads—

"Whenever the whole or any part of a division under the said Act has been, or shall hereafter be, constituted a municipality under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1878, the amount of endowment payable to such municipality shall be computed as if such municipality had still continued to be a division under the provisions of the said first-mentioned Act."

I am clearly of opinion, therefore, that, from the nature of the new clause, it is quite relevant to the scope of the Bill and can be put.

The House went into Committee.

Mr. NORTON said, the Speaker having decided that the amendment came within the scope of the Bill, they must, of course, abide by that ruling, but he thought they might still raise the question whether, if the amendment was passed, it would apply to such municipalities as Gympie. That municipality had been a municipality for some time, and, when the form of its incorporation was changed, it severed from the Divisional Boards Act and came under another statute. He did not think—now that the municipality had been constituted by the wish of the people who resided in it, that was, the ratepayers—they could expect to be dealt with under the Divisional Boards Act. His own idea was, even if the amendment were passed, that under no possible circumstances could Gympie derive any benefit from the Bill, nor could North Rockhampton.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he should like to have some answer from the hon. gentleman in regard to the question put by the hon. member for Port Curtis. Was it intended that the Bill should be retrospective, and be applicable to the municipalities of Gympie and North Rockhampton, and the shire of Middle Ridge? Was that the interpretation put on it by the hon. the Minister for Works?

The PREMIER said the words of the section were—

"Whenever the whole or any part of a division under the said Act has been, or shall hereafter be, constituted a municipality," etc.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It is retrospective.

The PREMIER: The words were retrospective, and he did not know that they had anything more than words to express their ideas. When they used words of a retrospective sense to express their ideas, they intended them to convey the meaning the words expressed.

Mr. NORTON said that sometimes th Supreme Court decided that amendments passed by that House were not law. He had never heard it questioned that the Supreme Court had a right to decide what was meant by the words used in an enactment, and not what hon. members intended to mean by them. He doubted very much, although they might put it in formal words, whether they could make the provisions of the Bill apply to municipalities which had been in existence for some years. Perhaps he might put his question in another way—namely, whether, if the clause were passed, it was the intention of the Government to give the advantages of the measure to such places as Gympie.

The PREMIER said he understood that, in the case of Gympie, it was formerly a division under the Divisional Boards Act, but was afterwards constituted a municipality under the Local Government Act. Under the Bill before the Committee, double endowment would be payable to Gympie from the time it first became a division, not from the time of its being constituted a municipality.

Mr. NORTON said he would ask whether those places now got double endowment?

The PREMIER: Of course they did. When those municipalities were severed from the divisions they lost nothing, because new municipalities got double endowment for five years under the Local Government Act, and it was of no consequence to them whether they got it under that Act or under the Divisional Boards Act.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there was this difference: that the municipalities or shires in question—all those divisions which subsequently became the municipalities or shires—thought they would better themselves by the change they made; and had it not been for the measure under discussion they would have heard nothing about them. But now they wanted to get some portion of the public funds, and they wished to be put back into the same position as the other divisions. Had there been no proposal such as the present Bill contained, there would have been no proposal on the part of those municipalities to come back under the statute relating to divisional boards. He contended that those bodies which had elected to work under the provisions of another Act should

be punished. Why should that Committee be asked to make additional provision for the Middle Ridge Shire, which the hon. member for Toowoomba had described as being in a state of impecuniosity, and other shires or municipalities which were possibly in a state of impecuniosity also, and which had chosen to go out from under the operation of the Divisonal Boards Act? But now, seeing that they could better themselves, they proposed that that amendment should be brought in and embodied in the Bill. It was unjust to those divisions which had borne the heat and burden of the day that the people of Gympie, and others similarly situated, should come back under the Act and participate in the advantages of the present Bill. On the grounds he had stated he thought that the claims of those people were not worthy of consideration. The proposal was unfair and unjust.

