

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 23 July, 1884.

Gympie Gas Company.—Questions.—Motion for Adjournment.—Deeds of Grant and Leases to Deceased Persons.—Public Officers Fees Bill—third reading.—Formal Motions.—Members Expenses Bill.—New Guinea and Pacific Jurisdiction Contribution Bill.—Proposed Federation of Australasia.—Insanity Bill—second reading.—Message from Legislative Council.—Triennial Parliaments Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

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

GYMPIE GAS COMPANY.

Mr. SMYTH presented a petition from the directors of the Gympie Gas Company, and stated that all the forms required by the House had been duly complied with.

Petition received.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. ARCHER asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. Is there any truth in the report contained in the *Telegraph* newspaper, that it is the intention of the Government to sell or lease, for wharfage sites, any part of the river-bank below the Alice-street ferry?

2. If there is any truth in the report, what is the arrangement made?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. W. Griffith): Which ferry does the hon. gentleman mean by the Alice-street ferry? There is a ferry at each end of Alice street.

Mr. ARCHER: I refer to the ferry near this House. We know there is wharfage all the way below the other ferry. The hon. gentleman knows that perfectly well.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: The only suggestion that has been made with respect to the leasing of any land below the Alice-street ferry is with regard to the lease of the river-bank at the back of Parliament House, but no conclusion has been come to on the subject. The Government have never entertained any idea of leasing any other portions of the river-bank below the ferry referred to.

Mr. JESSOP asked the Minister for Works—
Why was the Surveyor removed from the work of the Survey of the proposed Railway from Dalby to the Bunya Mountains?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that he would ask the hon. gentleman to postpone his question till to-morrow, as the Minister for Works was unavoidably absent, and he had not received any information on the subject.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. STEVENS said he wished to bring forward a subject which he considered of great national importance, and would conclude with a motion. He had brought up the same subject last year—the rabbit pest—and then understood the Premier to say that the matter should receive the consideration of the Government; but the session was so very short, and Ministers had such a great press of business, that he presumed it had escaped the Premier's memory. The danger was greater now than it was then. During his last visit to Victoria he took care to visit the western districts, which he had known very well in past years, to see how far the pest had extended in those districts. He found that the country was in a far more serious state than it was two years ago. To his certain knowledge there were now many thousands of acres of first-class pastoral land completely given up to the rabbits, and also thousands of acres of first-class agricultural land. There was one portion of the district generally known as Allan's Forest. Years ago there was hardly an acre of that which was not taken up by farmers, and a very large amount of produce was annually returned from it, and many holders of land there had spent thousands and thousands of pounds on it. Some hon. members could bear him out when he referred to one estate on Colac, Victoria, containing 25,000 acres. Three years ago the efforts to exterminate the rabbits there had cost £1 per acre; that was £25,000 for that one place. There was another property of about 30,000 acres where the cost had been about 17s. an acre, and the rabbits were not got rid of yet. The pest was not much more than 100 miles from the Queensland border, and as the average rate of travelling of rabbits was about seventy or eighty miles per annum, they would in the course of something over a year, under ordinary circumstances, enter Queensland. The colony which had suffered most by the pest was New Zealand; South Australia had also suffered much. He had some extracts which he thought it would not be a waste of time to read to the House. The first was from the report of the operations of the Crown Lands Department for the eradication of the rabbit pest in Victoria. He would not read the whole of the reports, but merely take the most particular parts of them:—

"Large quantities of rabbit skins, ears, and scalps were purchased by the shire councils, the department having paid subsidies during the period above mentioned on 129,943 dozen, equal to 1,451,316 rabbits, and 727 wild dogs. The principal poison used, and that which has been found the most effective, is bisulphide of carbon, 42,000 lbs. of this chemical having been required; 3½ tons of arsenic, lesser quantities of phosphorised oats and phosphorised wheat, etc., have also been distributed over Crown lands.

"In addition to the expense incurred by private owners, shire councils, and the Government, in destroying the pests, the great depreciation in the value of land and its grazing capabilities has to be considered. For instance, the stony rises (mentioned in first part of this article), consisting of about 21,000 acres, and surrounded by some of the finest grass land in Victoria, have been rendered of little value except for rabbits, the owners of the land obtaining a small rental from trappers; and about 4,000 acres were, some while back, disposed of at the low figure of 10s. per acre. In the discussion in Parliament on the introduction of the Mallee Pastoral Leases Act it was clearly pointed out that the country (12,000,000 acres) affected by the Bill had been rendered almost useless and unin-

habitable through the damage caused by the ruthless invader. Stations on which smiling homesteads, fine orchards, and other improvements had a few years back existed were fallen into ruin, and deserted by all living creatures except the rabbit. Here, where the grass and saltbush in 1875 were sufficient for nearly 700,000 sheep, enough did not grow in 1882 for one-seventh of that number; the loss during the past five years being estimated as at least three-quarters of a million sterling, besides £40,000 decrease to Government in rents, and £20,000 expended in destroying the pests. To illustrate the damage here I cannot do better than attach the particulars given of a few stations in the above discussion."

Each of the stations mentioned was in a district that he knew well, and he could bear out all that was said in the report.

"Year, 1877: Brim Station carried 33,000 sheep, rental £500; in 1879, 10,000 only; run abandoned; relet under grazing license for £56. Wonga and Nipo, once carrying 20,000 sheep, rental £400; now not a sheep on the run, which was also abandoned, and relet for £20. Lake Hindmarsh carried, in 1877, 33,000 sheep; lost 25,000 in two years; rent £700, now £72. Corong, 1877: 36,000 sheep, now 3,000; rent £1,050, now £150. And several others which were mentioned as being in an equally bad position.

"In the years 1875 and 1876 the production of wool in the mallee country was about 5,000 bales—value, £100,000. In 1882 this had fallen to 900 bales, worth, say, £18,000. Eighteen runs in this district in the year 1878 yielded 1,700 bales; in 1882 only 332 bales. The runs were all abandoned, and the land held from Government under grazing licenses at an almost nominal rent by persons who trusted that something would be done to improve the tenure under which the land could be held, and give them an opportunity and sufficient inducement to endeavour by combined action to destroy the rabbit pest, and render the land once more fit for profitable occupation. Whether the lengthened tenure now given to this part of the colony will enable the desired result to be achieved remains to be seen.

"During the past three years the Government has expended about £30,000 in Victoria on the extirpation of the rabbit, the principal means used being poison, such as phosphorised oats and wheat, arsenic mixed with bran and chaff, and bisulphide of carbon. The various shire councils in the badly infested districts have also adopted similar means, though in the majority of cases the Rabbit Act has not been strictly enforced, many of the shires not being in a position to incur the extra expense necessary to do so. In addition to the means above mentioned, the councils have arranged for the purchase of rabbit skins or ears and scalps, and have been assisted by the Government to the extent of a bonus of 3d. per dozen on all skins or ears and scalps purchased by them. From reports published at various times in the papers, and inquiries made, the number of rabbits destroyed has been considerable, at least 157,000 dozen, or equal to 1,884,000 scalps and ears and skins being paid for in less than two years, the St. Arnaud and Swan Hill Shires being the largest purchasers.

"In the Colac and Camperdown district a preserving factory was started some two years back, and operations carried on with vigour, the factory working each year for about six months, from March to October, and during that period purchased from 750,000 to 1,000,000 rabbits, the price paid being about 2s. 6d. per dozen. These rabbits are nearly all obtained from the stony rises and surrounding districts, as they cannot be sent to the factory in proper condition from any great distance.

"The sum voted this year by Parliament for rabbit extirpation is £10,000; and I learn from the Sydney papers that in New South Wales no less than £74,000 has been voted for the same work; and in South Australia the amount is £30,000. So that it will be seen Victoria is by no means the greatest sufferer, more especially as she is at the expense of labour and material on Crown lands in pastoral occupation as well as Crown lands unoccupied.

"The number of skins exported from Victoria during 1883, as near as can be ascertained, was 4,000,000, and the area of land more or less infested is about 20,000,000 acres."

There was one other article that he would like to read, and that was on "The Rabbit Nuisance in New Zealand." It was an extract from an article in the *Sydney Mail*, and was as follows:—

"Mr. C. D. V. Teschemaker, of New Zealand, a gentleman who takes a deep interest in pastoral affairs, has recently devoted some attention to the rabbit nuisance. According to calculations, which he has made carefully, the losses consequent upon the presence of the rabbit

in New Zealand form a total of not less than £1,700,000 annually. In ten years the losses have amounted to £10,000,000. The figures set forth in the following table very clearly show that there is lack of pastoral progress:—

Year.	Land in Artificial Grasses.	Sheep.	Value Wool Exported.	Value Rabbit Skins Exported.
1874	1,181,369	11,704,653	£2,832,695	£1,578
1875	1,434,982	...	3,303,155	3,913
1876	1,819,831	...	3,335,816	4,418
1877	2,202,616	...	3,653,938	8,638
1878	2,607,839	13,069,388	3,292,807	33,460
1879	2,807,911	...	3,126,169	46,759
1880	3,341,289	...	3,169,300	66,976
1881	3,556,949	12,985,035	2,909,760	81,774
1882	3,938,069	...	3,118,554	88,725
1883	4,322,562

"A glance at the above will show that the efforts in the direction of increasing the products of the country have not been successful. There is a large increase in grasses, but no corresponding increase in production.