Mr. SMYTH said that he did not see that Gympie should be deprived of its endowments because it was merged into a municipality. In the early days of Gympie there was only a local court, under the Goldfields Regulations, and when that court was changed they still enjoyed their privileges as under the old regulations. Any privilege they enjoyed under the Divisional Boards Act they had not abandoned when Gympie became a municipality.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he could not agree with the hon. member for Balonne in his statement that the new clause had been brought about by a desire on the part of certain municipalities to obtain plunder. He presumed that it would be accepted by hon. members on the opposite side, that those boards, or portions of them which had become municipalities, became so because the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1878 were better suited to the circumstances of those boards than the previous Act under which they were working; and that was the sole reason. Most hon. members knew that very well.

Mr. NORTON said he did not see that any fresh light had been thrown upon the subject at all. The hon. member who had just sat down, and the hon. member for Gympie, told hon. members that the ratepayers of certain boards wished municipalities to be formed, because by doing so they would be placed in a better position than they considered they were in under the divisional boards. Now an amendment was proposed to be made on the Act, they thought that they should have an advantage the same if they had remained divisional boards. There was no reason why they should at all; they simply wanted to have the advantages of the old Local Government Act and those of the amendment it was proposed to make in the Divisional Boards Act as well. They wanted two things; they were greedy; that was the long and the short of it. It was all very well for hon. members to get up and talk, as they had been talking, when they knew it was mere extortion. They were not entitled to the money; and if they wanted to get the benefit of any amendments that were made under the Divisional Boards Act they should have remained portions of divisional boards. They ceased to be portions of boards because they thought they would have some advantage. Let them have the benefit they sought, by all means; but they should not be taken into consideration when an advantage was given to divisions. The thing was an absolute absurdity. There were several members on the Government benches who remained silent, and with them he heartily sympathised; but those who had got up to speak had simply shown that what his side contended was correct. When those people asked for their municipalities they did it with the object of getting something better than they had, and now they wanted to go back again, and snatch up the endowments that were made for the benefit of the divisional boards. The whole thing was iniquitous. The Minister for Works ought to be ashamed of himself, and he believed he was. He could not get up to defend himself, at any rate; he left all that to the Premier. Anything that had been said in support of the amendment had been said by someone other than the Minister for Works, who presented it. He should like to hear from the Minister for Works, if he was not too much engaged in conversation, what his opinion was.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You cannot draw me.

Mr. NORTON said he had very great respect for the Minister for Works, and did not wish to see him get up and make statements that would not reflect any credit upon him. He was sure that what that hon. gentleman would say would make matters worse than they were before, if possible.

Mr. MELLOR said he was surprised at the arguments made use of by hon. gentlemen on the other side. It was an act of justice that they were arguing against. There was one portion of the Wide Bay district that had been formed into a shire council only this year; and would it be fair to deprive it of its endowment because it had been severed from the divisional board? He was surprised that hon. members on the other side should have so much to say respecting Gympie. They seemed to have a down upon Gympie. Gympie had done a great deal for the colony in the past, and he did not see why hon. members opposite should have such a down upon it, unless they had speculated money there and lost it. He considered that Gympie was entitled to the double endowment for the next five years.

Mr. NORTON said he would not say anything more about the Bill; he was content with having entered his protest. He had only risen to say that if the hon. member could not see further than to know that his remarks applied to other places than Gympie he was sorry for him. Those who listened to him (Mr. Norton) would have known that his remarks did not apply to Gympie alone: there were other places in a similar position to Gympie—North Rockhampton, and the Middle Ridge, Toowoomba, for instance.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2—"Short title and preamble"—passed and printed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with an amendment.

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

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT CONTINUATION BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill.

On clause 1—"Continuation of Act 45 Vic., No. 4."

Mr. MOREHEAD said he should like to have some statement from the Premier as to whether he was prepared to accept amendments upon the Bill. They had one which, in accordance with the usual procedure of the Government during the present session, was handed round to hon. members just as the Committee were about to consider the Bill. They had an amendment proposed by a supporter of the Government. Were the Government going to accept that amendment, or would they accept amendments from either side

of the Committee? The one before them was the kangaroo-rat amendment of the hon. member for Darling Downs. It was a very important amendment, he admitted.

The PREMIER said the Bill was introduced, as it stated, to continue the operation of the Marsupials Destruction Act. There had been a great number of objections made to the working of the Bill, he was aware, one of which had been particularly adverted to by the hon. member for Normanby, who referred to the great inconveniences arising out of the way in which the money was paid for marsupials destroyed. But to alter that part of the Act would involve an entire reconstruction of the present system. If they were paying public money through a board like that, they must provide for a system of audit, and to make that amendment would require a recasting of the Act altogether; which, for reasons already given, they were not prepared to do. So far as that amendment was concerned they were not at present prepared to go into it, and he did not think they would have time during the present session to devote a day or two to the discussion of the various vexed questions arising out of the present Act. Every time an Act of the kind had been brought in, there had been about as many opinions upon it as there were members in the House. He had assisted in the passing of two Acts of the kind, and having a good recollection of the trouble raised on those occasions, he did not think they were justified in doing any more on the present occasion than continuing the operation of the present Act, so that they might be able to deal fully with the subject next session. With respect to the amendment concerning kangaroo-rats, it did not appear to be a very large one, and was quite within the scope of the present Act. If the Committee appeared to consider it a desirable amendment he had no objection to it. He observed by the report of the Chief Inspector of Stock, which he had just laid on the table, and which had only been sent in to his office that day, that it was suggested amongst other things that they should include under the operation of the Act—native dogs, eagle-hawks, cockatoos, flying-foxes, and alligators; but he did not think that by any stretch of the imagination those could be included under the Act as marsupials.

Mr. NORTON: Why not pelicans?

The PREMIER said they were pouch-bearing animals, no doubt, but were not ordinarily called marsupials. He thought it would be better to extend the provisions of the present Act for a year, or two, as might be thought desirable.

Mr. JESSOP said that, as at present worked, the Marsupial Act was nearly useless. He hoped the Government would be prepared to accept amendments in the Bill now before the Committee.

The PREMIER said that what the hon. member suggested would involve the withdrawal of the present Bill, and bringing in another to amend the Marsupial Act.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why not do so, and do the thing thoroughly?

The PREMIER said the Government had not had time during the recess to prepare a Bill of that kind. Every clause of such a Bill would be contested, and it would involve probably the whole of a sitting week to get through such a measure. The Government were perfectly aware that the present Act was unsatisfactory, but they believed it was better than none; and there was not likely to be time during the present session to go into the matter *de novo*.

Mr. JESSOP said the amendments he should suggest would be merely verbal, such as substituting "clerk or secretary of the board" for "clerk of petty sessions," and "bank" and "board" for "Treasury" and "Colonial Treasurer." Having been a member of a marsupial board, he knew how difficult it was to obtain information, especially as to how much money they had to their credit. The board of which he was a member had recently tried to find that out, when they intended to strike a rate, and they were quite unable to get the information.

Mr. BLACK said he understood the Premier refused to accept any amendments—did he intend to accept the amendment from his own side about the kangaroo-rat? If he did, it would be the second time that evening that he had accepted amendments from his own side, and refused any reasonable amendment that might emanate from the Opposition. If that was the hon. gentleman's intention, he had arrived at an extremely unfair decision. The Premier had admitted that the working of the Act was unsatisfactory. When that Act was passed there was a wide difference of opinion about it, and he (Mr. Black) opposed it on the ground that it was extremely unjust that people in one part of the colony, where marsupials did not abound, should be taxed to pay for their destruction in other parts where they did abound. Until about ten minutes ago the Committee knew nothing about the working of the Marsupial Act, although it had been in force nearly three years. No one had had time to read the report, and to form from it an opinion as to the necessity of continuing the Act; and he supposed they might accept it, in the Premier's words, as a mass of information of not very much value.