"In reviewing the results aimed at from the year 1874 to 1881, Mr. Teschemaker says:—What might have been expected to be the result, had no enemy been working against us, may be stated thus:—An increase in artificial grasses of 2,375,589 acres, estimating the carrying capacity at three sheep to an acre (allowing the country in its natural state to carry one sheep to two acres), ought to be followed by an increase of 5,938,950 sheep, and the increased value of export of wool, at 4s. 9d. per head, would be £1,584,698. The returns would then stand thus:—

—	Land in Artificial Grasses.	Sheep.	Value Wool Exported.
1874	1,181,369	11,704,353	£2,834,695
1881	3,556,949	18,924,035	4,494,458

"It appears that so troublesome have the rabbits become that 50,000 acres of the Wakatipu District cannot be leased, and, at late sales of leases, runs which have commanded as much as 1s. 9d. per head of sheep carried, realised only 10½d. per sheep."

If it had not been for the rabbits there should have been an increase of nearly 600,000 sheep, and an increase of about £1,500,000 in the value of the wool over and above what was actually exported. Those reports only referred to runs which had been ruined or partly ruined by the pest, and not to the farms destroyed or abandoned. It was very much to be regretted that someone had not taken up the question from a farmer's point of view and shown what the losses of farmers had been, as he believed they must have been quite as much as those of the squatters. A number of gentlemen in Victoria had turned their attention to the matter with the view of discovering some method of destroying the rabbits, and several methods had been suggested and tried, among them being the plans of poisoning, by means of phosphorised oats, and of smothering the pest by forcing noxious fumes into the burrows. But he thought the best way was to try prevention. Prevention was better than cure, and it was not quite certain whether there was any effective cure, or whether the rabbits could be exterminated. In New South Wales, in the district of Riverina, where stock of all kinds had perished by thousands, the rabbits were still thriving; they seemed to be able to live without water, and with very little food of any sort. They made their burrows in cracks in the ground, that it was dangerous for a man to ride over, and were going on increasing in spite of flood, drought, fire, or anything else. If the Government would authorise the expenditure of a few thousand pounds it would be money very well spent. The best method of keeping the

pest out of the colony would be by fencing the border, and the cost of that would be a mere nothing compared with what would have to be incurred in extirpating the rabbits when once they got a footing in the colony. The first cost would be for wire netting and fencing and the pay of a certain number of boundary riders—placing so many miles under the charge of each man—and would only amount to a few thousand pounds. In New Zealand, the loss by rabbits was £1,700,000 annually. If it was found so difficult to keep down rabbits in a tolerably thickly populated country, what would it be in Queensland, where the population was so scattered? He had heard it stated that rabbits could not obtain a footing in Queensland, as the soil and climate were not suitable for them. He (Mr. Stevens) had never yet seen the soil that a rabbit could not find a hole in. They flourished in all parts of Victoria, and if the climate of Riverina was suitable for them, that of Queensland would be equally so. He hoped hon. members would not consider that he had occupied the time of the House needlessly. The question was one over which he had thought a great deal. So many of his friends had suffered loss from the rabbit pest that it had been brought very closely under his notice; and the subject was one to which the Government might very fairly be asked to give their immediate attention. He begged to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said that no one was more convinced of the seriousness and imminence of the danger to which attention had been called by the hon. member for Logan than the members of the present Government. He himself had long foreseen that the danger was one with which they would have to cope sooner or later: and the sooner the better, for if the rabbits once obtained a footing in our pastoral country, the nature of that country would never enable the Government to exterminate them. How the matter should be dealt with the Government were not at present prepared to say, nor had they any reliable information as to the nearness of the danger. According to the hon. member, the rabbits were within 100 miles of the border. According to other statements, they were still 200 or 250 miles away. He (Mr. Dutton) was willing to adopt any practical means that might be suggested for keeping them out of the colony, but he scarcely thought that would be effected by merely fencing the border with wire netting; and, besides the uncertainty of that plan, the cost would be enormous. He would assure hon. members that the Government had taken the matter into their serious consideration, and were obtaining all the information they possibly could as to the best means which they could put into operation, at the earliest possible date, for preventing the danger with which the colony was threatened.

Mr. DONALDSON said he could fully bear out the remarks of the hon. member (Mr. Stevens) with respect to the rabbit pest in New South Wales and Victoria. Several years ago the district in which he lived in the latter colony was completely free from rabbits, and on his returning thither about three years afterwards he found it overrun with them to such an extent that lands which were formerly of great value had been rendered almost useless for agricultural purposes, and many farms which were formerly yielding large crops had been deserted; while, from the same cause, many of the Crown lands had been rendered nearly valueless, and had been thrown up by the lessees. The suggestion of the hon. member for Logan was the best that could be offered. The expenditure for fencing the border might appear a large one, but when

they remembered what the other colonies were spending, in the vain attempt to exterminate the pest after it had once gained a footing, it was evident that, if successful, the money would be very well spent indeed. He trusted the Government would give the matter their earliest and earnest consideration, and that before long the border would be so guarded as to prevent the irruption of rabbits into the colony. As to the distance of the rabbits from our southern border, he could inform the House with certainty that it was only about 150 miles. From his experience he knew that rabbits first followed the course of the rivers, and afterwards they came over any kind of country; and as they could live without water no tract of country would be free from their ravages. They were already on the Paroo, and they might at any time be heard of on the Warrego, which ran into the Darling a little higher up than the Paroo. That was about 100 miles from Bourke; and from thence to the Queensland border would take them but a very short time to spread. From the way rabbits had followed the course of the Murrumbidgee, the Lachlan, and the Darling, he felt certain it was only a matter of a very few months for them to reach the Queensland border; and he earnestly trusted that in the meantime some steps would be taken to prevent their coming into the colony.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it must be admitted that the answer given by the Minister for Lands to the hon. member for Logan was a most unsatisfactory one. That hon. member brought forward the question last session, and he then received a promise that the Government would institute inquiries, and if necessary bring in a Bill to reach that great and impending danger with which the outside districts were threatened. But they had done nothing of the sort, and the Minister for Lands now folded his hands as if he did not know what to do. The hon. gentleman had, however, told the House that he had made all sorts of inquiries; and no doubt he would be willing to place the letters he had received from the other colonies on the subject, on the table, for the information of hon. members. As to fencing the border, he agreed with the Minister for Lands that it was by no means certain that that would meet the danger; and it had not been a pronounced success in Victoria, where it had been tried experimentally. But the magnitude of the danger with which the colony was threatened was so enormous that prompt action of some kind ought to be at once taken—ought, in fact, to have been taken months ago. The question was one surrounded by great difficulties, but the time had come when something must be done to prevent the pest from coming across our borders; for, if it should ever get across the border, it would be nothing less than a national calamity.

Question put and negatived.

GRANTS AND LEASES TO DECEASED PERSONS BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, leave was granted to introduce a Bill to authorise the issue of Deeds of Grant and Leases in the names of Deceased Persons in certain cases.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PUBLIC OFFICERS FEES BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. JESSOP—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Report of the Survey of the proposed Railway from Dalby to the Bunya Mountains, as far as completed.

MEMBERS EXPENSES BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable that a Bill be introduced to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament, as recommended by message No. 8, of date the 22nd instant, from His Excellency the Governor.

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

NEW GUINEA AND PACIFIC JURISDICTION CONTRIBUTION BILL.

On motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable that a Bill be introduced to make provision for the payment, by the colony of Queensland, of a proportionate share of the expenses to be incurred by Her Majesty's Government in giving effect to certain resolutions adopted by the Convention of Representatives of the Governments of the several Australasian colonies, held in Sydney in November and December, 1883, as recommended by message No. 9, of date the 22nd instant, from His Excellency the Governor.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PROPOSED FEDERATION OF AUSTRALASIA.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the consideration of an Address to Her Majesty the Queen on this subject,

The PREMIER submitted the following draft Address, which was read by the CLERK:—

"MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,—

"We, Your Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in Parliament assembled, humbly approach Your Majesty with a renewed assurance of our affection and loyalty towards Your Majesty's Person and Government.

"We have had under our consideration the draft Bill for the constitution of a Federal Council of Australasia, adopted by the Convention of Representatives of the Governments of your Majesty's Australasian colonies, held at Sydney in the months of November and December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three, and we humbly pray that your Majesty may be graciously pleased to cause a measure to be submitted to the Parliament of the United Kingdom for the purpose of constituting such Federal Council upon the basis indicated by the draft Bill.