The PREMIER: I did not say so.

Mr. BLACK said that in that case he would withdraw the remark. There was no information showing the amount to the credit of the boards, or whether it was really necessary to continue the Act for another two or three years. If he was correctly informed, there was an amount of £18,000 to the credit of the boards, which he maintained was quite sufficient to carry out the working of the Act, without any further assessment on the general public. The report now presented should have been laid on the table on the second reading of the Bill, so that hon. members might have satisfied themselves as to the necessity of a Bill of that sort. It was not the first time the Government had declined to give information to the House: the same thing occurred last night when the Stanthorpe extension was rushed through. On that occasion, the Minister for Works could not even tell them the distance from Stanthorpe to the border. In the report before them there was no information as to what the annual receipts were; they were simply asked to pass the Bill blindfold. He had another great objection to extending the Act. The inspector of brands had communicated with all the marsupial boards in the colony, for the purpose of getting information as to the operation of the Marsupial Act. That information, he gathered from the report, had been sent in in ample time for a proper Marsupial Bill to have been brought down. But nothing whatever had been done. What was the use of seeking for information if the Government did not intend to make use of it? He found that out of forty-seven boards only twenty-nine were in favour of extending the Act; thirteen seemed not to take the slightest interest in the matter; and five were against it. He would like to have a distinct statement from the Premier as to whether he intended to accept the one amendment about kangaroo-rats, and to refuse all other amendments that might be brought forward.

The PREMIER said the hon. member was entirely wrong in saying that the Government

had accepted an amendment from their own side, and had refused to accept any from the other. An omission was pointed out in a Bill introduced by the Minister for Works, and which they had just been discussing, and that omission was rectified by the Minister himself. With respect to the present Bill, the hon. member wished to know whether the Government were prepared to accept amendments. His reply was, that they were not prepared, in that Bill, to accept amendments to the Act generally. If that was to be done, the present Bill must be withdrawn and another Bill introduced. That was another question altogether. This was simply a Bill to continue the operation of an expiring law. If the Act was not continued, at the end of 1884 the boards would all cease; any persons who had killed kangaroos and had obtained certificates would not get their money, no rates would be collectable, and the trust funds would return to the general revenue. There were three courses open—to let the Act lapse, to continue it, or to bring in a new one to amend it. If the Government had plenty of time they might desire to introduce a new Bill—an amended one and a better one. He had no doubt it would have been done, but the Government had not had a very long recess; they had had very heavy work to do—and the House had very serious work to do during the present session—and so they had not been able to prepare a complete Bill. He had not seen this report till that evening; when he received it in the House he saw it for the first time. They had got through the last three years with the Bill tolerably well; it did not seem to be a very burning question, and he did not see why it might not be left over till next year. If hon. members were not satisfied with that, the other alternative was to let the matter stand over till a later period of the session, which might arrive or might not, when they should have time to deal with it. He did not think that time would arrive, considering the amount of business before the House. It ought to be dealt with this session, but unless they utilised the early days of the session, perhaps they might not be able to do it at all. The Government were not prepared to undertake to bring in a complete Bill, and he supposed hon. members did not wish to see the law lapse at the end of the year; so if they were going to continue it, why not do it now? As to the amendment of which his hon. friend the member for Darling Downs had given notice, it did not seem to be a matter of much consequence; another marsupial hardly seemed worth troubling about. He was not prepared to say the Government would accept it; he confessed he did not know much about the subject; but they would hear what could be said for or against the amendment. If any hon. member on the other side desired to propose any amendment, the Government would deal with it in the same way.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was not going to discuss kangaroo-rats with the hon. gentleman opposite, at the present time at any rate. What he was about to say was that the hon. the Premier seemed altogether to ignore the very important fact that the Committee were not dealing with the funds of the public, but with contributions made by pastoral tenants and others in the colony, and therefore he thought exceptional attention should be paid to those who contributed to the funds. It was not State money; it was all money contributed as an assessment by a large number of people throughout the colony. He thought the hon. the Premier assumed a little too much when he accepted the *rôle* of acting for the whole people of the colony in dealing with those funds. The hon. gentleman seemed to think the whole colony was taxed.