"We confidently trust that the constitution of such a Council will conduce to the continued and increasing prosperity of your Majesty's dominions in Australasia, and it is our earnest prayer that your Majesty may long be spared to rule over us and all other your Majesty's loyal subjects throughout the Empire."

The PREMIER moved that the Address be adopted.

Mr. MOREHEAD seconded the motion.

Question put and passed.

INSANITY BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker.—I rise to move the second reading of a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the insane. The existing laws relating to this matter are so fragmentary that, in point of fact, there is not much to consolidate. There is, first of all, an Act passed in the Legislature of

New South Wales, in 1843, to deal principally with dangerous lunatics. Up to that time apparently there had been an asylum, but there was no lawful authority for the detention of insane persons, so that Act contains a provision to prevent any action being brought for the detention of any persons in that asylum. Provision was made empowering two justices of the peace to commit to the asylum persons certified by two medical practitioners to be dangerous lunatics, and also that persons not dangerously insane might be admitted by the order of Governor, on the application of a relative or guardian, with the sanction in writing of a judge of the Supreme Court. That was practically all the law on the subject for a long time. Provisions for looking after and protecting the property of lunatics were conspicuous by their absence. There was a power given to the judges to discharge a person found to be sane, and power to remove him from one asylum to another. In 1869, in this colony, an Act was passed for establishing reception houses, and justices were empowered to commit any person, proved by one or more medical practitioners, instead of two, to be insane, to a reception house for a term not exceeding one month. At the expiration of a month he was to be brought before two justices, who must discharge him unless evidence was given by two medical practitioners that he was not in a fit state to be at liberty. Power was afterwards given to extend the period of one month. That is all the law on the subject of the insane to be found on our Statute-book. Of course the Supreme Court has power under which insane persons may be protected, and persons may be found to be insane by a solemn proceeding called a commission *de lunatico inquirendo*; but this proceeding is exceedingly costly and inconvenient and not in any way satisfactory. The present Bill is founded, to a great extent, upon the law of the mother-country, because of late years—since 1843, certainly—a great advance has been made in the proper mode of dealing with persons afflicted by this form of disease. In 1879 a measure was introduced into the Legislative Council, and passed through that House; it was then introduced here by Sir Arthur Palmer, who was at that time Colonial Secretary, but being in many respects very defective it was withdrawn. In 1880 the Bill was again, I think, passed through the Legislative Council and sent to this House, and again withdrawn. I forget whether it was introduced into this House in 1881, or not, but it was again introduced into this House in the year 1882. The Bill was framed with considerable care, but was nevertheless defective, and it was not practicable to put it through in its then form. Of course a measure of this sort it is practically impossible to amend in committee if it requires considerable amendment, and so the matter remained in abeyance. I have had the advantage of the Bill prepared at that time in framing this measure, which does not, I think, differ very materially from its predecessors in principle. It has been considered by the best advisers the Government could get on the subject, and various suggestions have been received from the superintendent of the asylums at Goodna and Sandy Gallop, who is, I believe, as highly competent to express an opinion on the matter as anyone in Australia; and his suggestions have mostly been adopted. The Bill is divided into parts as usual, the first containing preliminary provisions; the second relating to places for the reception and treatment of the insane; next, proceedings by which persons of unsound mind may be placed under restraint; then, criminal insane; then inspection, transfer, and discharge of patients; next, proceedings for declaring persons insane, and for the appointment of committees; the

seventh part refers to the management of the estates of insane persons; and the eighth contains miscellaneous provisions. I will briefly call attention to the provisions of the Bill. In the first part, I think, I need only point out that I prefer and have adopted the name "hospital for the insane" instead of "lunatic asylum"; I think it is a better name. The second part deals with the providing of places for the reception and treatment of the insane. The hospitals provided by the State at present are those at Goodna and Sandy Gallop; the Governor in Council is to be empowered to appoint others as they may be required. Then there is a provision for continuing the present reception houses and appointing others. Then a new feature is introduced—licensed houses for the reception of the insane, or private lunatic asylums. These are much used in many countries, and are, I think, in many respects desirable. There are not any here now; but it may happen that there will be insane persons who would be put into a private asylum for separate treatment, which they cannot receive in public asylums, by friends or relatives who can and are willing to pay for their more comfortable treatment in that way. It is, therefore, desirable to make provision for them, and it is contained in clauses 10 to 19. These provisions are analogous to those in force in New South Wales and in other colonies and countries. Power is also given in clause 20 to grant a license for the reception of a single insane person, which I think more likely to be taken advantage of than the other. Passing to Part III., which deals with the mode in which insane persons may be placed under restraint, I will point out what the provisions are. Clause 23 says:—

"Upon information, on oath, preferred to a justice, that a person suspected to be insane—

- (1) Is without sufficient means of support; or
- (2) Is wandering at large; or
- (3) Has been discovered under circumstances indicating a purpose of committing some offence against the law;

such justice may, by order under his hand, require a constable to apprehend and bring such person before two justices.

"Any constable finding a person, suspected to be insane, under any of the circumstances above mentioned, may, without an order, apprehend and bring such person before two justices."

And then the next clause:—

"Any person who knows that a person suspected to be insane—

- (1) Is not under proper care and control; or
- (2) Is cruelly treated or neglected by any relation or other person having or assuming the care of him;

shall forthwith give information thereof upon oath to a justice; and upon such information, or upon the information on oath of any other person, the justice shall—

- (a) Either himself visit and examine such person, and make inquiry into the case; or
- (b) By order under his hand direct and authorise some medical practitioner to visit and examine such person and make inquiry into the case, and report in writing to the justice his opinion thereon.

And if upon such personal visit or report it appears that the information on oath laid by the constable or other person is true, the justice may, by order under his hand, require any constable to bring the person so suspected to be insane before two or more justices."

The examination is to be made by two medical practitioners separately, which I think is a most important provision; and they must each send a separate certificate in the form of the third schedule to the Act, which will give such information as will assist the superintendent of the asylum to which the person may be sent, in giving him proper treatment. If the person is found to be insane, and is without sufficient

means of support, or is wandering at large, or is not under proper care and control, or is cruelly treated, and requires to be taken charge of and detained under care and treatment, then a warrant may be issued for his removal to an asylum. The justices may suspend the execution of a warrant for thirty days, and power is also given to them to examine the person suspected to be insane, and any witness in a private house—the proceedings to be just as if they took place in court; which I think is very desirable. Then provision is made for either of the medical practitioners to certify that the person is not in a fit state to be removed, when his removal will be deferred. Then follow other provisions by which certificates may be obtained without formally proceeding before two justices; that is, upon the request of someone who has had charge of the person. In that case the request must be authenticated by a justice or a minister, and be accompanied by a statement in writing, supported by certificates signed by two medical practitioners who have examined the person separately, in the same manner as before, and within fourteen days before the request is made. Then the 29th section provides for the temporary detention in a reception house of persons found to be insane. At the present time a man may get into a reception house almost without knowing it; on the statement of one doctor, before he knows where he is, he may find himself in a reception house. The reception house is to be considered as a place where a person may recover, and from which he may not have to be sent to an asylum at all. Where there is no reception house, provision is made that a person may be lodged in the nearest hospital, gaol, or lock-up until he can be conveyed to an asylum. Then there are some very proper provisions as to the genuineness of certificates, and the care in giving them; and anyone who infringes these provisions will be liable to severe penalties. No man is to be allowed to give a certificate in respect to any private asylum in which he or his relatives are interested. Clause 34 provides that no warrant for reception into an asylum is to remain in force after forty days from the date on which the certificates are given; and in the case of a request, for not more than fourteen days. Clause 35 is important. No patient is to be detained in a reception house for more than thirty days, unless he is unfit to be removed. Then come some formal provisions. Sections 39 and 40 are important ones; the former refers to the reception of persons found to be insane by proceedings before the Supreme Court—that is, found insane by a jury. The order of the court will be sufficient authority in such a case. The 40th section deals with cases of emergency. In many parts of the country it will be impracticable to obtain a certificate from two medical practitioners, and in such cases a person may be detained and sent to an asylum on the receipt of one certificate. If two certificates cannot be obtained in the first instance, one will be sufficient; but the patient must be examined separately by another medical practitioner, and a certificate given, before he can be received into an asylum. Under sections 43 and 44 a register of patients is to be kept, and information obtained and furnished from time to time to the Minister in charge of the department. I think these provisions are very carefully framed, and are as great safeguards as can be devised for the prevention of the admission of sane persons into an asylum. Part IV. deals with the criminal insane. I do not think it necessary to go into these provisions at the present time; they do not differ in any important respect from those hitherto in force. The next part, dealing with the inspection