The PREMIER: So it is.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the whole colony was not taxed in the way that he put it before the Committee. It was primarily a levy upon the stockowners of the colony. There was no doubt about that, and the hon. gentleman could not get out of it. They had the Bill before them, and what was it after all? Simply a prolongation of an Act that was known to have worked unjustly and unfairly. If the Government had intended really to deal with the measure, they should have done it in the way the Premier himself suggested—namely, bringing in a measure that would deal with it fully, fairly, and thoroughly. A kangaroo-rat amendment would not amend the Bill. He did not know that any suggestion made by the squatter-paid Mr. P. R. Gordon would help it materially, except where Mr. Gordon endorsed what the hon. member for Normanby said last night. That was in the concluding part of the report, which said:—

"On one question there is perfect unanimity amongst all the boards that have responded to my circular letter—namely, that in the event of the present Act being continued the boards be similarly constituted to those under the Divisional Boards Act; that each board collect its own assessment, and open a bank account to be operated upon by the chairman and secretary, and into which assessment and Government subsidies shall be paid.

"With my experience of the working of the present Act, I see no objection to this, but much to recommend it. The present mode of collections and payments under the Act is very circuitous, and very frequently occasions vexatious delays and uncertainty; so much so, that many of those engaged in the work of destruction dispose of their certificates to storekeepers and others at a serious discount. In other respects the collection of assessments by this office, and the payment of scalps direct by the Treasury, is accompanied by much inconvenience."

That was almost word for word what his hon. friend the member for Normanby said last night. This was an important matter, and one that should be dealt with in the Bill, and might easily be dealt with. It was a much more important amendment than kangaroo-rats, with all due deference to his friend, the junior member for Darling Downs, if he might call him so.

Mr. KATES: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he apologised to the hon. member; he would call him the senior member for Darling Downs. He thought that, rather than sacrifice the Act, they should accept the Bill as it stood, because he admitted it had done an immense deal of good; but if it was to be amended at all the Government must accept amendments beyond that of the kangaroo-rats. If his view was accepted, the Government must, at any rate, deal with the question of native dogs or dingoes. Those should be included in the Act. In fact, kangaroo-rats might be included in the native dogs without very much harm being done to the country. The hon. the Premier was jumping to conclusions when he said that if a real amending Bill were brought in it would occupy too much time. He could assure the hon. member it would do nothing of the kind. He was perfectly certain hon. members, at any rate on his side of the Committee, had no very great differences of opinion with regard to the alteration of the Act; and he was sure there would not be very many differences on the other side. If the Government would not accept any amendments, and the Opposition would not accept the kangaroo-rat amendment unless they got others, he would vote for the renewal of the Act as proposed; but if amendments were accepted there were some

very important ones, more particularly that indicated by the hon. member for Normanby, that should be included in an amending Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said that what the hon. member meant by saying that the funds they were to deal with were not public funds he could not understand, considering that one-half of the whole amount expended in the destruction of marsupials was contributed by the general revenue of the country.

Mr. MOREHEAD : I withdraw one-half ; the other half you have nothing to do with.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said they all admitted that the present Act was defective in many respects ; but it was not so bad as to be inoperative, and people had no difficulty in working it if they were really in earnest. The payment for scalps had never been a real difficulty. In some cases, perhaps, storekeepers and publicans had exacted tribute from improvident, careless men who did not take care of themselves, but men who used reasonable caution were protected under the Act, and got full value for the scalps. The amendment with regard to kangaroo-rats was a wise one, as he knew that in the Springsure district those animals were at one time thicker than sheep, and far more numerous than kangaroos or paddamelons ; though whether they were so numerous now he could not say. Squatters had in some instances turned their sheep out, and turned dogs in to destroy the kangaroo-rats. It was well known that wherever dogs were destroyed the marsupials increased enormously, and the proposition that dogs should be destroyed was one to which no cattle-man would consent. Of course, the sheep-men would consent to such a proposal, because the dogs destroyed the sheep ; but if they wished to have dingoes destroyed they should do it themselves. In the district from which he came, the cattle-owners considered dogs their greatest protection, and, though they suffered a trifle by the loss of calves, that was nothing to what they lost owing to the presence of marsupials.