of asylums, is very important. I think it is very desirable that all our public charities should be inspected, and the inspector whom it is proposed to appoint under this Bill might also perform the duty of inspecting all charitable institutions. It is proposed that there shall be an inspector who shall be paid travelling expenses besides a salary, and who shall visit every asylum and reception house at least once in six months. He has also to report every year what he has done. It is also provided that there may be official visitors—two or more for each place, one of whom shall be a doctor, and the other a lawyer, or a police magistrate. That is the practice in England, and it is desirable that one of them should be a person who is accustomed to elicit facts by inquiry. Then follow proceedings relating to the transfer of patients. The next part deals with declaring persons insane by the Supreme Court, which is also to be empowered to authorise the removal of an insane patient beyond the colony, if proper provisions are made for his safe custody. A summary and simple mode of procedure is substituted for the commission *de lunatico inquirendo* which is now in force, and which is a very costly practice. As simple a mode as can be found is provided in the present Bill. Inquiries may, if necessary, be made before a jury. The seventh part deals with the management of the estates of insane persons; and a person is to be appointed as a curator in insanity. The estates of insane persons are at present left to take care of themselves; the only authority is a committee appointed by the Supreme Court, after the cumbrous proceedings of a commission, which, as I pointed out, is seldom resorted to. Generally, the estates of insane persons are taken care of, if at all, by their friends; often they have deposits in the Government Savings Bank, or selections, and no contribution is made towards their support in the asylum. The law in that respect is as bad as it can be. The provisions of this part of the Bill really mean exactly what they say—there is to be a person whose function it is to be to look after the estates of the unfortunate persons in the lunatic asylums; when they are able they should contribute to their support, or to that of their wives and families. The curator is given all power necessary for that purpose, and he is to act as far as possible without any formal proceedings in court, and principally in his own office. Anyone can object who thinks he is acting in too summary a manner, and can ask that the matter be referred to the Supreme Court; but if the reference proves to be unnecessary he must do it at his own expense. These provisions are adopted very much from those in force in New South Wales, and are not unlike those in Great Britain. Ample powers are given for dealing with the property of insane persons, and at the same time there is every safeguard, so that it shall not be made away with or sold foolishly without the sanction of the court. The eighth part contains miscellaneous provisions, the duties of superintendents, etc.; and provides that letters or complaints written by patients shall be taken care of so that they may reach the person to whom they are addressed; and there are some penal provisions. Then follow the schedules. The first schedule is of the Acts which are proposed to be repealed. One, of Edward II.; another, of Edward VI., and so on. One of the Acts mentioned in the schedule of the former Bill has already been repealed. The forms of certificates, etc., will, I think, be found to contain all that is required, although they are not very long. They are similar to those in force in other colonies. Upon the whole, I can recommend the Bill with great confidence for the

acceptance of the House. That the principles are right there can be no doubt. It has been framed with very great care, and I think the House will not act unwisely in accepting it. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: I have had to do with a measure of a similar character in another place, and I do not rise now to offer any opposition to the second reading of this Bill. I am perfectly certain that both sides of the House are only too anxious to pass any measure that will tend to ameliorate the position of those who are unhappily afflicted, and whom this Bill proposes to deal with. I do not think, however, that it will get through committee without amendment. I do not wish to say anything reflecting on another place; but it appears to me that a Bill is sometimes scamped through there, and the work is not so well done as it will be here, if we set to work when the Bill is in committee, with the intention of making it as good as possible. I need not enter into the details of the measure, which cannot be considered as a party measure unless the opposite side take it to be so. I shall certainly do all I can when it gets into committee to make it as perfect as possible. It is a very necessary Bill, as the laws relating to the insane are in a very unsatisfactory state; and I hope the measure will be made as nearly perfect as possible in committee.

Mr. CHUBB said: This is a measure which has been wanted for a great many years past, but unfortunately the exigencies of Parliament have not admitted of its coming before this House. At any rate, now that we have got it, it will be the duty, as I am sure it will be the desire, of every member to assist in making it as perfect a measure as it possibly can be. I have had an opportunity of carefully comparing it with laws in force in other colonies of Australia, and also with that in England. I think that it is a great improvement upon that in force in Victoria. It provides for several matters which the Victorian law does not, and more nearly approaches the law of New South Wales, which I think better than that of Victoria. For instance, one of the things we provide for here is the abolition of the cumbrous process of a commission for inquiring into the insanity of persons. That form is still preserved in Victoria, but was abolished in New South Wales some three or four years ago. Again, provision is made for the protection and management of the estates of lunatics, and more power is given to compel lunatics to pay for their support while they are being cared for and maintained in a lunatic asylum. I know of one instance, in which I was professionally consulted, where a person had upwards of £1,000 in a local bank in Brisbane, on fixed deposit, and his friends were very anxious to get the money, and at the same time to avoid contributing anything towards his maintenance in the asylum, where he had been for many years. This is one instance within my own knowledge, and I believe there are many others where persons who have been maintained at the expense of the State have been well able to pay for their own maintenance. Too much care cannot be given to providing machinery which will prevent sane persons from being incarcerated. In my opinion an amendment can be made in the Bill in that respect, by providing that the certificates with reference to the examination of persons shall contain a personal description of the person examined. It is within our reading that persons have been locked up by their relatives for the purpose of getting hold of their property, and it may be that a fraud might be perpetrated by bringing the wrong person before a medical gentleman. If, however, the certificate contained a personal description of the party

examined there would be less difficulty in proving the identity of the person examined. I therefore think a clause of the character I have suggested would be a very valuable amendment to the Bill. Some other amendments may be required to make the measure more perfect, and if so they can be made in committee, but I am not aware of any at present. When once it becomes law the Bill will no doubt prove a benefit not only to the unfortunate people who require treatment in the asylum, but to the colony, and the relatives of the insane, who will have afforded them a simple process for dealing with the estates of their afflicted friends. Therefore, I think the Bill is one which will commend itself to both sides of the House. It will certainly receive the support of members on this side, who will give all the assistance they can to make it as perfect as possible.

Mr. SCOTT said a great many provisions were contained in the Bill to prevent mismanagement, but he would draw the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the fact that, while clause 35 provided that a patient was not to be detained in a reception house for more than a month unless the medical officer certified in writing that he was not in a fit state to be removed therefrom, by clause 40 a person might be received into a reception house upon the certificate of a single medical man. So that, as far as he could judge, a person might be detained for any length of time in a reception house upon the certificate of one medical man, although two certificates were absolutely necessary before he could be received into an asylum.

Mr. NORTON said: I have not gone as carefully through the Bill as I should have liked to have done, but I have read enough to enable me to speak with confidence as to the great advantage it will be to the colony to have the measure passed. I think it quite possible that it may require some amendment in committee, but I am quite sure that the principle of the Bill is sound, from first to last. I have taken some trouble to look into the law on this subject in force in New South Wales, in Victoria, and in this colony; and I have no doubt that the law we have had hitherto has worked very badly indeed, not only in its general provisions but in connection with sane people who might by some unfortunate set of circumstances be treated as if they were insane. It is not right that a man should be sent to an asylum on the certificate of two medical men who examined him together, and an inquiry before one magistrate; and this Bill clearly provides against anything of that kind, as it requires that two magistrates shall deal with every case, and that every patient shall be examined by two medical men, who shall examine him separately, and send in separate reports. I think that is one of the most important and most necessary provisions contained in the Bill. It is not necessary to refer to the awkward position a sane man would find himself in if he were sent to an asylum through some terribly unfortunate circumstance, to be treated as though he were insane, because I am quite sure that every hon. member will regard any possibility of such a thing occurring as most objectionable, and endeavour to make it impossible under this measure. Another provision has been inserted which I also look upon as a most necessary one, and that is that persons in the asylum who have funds, or whose friends have means, shall either pay for or contribute to their maintenance. At present we have, I think, 700 patients in the asylum at Woogaroo and Sandy Gallop, and the whole of the money received from them last year was about £150; and I think this is the largest sum that has ever been received from the patients or their friends. As compared with Victoria I

do not think we show at all badly, because there the law relating to the insane is most indefinite. In New South Wales, however, they manage affairs particularly well, and they derive a large income from the patients, and the contributions of their friends who assist in their maintenance. I believe that in this respect the Bill before the House will have the effect pointed out by the Premier. I entirely agree with the principle of the measure, and I think the Government deserve the assistance of hon. members on both sides of the House—and I am sure they will get it—in making the Bill as good as it can be made.

Question put and passed.

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

MESSAGE FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a message from the Legislative Council returning Appropriation Bill No. 1, without amendment.

TRIENNIAL PARLIAMENTS BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER: I rise, sir, to move the second reading of a Bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments in this colony from five years, as it is at the present time, to three years. While in opposition I introduced a similar measure, which I was not successful in carrying; but I promised then that, when the time came that I was sitting on this side of the House, I would endeavour to give effect to the same views which I enunciated in opposition. The subject has been much talked about on many occasions, and I doubt whether there is much new to be said upon it. It is simply a question of what is the most convenient length of time for Parliament to last in a country like Queensland. I do not myself think that the two long Parliaments we have had in Queensland—the last one, and the one immediately before it—should have lasted their whole length. The last Parliament in particular, at least twelve months before it was dissolved, ceased to represent the people of the colony. It is, of course, essential that the Parliament should represent the people. I do not hold that a member of the House is necessarily a delegate of his constituents, but he certainly ought to represent them, and there ought to be frequent opportunities of ascertaining whether he does represent them or not. In considering what is a suitable period for the duration of Parliament, some light may be derived from what has been the practice in other countries. I find that in very few countries, where there is representative government, is a popular assembly elected for so long a period as five years—very few indeed. It is just as well that hon. members should know what the facts are in that respect, as they are not always correctly stated. In England, as we, of course, know, the duration of Parliament is seven years; and before I sit down I shall say a few words as to how that came to be the law, and the effect of it, according to the best authorities. Leaving England out of the question, let us turn to some other countries which have adopted representative institutions. I will deal first with European countries. In Belgium, the duration of Parliament is four years, but half the members go out every two years. In Denmark, Parliaments are elected for three years; in France for four years; in Prussia for three years; in Italy for five years. In the Netherlands the time is the same as in Belgium;

in Portugal it is four years; and in Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland three years. In most of the American States—though I do not attach much weight to their example—the time is three years, and sometimes shorter. In Canada the period is five years, and it is the same at the Cape of Good Hope. In the Australian colonies, Queensland and Tasmania are alone in having so long a period as five years. The Parliaments of New Zealand, South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales last for three years only. In probably the greatest country that has representative institutions—the United States—the House of Representatives is elected for two years. The Senate is peculiarly constituted, one-third of the members retiring every two years; but the House of Representatives is elected for two years only. So that we are almost singular in the length of the duration of our Parliaments. Of all the British colonies, Tasmania, the Cape of Good Hope, and Canada are the only ones that keep us company in the duration of their Parliaments. I venture to think that although five years may not be too long a time for Tasmania, where change is slow, it is much too long for us, for there is no colony in the Australian group whose circumstances change so rapidly as those of Queensland. In three years here a complete change may be worked in a great many particulars; nevertheless, the same members continue to represent the people in Parliament, although the opinions of the electorates may have very materially altered. I have never heard that in any of the other colonies where the three years' system has been adopted—New Zealand, Victoria, New South Wales, or South Australia—any complaint has ever been made against it; and I am sure the proposal to revert to the longer period in those colonies would be scouted. In fact, it is one of the chief items of democratic principles that parliaments should be of short duration. It is said that, if you have short parliaments, members have not time to get into the swing of their work—that they spend the first session in learning their work, the second session in doing it, and that in the third they are preparing for the ensuing elections. I do not think that has been found to be the case where the three years' system has been adopted, and the testimony of so many other countries seems to go in quite a contrary direction. Indeed I do not know what arguments can be urged in favour of a long period, except the one argument that members ought not to be in too close relation with their constituents. I think that is a great mistake. They ought to be in close relations with their constituents. As soon as a member ceases to represent his constituents it is quite time he went back for re-election. I intended to refer to some facts with respect to the extension of the duration of Parliament in England to seven years. I am going to refer to a work by Mr. David Syme. Mr. Syme is an English author of considerable repute. There is another author of the same name, I think, in one of the colonies; but he is not the author of this book, which was published in 1881, and is on "Representative Government in England." At page 51, Mr. Syme says, speaking of the Triennial Act:—

"This is the measure which is known as the Triennial Act of 1694. The intention of the framers of the Act is apparent from the preamble, which sets forth that 'whereas frequent parliaments ought to be held, and whereas frequent and new parliaments tend very much to the happy union and good agreement of the king and people, we, etc.'"

The writer goes on to say:—

"The Triennial Act was a wise and moderate measure, and probably the best that could have been carried at the time."

Before that time (1694) Parliament was not bound to be summoned unless the King pleased, and members had begun to object to that; and the writer says:—

"They approved of the proviso which compelled the Sovereign to hold a session of Parliament once every year, but they had a decided objection to be sent to their constituents every third session, as provided by the Act. To cut short their career at the end of three years was to deprive members of the opportunity of aggrandising themselves at the public expense. They accordingly soon found an occasion for altering that part of the measure which compelled them to appear before the electors every third year. On the accession of the House of Hanover a good deal of dissatisfaction existed throughout the country, especially in Scotland, and the King's supporters in the House pretended to believe that the dynasty might be overthrown if a general election took place while the country was in this state of disquietude. They accordingly introduced a Bill for the lengthening of the duration of Parliament from three to seven years. This Bill was introduced into the Lords on the 10th April, 1716, and rapidly passed through all its stages by large majorities. In the Commons, the third reading was carried by 284 to 162, notwithstanding that public opinion strongly condemned the measure. Almost all the speeches on this debate which have been preserved are against the Bill, so that we must conclude, either that the supporters of the measure preferred giving a silent vote on the occasion, or that they have been unfortunate in their reporters. The Bill, as introduced, had the appearance of being a merely temporary measure to set aside the Triennial Act for a short period till public excitement had subsided, and although it contained no clause limiting the time it would be in operation, the preamble set forth that if the provisions for holding triennial parliaments should remain the consequences might probably 'at this juncture, when a restless and Popish faction are designing and endeavouring to renew the rebellion within the kingdom, and an invasion from abroad, be destructive to the peace and security of the Government.'"

He then pointed out how immoral the whole transaction was, that a parliament elected for three years should continue its existence for another four years. He goes on to say, concerning this:—

"This unconstitutional Act has proved more pernicious in its operation—has done more to degrade parliamentary government and retard the progress of legislation—than any proceeding on the part of any previous parliament. But the Commons had now got what they longed for. The Triennial Act, by making annual sessions compulsory, freed them from the control of the Sovereign; and the Septennial Act, by extending the duration of parliament, placed them practically beyond the control of the people. Free from all restraint, they now commenced a career of profligacy unexampled in our parliamentary history. No doubt we had corrupt parliaments before the Septennial Act came into operation. Parliaments were bad enough in the time of Charles II.; they were worse under William and Mary; but they reached their last and worst stage under the three Georges, when the Septennial Act began to bear its legitimate fruit. Nor is it difficult to account for this. If a seat in parliament was worth competing for when the tenure was a short one (and we know that it had been an object of keen competition for more than a century before this), it stands to reason that the competition would not be diminished when the tenure was lengthened. The prolongation of the term had indeed the immediate effect of increasing the previously existing demand, and with the increased demand there was a corresponding increase in the value of the seats. The electors, finding that there was a keen competition for their votes, increased their demands; while the representatives, having no longer the fear of the constituents before their eyes, immediately set about making the best of the opportunity which a seat in parliament afforded them of turning their own votes to account. Members who had bought their seats would have little scruple in selling their votes. The men who offered bribes were not likely to be scandalised at being asked to accept them. That men were bribed is beyond all question. The evidence on this head is pronounced by all competent authorities to be overwhelming. Ministers could carry on the government only by having the support of the majority in parliament, and this majority they openly purchased by the free use of State funds. The Pay Office, as Macaulay tells us, was turned into a mart for votes, and it was not an uncommon

thing for £20,000 of secret service money to be paid to members in a single morning. It was estimated that out of 550 members who were in the first Parliament of George I. there were no less than 271, and in the first Parliament of George II. there were no less than 257 members, who were dependent upon the bounty of the Government in one shape or another."

That is attributed by this writer—and I believe with a very great deal of truth—to the extension of the duration of parliament to seven years from the short time it used previously to last. I believe myself that one year would be best if it were practicable, but that we know is not practicable. It is noticeable that nearly all the men of eminence, at the time the question was discussed, were in favour of parliaments of short duration. Speaking of the debate on the Triennial Bill, which was ultimately carried, though subsequently vetoed by the king, the writer says:—

"Mr. Harley said that 'a standing parliament can never be a true representative. Men are much altered after being some time here, and are not the same men as sent up.' Mr. Pelham said, 'A present member of this House and also of the Pensioner Parliament told me that he, by order, paid pensions to thirty members in that House. The like, by a long sitting, may be done again.' Colonel Titus said, 'I never saw long parliaments good ones. A picture now drawn may be like the person it represents, but in time the colours will fade, and it so alter from itself that no one can know what it represents. If we would have a picture like it, it must be new-drawn.' Mr. Herbert defended the dissolution clause, and said he 'would rather have a standing army than a standing parliament.' The Bill was ultimately carried by a majority of 200 to 164, but was vetoed by the king."