Mr. STEVENSON said that, while he agreed with the hon. member for Mackay that the Premier should show the same courtesy to members on both sides, he hoped he would not agree to any amendment in the direction indicated by that hon. member. He did not agree with the hon. member when he said that certain districts now under the operation of the Act should be relieved from the payment of the tax ; for even if districts were free from marsupials the people there should be only too glad to contribute some thing towards keeping them out. He was sorry the Premier could not see his way to accept an amendment in regard to the matter of which he spoke last night, and notwithstanding that the Minister for Lands had said he knew that many complaints had been made of the working of the Act. Most of the men who made their living by killing marsupials were charged 10 per cent. for cashing their certificates, which was a very great hardship. A clause had been drafted by the hon. member for Bowen, under which the payments could be made as by divisional boards ; and he would ask whether the Premier could not bring that clause into the Bill ? He hoped that at some future time, if not now, the hon. gentleman would make the suggested amendment. Complaints had been made not only by the men themselves, but also by members of the board, who saw how the men suffered. He had redeemed his promise by bringing the matter before the Committee, and he only regretted that the Premier could not see his way to accept the suggested amendment.

Mr. BLACK said he thought that some of the members most interested in questions which came before the Committee actually knew least about them. When the Bill was brought forward in the year 1881, one of the arguments then used was that the marsupial plague was a national calamity. He (Mr. Black) said that if that was the case it should be treated as such ; but the Act which it was now proposed to extend did not do anything of the sort. He did not, as was suggested by the hon. member for Normanby, object to his district paying rates for the destruction of marsupials ; but he did object to the money raised in those districts where the marsupials were not bad, going into the Treasury and remaining there. If it went into one general fund for the extirpation of the pest, he would not object ; but at the present time, there was a sum of £8,000 from two districts—the Gregory and the Burke—lying idle in the Treasury. That money was not being expended in the destruction of marsupials at all. That was the point he wished to draw attention to. He did not object to every district in the colony contributing to the marsupial fund if the money was only devoted to the purpose intended, but it was nothing of the sort. A first assessment was made, and if the money was not made use of in the destruction of marsupials it remained idle in the Treasury. In the report of the Chief Inspector of Stock, it was stated that—

"Of the forty-seven districts into which the colony is divided for purposes of this Act, two (Diamantina and Einasleigh) have not put the Act into operation, and in eight other districts—namely, Bulloo, Cook, Dalrymple, Doonmunya, Gregory, Murilla, Paroo, and Warroo—it has virtually been inoperative, for, although the boards for each of these districts have levied a first assessment, no claims have been made on their funds for marsupials destroyed."

As he had already stated, two of those districts had no less than £8,000 to their credit in the Treasury, which had not been used for the purpose of destroying marsupials. Therefore, he said that in bringing in a new Bill a different principle should be adopted, and the whole colony should, if necessary, be assessed for the destruction of marsupials. Let the matter be treated as a national calamity, and let them set to work to destroy the marsupials, and not insist upon contributions from the public, which simply remained as so much dead money in the Treasury.

Mr. KATES said, on the second reading of the Bill he stated his intention of introducing a new clause to include the kangaroo-rat as a marsupial. That animal was very destructive in the agricultural portions of the colony ——

Mr. NORTON rose to order. He submitted that the hon. member was not in order in discussing an amendment he intended to propose before the question under discussion had been disposed of.