I certainly think that men are much altered after being some time here. They are not always the same men as are sent up. If this was true in England at the beginning of last century, is it not true of this colony at the present time? Can anyone doubt that circumstances in this colony are changing more rapidly than they ever changed in England? Things are changing more rapidly here than in any other country in the world in which they have representative institutions. I challenge any hon. member in this House to point out any country in which there are representative institutions where the changes in circumstances are so rapid as they are at the present moment in this colony, or in the Australian colonies; and of the Australian colonies, in which of them do circumstances change so rapidly as they do now in Queensland? I will just refer to another historical passage in the work, at page 59:—

"And this Act is still the law of England. Numerous attempts have been made to repeal it, but they have all failed. For one hundred and fifty years, off and on, has the question been debated in Parliament. Resolutions without number have been brought before the House for shortening the duration of Parliament, but they have all been defeated by large majorities, although they have been supported by the most eminent statesmen in the country. Amongst the names of those who voted with the minority on this question are to be found Earl Grey, Lord Brougham, Sir F. Burdett, Sir James Macintosh, C. Buller, George Grote, Joseph Hume, Sergeant Talford, Colonel Thompson, C. P. Villiers, and, when first seeking election, Disraeli. We have made progress in most matters since the beginning of the last century when this Act was passed, and Parliament has been driven forward with the times; but the Septennial Act still remains on the Statute-book. The political creed of to-day is very different from what it was in the time of the three Georges; but on the question of the duration of Parliament, and of the relation of the representative to his constituents, which is involved in it, there has been literally no progress. The spirit of the eighteenth century still pervades the Parliament of to-day; members have the same distrust of their constituents; the same impatience of control; and if they do not express their feelings so offensively, they show the same inclination to assert their independence of the constituent body as did their predecessors at the beginning of the last century."

I am happy to think that those are not the sentiments of the majority of members of this House;—that we desire the House should be fully repre-

sentative of the constituencies we are sent here to represent. I have now summarised, I think, the arguments that may be used in favour of this Bill. I do not know exactly what are the arguments against it, except that at present Parliament continues for five years, and no sufficient reason has been shown for the change. I do not care to go particularly into the history of this colony more than any other as to the reasons for the change. In the other colonies they all started with five years, and they have all found it necessary to have a change. It is, however, clear, from the work I have quoted, that, in all countries where there have been long parliaments, members have become impatient of control, and have ceased to represent their constituencies. I prefer not to condescend to details, and not to point out the evils that were wrought during the last Parliament alone. Many prominent members of the House, and of the public outside, have formed very clear conclusions as to whether that Parliament lasted too long or not. I believe that the party who now occupy the Opposition benches would have been better off if that Parliament had not lasted so long; and this is not the first time I have said so. I believe that the continuance of the existence of any Parliament, or the continuance in office of any party for too long a time, is most destructive to that party, and I have said so before in reference to the party of which I have always been a member. But, apart from that, I am not moralising simply because the last Parliament, which lasted so long, was one in which the party opposite had a majority, as I held the same opinion with reference to the previous Parliament, and have expressed it often. I think, therefore, we shall do well to follow the example of most other countries, and adapt the provisions of our Constitution to the circumstances which we find in existence in this colony. The Bill itself is naturally a very short one. It proposes to repeal the 29th section of the Constitution Act, after the present Parliament. We do not propose to follow the example of the Parliament that passed the Septennial Act, and lengthen the duration of our own existence, and we will not attempt to commit suicide by shortening it. This is in accordance with what I proposed when in opposition; in fact, it is the very same measure that I proposed in 1882. The 2nd clause is exactly the same as the 29th of the Constitution Act, with the exception that "three" is substituted for "five." I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,--I think you, sir, and every member of the House, will admit that we have had a very unusual speech from the hon. gentleman who sits at the head of the Treasury benches. The hon. gentleman is generally clear, logical, and to the point, and gives sufficient reasons, at any rate from his own standpoint, for any measure he advocates before the House. He does not as a rule trouble the House with lengthy quotations, and go back for precedents some 200 years. He usually has his case, from his own particular standpoint, made out as a clear and good one. What have we got to do with the Legislatures of Belgium, of France, of Spain, of Italy, of Russia, of China, or any other legislature that he has quoted the duration of? What we have to do to-night, I take it, in discussing this question, is to consider whether it is proper, fitting, and advisable, that the duration of Parliament in this colony should be reduced from the period of five years to three. That point the hon. gentleman has carefully avoided. He never touched upon that in any way. He read lengthy quotations, and spoke learnedly about the arguments used 200 years ago, and subsequently against the dura-

tion of Parliament in England being seven years; and he wound up by telling us that it was still maintained at that period;—that after all the agitation in Great Britain, where the Radical element in the present Parliament is stronger than ever it has been during the existence of the British Parliament, and where a large proportion of the Cabinet is known to be composed of Radicals—no attempt has been made to shorten the duration of Parliament. I think most hon. members will agree with me that the hon. gentleman's arguments go against himself—that they tend against his own contention. He has shown us that, notwithstanding all the agitation in England for more than 200 years, this very much desired amendment, according to his lights, with regard to the duration of Parliament, has not come to pass. One thing he altogether forgot to touch upon: he forgot to tell us that incidentally—or rather I should say coincident—with this proposal to limit the duration of future Parliaments to three years there is also on the business-paper before us a proposal to pay members of Parliament. The two things appear to me to have to go together, but they do not do so entirely, although the Bill under discussion follows the Insanity Bill, and possibly may be a sequence to it, and was so intended by the Government. But the Premier, while telling us that the duration of this Parliament is to be five years, did not go on and say that payment of members is to come in and apply to the members of this Parliament—that during the remaining portion of the five years that this Parliament has to exist, unless a dissolution occurs, the members of it will be paid. I maintain, sir, that the whole matter is a scheme—simply a trap to catch votes. The hon. gentleman was no more earnest in bringing forward the measure than he would be if he were proposing a vote of confidence in the late Premier. He has shown no earnestness in the past with regard to the measure, and he has shown great half-heartedness now in proposing it. I myself think that if the triennial parliament system pass it will be one of the most damaging measures that was ever passed by any legislature. It would simply mean personal government for three years. Give payment of members, which does not exist in New South Wales, and triennial parliaments and any Ministry could exist for three years, no matter how bad their actions might be, or no matter how they might be opposed to the wishes of the majority of the people. A good deal has been said about the opinion of the people; but I say that no measure could be passed by this House which might, and probably would, do more to outrage the opinion of the majority of the electors of this colony than the passing of this Bill. Supposing such a state of affairs to exist as might exist if this Bill, coupled with the payment of members, became law. The Ministry for the time being, coming in with a majority, would unquestionably carry on to the end of the three years. They would have a majority at their back as long as they were paid; as long as they were paid by the State that Ministry would rule the roost, and would manage the colony in despite of the opinion of the outside public. Now, sir, with regard to the duration of Parliaments for five years, we know perfectly well that the average duration of Parliaments under the five years' system has not been much more than three years in this colony. We know that there have been two long Parliaments, as has been pointed out by the hon. the Premier; but, with the exception of them, the duration of Parliaments here, I think I am right in saying, has not been three years; so that for all practical purposes we have a three years' Parliament. Now the hon. gentleman says he deprecates very much what was

done by the two long Parliaments, as he calls them. I am sorry he did not point out what evils resulted from those two long durations of power, in one of which he was a member of the Government. I maintain, the colony has never been so prosperous, at any rate, as during the term of office of the late Government. The hon. gentleman may contradict me, but the revenue returns and the condition of commerce will show it. I think when he objected to the long Parliaments it was his duty, in bringing in a Bill to create such an enormous innovation in the Constitution as this, to show us, as he said he could, the injuries the colony had sustained from the duration of Parliaments being five years. He should have shown us where the necessity arose for this alteration. As a politician—as a representative in this House, hoping to have some pretensions to statesmanship—I say this attempt to reduce the duration of Parliaments from five years to three is a great political blunder. There will be no practical good attained at all. The hon. member has told us that in New South Wales the period has been reduced. We know it. But has Parliament improved? Did the hon. gentleman proceed to show us that they had a better set of men put together than when that Parliament was of five years' duration? Did he attempt to show us that legislation has been improved? I say he has not only failed to show us, but he has failed to attempt to show us that such is the case. I think, before we go in for such a radical change as this, some very good and sufficient reason should be given. We should not, simply because the Premier has a majority at his back, pass a measure of this sort unless he can clearly show every member of this House a good and sufficient reason for it. I maintain that the Premier has not given us such a reason; he has not shown us that we will have better legislators sent to this House; he has not shown us that business will be expedited, or that great measures are more likely to receive consideration at the hands of men sent here for three years than of those sent here for five. He has altogether broken down in his attempt to force this alteration in the existing state of things. I further distinctly object to this Act being made prospective, and not dealing with the present Parliament. If it is good for future Parliaments, it is good for the present one. I will go further than that, sir, and say this: that such a measure as the one proposed by the hon. gentleman, and other measures I could mention, should not be entertained by this House until representation is given to those constituencies now unrepresented in this House. I maintain that, when we are making radical changes in the constitution of the colony, every electorate should be fully represented, and I think the hon. the Premier will admit that. And to come back to what I said before: if there is any soundness in his theory at all, if he believes in his theory, let him limit the duration of this Parliament as he proposes to limit those of the future. If it is a good thing, why not bring it into force at once? The hon. gentleman, I suppose, does not wish to limit the duration of his own power; he wants to do his five years; he wants to have five years of power, and, if possible, to have a long Parliament of his own; but he wants, when the time comes for him to go—and it will come—that those who come after him at any rate shall not have anything more than three years. There is no doubt that that is the reason which actuates the hon. gentleman. It can be no other. He has set up no defence whatever for what he has done. I hope the House will not consent to pass the Bill, which, although it at present does not affect themselves, will affect those who come after them. At least it will not affect hon. members as the clause stands at present; but I shall make

the most strenuous efforts to have it amended in committee on the lines of justice and equity the hon. the Premier admires so much. I would ask hon. members to pause before voting for the second reading of this Bill, and to consider the reasons which have been brought forward by the hon. the Premier in introducing it. Has he shown any good and sufficient reason why the duration of parliaments should be lessened? Has he shown that in any way the liberties of the people, or the rights of the people, have been interfered with by parliaments lasting five years instead of three? Do we not all know that the average duration of parliaments in this colony has not exceeded three years? Can we not also see that if the duration of parliaments is fixed at three years, with payment of members, it may lead—and will, I believe, lead—to such a corruption in government as has never been seen in any of the colonies? I feel very strongly on this point. It is a matter of indifference to me, personally, whether it is three years, one year, or one week: when my constituents are tired of me, I am quite content to retire; but I maintain that in the interests of the State it will be a fatal blunder to reduce the period from five years to three. I say we should not, on the arguments brought forward by the hon. gentleman, make such a sweeping change in our Constitution. I maintain again that the hon. gentleman's own quotation will show that, although agitation has gone on year after year in Great Britain for the last 200 years, they have never succeeded in changing the septennial parliament; although, as a matter of fact, the duration of Parliaments there is something under five years. No word I can say, I suppose, will have any effect in changing votes as they have already been booked by the hon. the Premier; but I will simply enter my protest against this sweeping change in our Constitution—a change which I believe will lead to grave trouble and possible disaster in the future.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said: The hon. gentleman dwelt long upon what he says are the two chief objections to this Bill—that five years is not too long, and that three years is too short; and in maintaining that view of the case he asked this House to state what we know as to whether there is any experience in the past of five years being too long. Now, I think we had very good experience in the last Parliament, which lasted five years. The hon. gentleman has claimed that the prosperity of the colony was due to the last Government, but he might just as well attribute the drought to the present Government; every bit as well. We can prosper in spite of Governments, unless they are downright blunders and fools from the beginning, and I do not suppose either one side of the House or the other would tolerate any Government of that character here. We know that, towards the end of the existence of the last Parliament, two very important revolutionary measures were brought forward, which the members of this House were no more competent, I assert, to deal with, than we would be to deal with measures that came before us five years hence. The country had not had an opportunity of expressing its opinion; and if it had not been for the independent action of two or three members, who put their foot down and would not have the measures, they would have gone through. The danger was very imminent at one time; in the absence of any expression of opinion on the part of the country with regard to these measures, if those members had not come forward and asserted their independence, the measures would have gone through. An immense danger threatened the whole

country in consequence. With triennial parliaments such a thing could not obtain; there would be altogether different conditions; a Government could make their opinions and their ideas felt and maintained throughout the whole period of their existence. If a parliament lasts five years, there is a continual falling off in the members at the House. The electors have no opportunity of making their representatives amenable to their opinions as they would have if they had the chance of changing them every three years. In five years the condition of things may change; and, in fact, they do change so rapidly here that there is a possibility that, before the end of the term, the electors are not fairly represented in this House. The condition of things that prevails now and the condition of things that may prevail five years hence may be so totally dissimilar that there is no fair representation of the different constituencies before the end of the term, and no possibility of representing them at all. I maintain that that has generally been so here. The contention of the hon. member that parliaments do not exist on an average more than three years is not relevant to the question. It is the fear that they may last five years; that is the point. If it were known that a parliament would only last three years, it would be known that there would be an opportunity of carrying out the opinions of the electors; and I maintain that it is the duty of the members of this House to carry out the opinions and principles of the country—opinions and principles upon which they have been elected. The hon. gentleman also referred to the fact that it is necessary to look to older countries where there were long terms of parliament; but I do not see that. We exist under different conditions altogether, and we have to suit our habits and the duration of parliament to these conditions, carrying on our business without deference in any way to what is the practice in the old country. As I have said, changes here are so extraordinarily rapid that it is desirable we should reduce the time to three years or two. Three years, I think, is better than two because of the evils connected with elections. I admit that those evils are very serious indeed, and we ought to adopt some means to prevent the mischief that arises in consequence; but I think more evils arise from allowing the House to continue in existence for a period of five years, when the constituencies have no opportunity of exacting from their representatives that expression of opinion, political and otherwise, which I think it is very desirable they should exact from them more frequently than it is probable they can do when the duration of parliament is five years.

Mr. CHUBB said: We have had a very benevolent expression of opinion from hon. gentlemen who are supposed to be the Liberal members of this House, but do they not remember that the Septennial Bill was carried by the Liberals.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. CHUBB: I say that it came from the Whigs—another name for the Liberals.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Ministerial Benches: Oh! oh!

Mr. CHUBB: They are Liberals in these days, they were Whigs then; and they carried the measure against the Tory party in the House. It seems very strange that the leader of the Government should, notwithstanding that he was in office for nearly five years, never have then thought of the desirability of introducing such a Bill as this. It remained for him when in opposition to introduce a Bill shortening the duration of parliament to three years. In that

Bill he inserted a clause making the measure apply to the then existing Parliament.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I offered to withdraw it.

Mr. CHUBB: I do not know what the hon. gentleman promised to do then. I know that he is reported in the debates to have inserted such a clause; and he may have offered to withdraw it. But why has he not introduced that clause in the present Bill? "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." If the hon. gentleman had introduced such a clause now, the effect might have been to reduce the opposition which the Bill will receive. It seems to me that the hon. gentleman is rather inconsistent in his action. Hon. members appear to have almost forgotten that there is such a thing as the power of dissolution. It does not follow that because the Parliament has a duration of five years it will exist for that time. The Premier may have a dissolution in many instances. We have had eight Parliaments during the last twenty-four years; the average duration, therefore, has been under three years. We have had eleven Ministries. It is true that the last two Parliaments existed for a period of nearly five years each; but that is no argument that future parliaments will inevitably last for that period. The Minister for Lands deprecated European precedents as a guide to what we should do in this colony. His hon. colleague the Premier, however, based his arguments in support of the Bill on European precedents. He said that there had been a continuous struggle to obtain triennial parliaments, and no doubt from time to time there have been agitations, as observed by the leader of the Opposition, but the change has never been effected. In the early days there were annual, then came triennial, and now there are septennial parliaments. Except the Bill that was passed in 1716, I believe I am correct in saying that there has never been a Bill introduced into the Imperial Parliament, in favour of triennial parliaments, which has passed its second reading. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government said he hardly knew what arguments could be used against the Bill. Some of the arguments appear to me to be these: three years is a very short time, and many gentlemen who represent constituencies in this House are new to parliamentary life, and have to learn the routine of parliamentary business. That is not learnt in a day nor in a year. Again, a new Government coming in requires time to mature its measures and formulate the business to be laid before the House. During the first session of parliament business is not very rapidly conducted; in the second, hon. members have got well into the work; and in the third session they are looking forward to the decease of the parliament, and the election which will consequently follow; so that really there is not time to carry on that legislation which is really required. If such a measure as the one we will soon be discussing—the Land Bill—was brought forward at any one time, that measure alone would take up the whole session, and there would be very little time left for such legislation as we have been engaged in during the past week or two. So far as I am personally concerned, I do not care whether we have triennial parliaments or quinquennial; at the same time, I think no reason has been shown why the House should be asked to pass this Bill. There has been no agitation in the country for it. Look at the galleries—is there any interest taken at this moment in a measure of this kind? When a most important measure, which is intended to alter the Constitution of the country, is to be considered, surely the public would appear to take some interest in it?

The PREMIER: They did it at the general election.