The CHAIRMAN said it would be more convenient for the hon. member for Darling Downs to confine himself, at present, to the purposes of the Bill, and discuss his amendment when it came on.

The PREMIER said, in discussing a Bill of that kind, which was composed of only one clause, a certain amount of latitude must be allowed to hon. members in suggesting amendments. There might be very good reasons shown why the Bill should not be passed without amendment. Hon. members might be allowed to point out what they considered necessary amendments.

Mr. KATES said he understood the hon. member for Mackay to suggest that those districts which were not afflicted with kangaroos should be exempted from the provisions of the

Bill. Well, he remembered that twenty years ago it was quite an unusual thing to see a kangaroo in his district; ten years ago they became numerous, and, if the Marsupials Destruction Act had not been introduced in 1877, he had no doubt that the district the hon. member represented would have been swarmed with kangaroos. To show that the Marsupials Destruction Bill had been a beneficial one, he had only to refer to the report sent in by Mr. Gordon, from which it appeared that the kangaroos and wallaroos destroyed under the Act of 1887 amounted to 1,171,427; while those destroyed under the Act now in force, up to December, 1883, amounted to 786,101, making a total of 1,957,528. He thought those figures spoke for themselves, and showed that the Act had been one of national benefit, and had, so far, worked very well. If he might be allowed to make reference to his proposed new clause, he would call the attention of the hon. members to the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881. Under clause 5 of that Act, it was provided that no owner of less than 500 head of cattle or 2,500 sheep in any district should be qualified to be a director of the board, and no owner of less than 100 head of cattle or 500 sheep should have a vote. Now, on the old maxim that those who were called upon to pay taxes should also have a right to record their votes, he thought that all persons who were called upon to pay this tax should have a choice in the representation. At present farmers and selectors who were owners of 20 head of cattle and 100 sheep had no right to vote, although they were called upon to contribute towards the marsupial fund, and for those persons he asked protection in this way: A bonus had been allowed for the destruction of kangaroos, which had not done much harm to the farmers in the agricultural portions of the colony, but the kangaroo-rat, as he pointed out yesterday, had proved very destructive, especially to seeds. As soon as maize and wheat and barley were sown, those pests scratched the seeds out of the ground and destroyed them. He also saw in the report of the Chief Inspector of Stock that some of the marsupial boards recommended that kangaroo-rats should be included as marsupials, the rate suggested for their destruction being 2d. each. The three boards he referred to were Glengallan, Jondaryan, and Wambo. He should not have attempted to bring forward his new clause had he not been thoroughly convinced that farmers were suffering very great hardships on account of that particular pest; and, if he were not out of order, he would on this occasion move his new clause, which was to the following effect:—

That the term "marsupial" in the said Act shall include "kangaroo-rat." The bonus payable in respect of the scalp of the kangaroo-rat shall be 2d.

The CHAIRMAN said the hon. member would be out of order in moving a new clause before the one under consideration was disposed of.

Mr. ARCHER said he was not going to enter into the whole question, but he must say that if they were going to introduce the kangaroo-rat into the Bill he would certainly try and add another marsupial — because nearly all the mammals of Australia were marsupials: he referred to the flying-fox. Some time ago the Farmers' and Graziers' Society of Rockhampton —who belonged, of course, to the electorate he had the honour of representing—met together and determined to draw up a petition for the consideration of the House, asking it in its wisdom to adopt some means by which the greatest pest of the small farmers and fruit-growers could be suppressed. He thought the flying-fox an infinitely greater pest, and one which did much more harm than the unfortunate kangaroo-rat. In one night an orchard on which a man depended largely for his living might be utterly ruined. He himself had an orchard, and the flying foxes, beginning with bananas, had gradually acquired a taste for all other kinds of fruits, until they now actually scooped out the oranges and left the skins hanging on the trees. If hon. gentlemen were going to move amendments on the Bill—and seeing what the Premier had said, he did not think it desirable—he should certainly bring pests of which he had spoken under the notice of the Committee. He could assure the hon. member for Darling Downs that the matter was not so simple as he thought, nor could it be so easily dealt with. He had not yet received the petition he had mentioned, but when he did he was in duty bound to bring it under the notice of the House as an expression of opinion from his own electors. He repeated again that, if the amendment of the hon. member for Darling Downs was taken into consideration, he should certainly expect equal consideration to be given to a pest which did a great deal more damage than people were aware of.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he would take the opportunity of saying that, as a representative of an agricultural constituency, he intended to support the clause suggested by the hon. member for Darling Downs. Referring to what fell from the hon. member for Blackall, he did not see how he could introduce flying-foxes into the Bill, and for this reason: that the hon. member for Darling Downs asked that his constituents might be relieved of the kangaroo-rat pest, on the ground that those men contributed to the funds under the Act, whereas fruit-growers contributed nothing. As the funds were entirely for the relief of graziers and selectors who contributed to them, he thought they should be reserved for their use.

Mr. ARCHER said he was astonished at the hon. member showing such ignorance on the subject. There was not a single man in the Blackall district who cultivated an orchard who was not also a selector. The two occupations were combined; a man might have a few cattle and a small farm, and still expect to get £50 or £60 out of his orchard in the year. Those men were really selectors, and paid into the funds according to the stock they kept.

Mr. GRIMES said he was very glad to see there were some hon. members on the other side who could look beyond stock and stations. The hon. member for Balonne sneered at the idea of bringing the kangaroo-rat under the operation of the Act, but if he had any interest among farmers he would have found that they were a great pest. The farmers were contributors to the funds under the Act, as good contributors as the pastoral tenants. There was another animal which he thought it would be well to introduce into the Bill—namely, the bandicoot. The kangaroo could be kept out by means of fencing and wire-netting, but the bandicoot got through the very smallest crevice, and was equally destructive to crops. It took the opportunity when the various seeds were sown to rake them up again, and it was not uncommon for a farmer, when he sowed his seed one day, to come the next and find half of it gone and his labour lost. He hoped if the amendment was to be accepted by the Premier that he would consent to include bandicoots.

Mr. STEVENS said they were getting into rather a bad way of discussing Bills, and he hoped it was not going to continue all through the session. Instead of allowing the 1st clause to pass, and discussing amendments on their merits, hon. members were making second-reading speeches. If they went on in that way, they

would not only have to sit on Fridays, but on Mondays as well; and he was not prepared to remain there all the week. He thought they might really get to work. As for asking the Premier to allow amendments to be put, neither the Premier nor anyone else could prevent them being put.

The PREMIER said that, after the discussion that had taken place, he thought it better that the period during which the Act should remain in force should be still further limited. He proposed, therefore, to substitute "five" for "six" in the 7th line, making the year 1885 instead of 1886. That would necessitate the question being brought up again next session. The Act wanted a good deal of revising, and he was quite sure, from the discussion which had just taken place, that it would be impossible to do so during the present session.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that hon. members on the Opposition side were quite willing to accept the proposition of the Premier on condition that no amendment be accepted from either side. He did not see how any of the proposed amendments could be accepted in the measure as it now stood; but if one was adopted there would be a host of others. In bringing forward an amended measure next session, he hoped the Premier would recognise the great evil mentioned by the hon. member for Normanby and endeavour to obviate it.

Question — That the word "five" be substituted for "six"—put and passed; and clause, as amended, agreed to.

On clause 2— "Short title"—

Mr. KATES said he would not press the new clause he intended to move. He took that course on the assurance of the Premier, that next session, when an amending Bill was brought forward, he should have an opportunity of bringing the matter forward.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment, said that the private business to-morrow was chiefly of a formal character, and would only take a short time. He hoped, therefore, that some progress would be made with two Government Bills; one had been read a second time that evening, and the other was the Officials in Parliament Bill. He did not propose to go any further than that.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes to 10.