Mr. CHUBB: It may have been made by some a very popular cry at the time. It may have caught a few votes of people who thought it a very fine thing. People would say, "Here is a Government which has remained in office for five years, and we will make it a part of our platform to have a Triennial Parliaments Bill, in order that if they possibly get in again they shall not remain in office five years." I submit that the time has not yet arrived for a change of the kind. There is no reason why such a violent wrench should be given to the Constitution; we have worked very well for the last twenty-four years, and there is no reason why we should tinker with the Constitution. If you look at the cases cited by the Premier as to the duration of parliaments in other countries there is no arbitrary period fixed. In America they have two years for their Legislatures and four years for their Senate. In other countries they vary from seven years downwards. There is no rule fixed, and there is no reason why three years should be more beneficial than four, or five, or two; consequently no reason why we should change. If we change the law, those who alter the law should certainly submit themselves to that law. It is dishonest for us to make a law which shall not apply to ourselves but will apply to future parliaments. Therefore, if the House pass the second reading of this Bill, I shall certainly, when it goes into committee, endeavour to amend clause 2, in order that it shall apply to the existing Parliament; and I trust I shall have the assistance of members on this side of the House. For these reasons I think this Bill ought not to pass.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. gentleman who has just sat down, in denouncing the Bill, said that it would open the flood-gates of a new era of corruption. I think the hon. member before making any use of that expression should have directed his attention to the other Australian colonies, where triennial parliaments prevail, and have informed us to what dreadful extent the corruption obtained there. During the discussion this evening, it struck me that the chief arguments in favour of triennial parliaments are these: that the Australian colonies have adopted the system—New Zealand, Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia are converts—they have all adopted the system of triennial parliaments. Now, we have just considered an Address to Her Majesty, praying for federal action in the colonies, and I think that is a very strong ground indeed why, so far as we can, we should endeavour to assimilate the character of our legislative institutions. I take it that very good reasons should be shown why we should differ as to the duration of our parliaments from our older sisters. The mere fact of the system working well ought to be sufficient justification for our assimilating our period with theirs. This matter has been overlooked in the discussion this evening; but the arguments in favour of triennial parliaments and against have been so often gone into by speakers in this House that it is really unnecessary to occupy much time in connection with it. The gist of the whole thing is to give the people a better opportunity of being heard in this Chamber, for I am of opinion that the representative only has strength or honour in the position he occupies in proportion to the confidence which is placed in him by his constituents. The more intimate his relations with them the greater is the honour of his position in the House, and the greater the justification for asserting his opinions. That

is the real reason why triennial parliaments have been repeatedly advocated; and even Lord Chatham declared in 1771, as we are informed by Erskine May, to the following effect:—

"In 1771 Lord Chatham, with the most deliberate and solemn conviction, declared himself a convert to triennial parliaments. The question afterwards became associated with plans of parliamentary reform. It formed part of the scheme proposed by the 'Friends of the People' in 1792. At that period, and again in 1797, it was advocated by Mr. Grey, in connection with an improved representation, as one of the means of increasing the responsibility of parliament to the people."

The reason given was this:—

"The main ground, however, on which this change has been rested is the propriety of rendering the representatives of the people more frequently accountable to their constituents. The shorter the period for which authority is entrusted to them, the more guarded would they be in its exercise, and the more amenable to public opinion. It is said that a parliament cannot be trusted, if independent of the people, and exposed to the influence of Ministers for seven years."

That contains the gist of the whole matter, and, notwithstanding the existence of septennial parliaments in the United Kingdom, they have had an average duration of something under five years. But, as has been shown this evening, the circumstances of the mother-country are not parallel with ours—changes here are much more rapid than in England. I do not intend to trespass longer on the time of the House in dealing with this matter. The arguments *pro* and *con*, have been repeated so often that I do not think it necessary to occupy much more time in discussing the subject. As I have already pointed out, I conceive that one of the chief arguments in favour of the Bill at the present time is this: that as we have under consideration a scheme for federation, it is desirable, seeing that the other colonies on the mainland of Australia have accepted the triennial system of parliaments, that we should assimilate our system thereto, unless it can be shown that the system, as adopted by the other colonies, has been fraught with evil to the State, or has been productive of prejudicial results. The circumstances of this colony demand that the representatives of the people should be in frequent communication with the electors from whom they derive their power and their position in this House; and not only so, but the electors of the colony ought to have frequent opportunities of expressing their opinion upon the various Governments who hold the reins of administration. In a new country like this, where we are laying the foundations of a future nation, it is natural, not having precedents to guide us in all the matters we have to enter upon, that there will be many tentative questions demanding serious consideration, which ought necessarily to be submitted to the various constituencies. And in so sparsely populated a colony communities may spring up at any time in places which to-day are portions of forests primeval, and it is only right and proper that they should have an early opportunity of obtaining representation in the councils of the State. An argument has been made use of by preceding speakers to the effect that this measure ought to apply to the present Parliament, and that if there were such a provision in the Bill that would be a proof of the sincerity of the Government in the matter. I think if hon. members will turn to the debate that occurred on the second reading of the Triennial Parliaments Bill, which was introduced by my hon. friend the Premier when in opposition in 1881, they will see that several hon. members who supported the measure expressed the opinion that it ought not to apply to the then existing Parliament. I will refer particularly

to my own remarks as reported in *Hansard* of 1881:—

"He would be quite content—in fact, he would prefer a measure of that sort not to apply in any way to the present Parliament. He thought it was injudicious to apply it to the present Parliament. It ought to apply only to future Parliaments.

"Mr. LUXLEY HILL: Hear, hear!

"Mr. DICKSON said that, from what the Premier had said, he supposed that he would be prepared to express his approval of the measure if it was to apply only to succeeding Parliaments, and he had hoped that the Government saw their way clear to approve of the principle of triennial parliaments."

That was said in answer to the opposition raised by the then Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, as to its applying to that Parliament; and I contend that a parliament, like a human being, has no right to abbreviate its own existence. We have no right to curtail our existence, and, even if this reform were applied to the present Parliament, it might interfere with that calm deliberation which hon. members no doubt intend to bestow from the 5th of next month on the Land Bill and other measures of great importance. I hope we shall come to the consideration of those matters in a placid frame of mind, undisturbed by the idea of an approaching dissolution. I think I have shown that several members, who at that time supported the second reading of the Triennial Bill, did so with the desire that it should not apply to the then existing Parliament. If that Bill had been accepted we should now have come under its provisions. I learn from hon. gentlemen opposite that, individually, they have no objection to the measure; and that being the case, and seeing that the question has been ratified by the constituencies at the last general election, to whom it was submitted along with other measures proposed by the then Opposition, they should allow this change to be made in our system, especially as it will tend to assimilate the duration of our Parliament to those of the other Australian colonies with whom we desire to be federated.

Mr. NORTON said: The Colonial Treasurer has just told us that the principle of this Bill was ratified by the constituencies at the last general election. Well, sir, to the best of my recollection, the subject was only mentioned in a few of the constituencies—certainly it was not generally mentioned. However, I am quite willing to accept the hon. member's argument, and I will show him the value of it. The hon. gentleman also quoted from a speech of his own to show that, when this Bill was introduced before the last Parliament, those who supported it were in favour of its not being made applicable to the Parliament which passed it. So far as that goes, it is all very well, but we happen to know that the Premier's opinion was quite different; his intention was that the Bill, if passed, should apply to the Parliament which passed it. The hon. gentleman now makes his own leader's opinion give way to that of a few members who expressed a contrary opinion in supporting it, and the will of the electors, as he says, is also to give way to the opinions of those few members. What is the use of the electors ratifying a principle of this kind if it is to be set aside in that way? His own leader holds the same view, which he tells us the electors held and ratified at the last general election; and yet the Premier's opinion, and the opinion of the electors generally, as he claims, are to be set aside for the opinion of the few members to whom he referred. That argument certainly does not tell greatly in his favour. In a matter of this kind I should like to know what special virtue there is in three years more than in four years, or two years, or one year, or six years. No reason has been shown why three years should be adopted. We have been told that that was adopted in the

other colonies, but we have not been told that any great advantages have been derived from it, and the Colonial Treasurer says that, unless it can be shown that the system adopted in the other colonies is a mistake, we ought to adopt it here. Surely it is for those who advocate the change to show that it is not a mistake! Why should it be left to those who oppose the Bill to show that what is the law now should not be set aside, because the other system has not been shown to be a mistake? The thing is absurd, and the hon. member must see the weakness of his own argument. The Premier in his remarks referred to what took place in England during the reign of the first Georges. But, as the leader of the Opposition has pointed out, notwithstanding the fact that the duration of parliaments in England was made to be seven years, during all the years since that law was passed there has never been any serious attempt made to alter it. We know very well that the subject has been discussed, and motions have been introduced into the House of Commons with the object of reducing the term; but there has never been any strong feeling on the part of the country, or even amongst members of the House of Commons, which would result in passing a Bill to that effect into law. The support which such measures have received in the House of Commons has been a very weak support indeed; and I say, without the slightest hesitation, that if it was thought fit at the present time that the duration of parliaments in Great Britain should be reduced, there would not be the slightest difficulty in bringing it about, and the present Government would be the very first to bring in a measure to that effect. Reverting to the corruption that prevailed during the time of the first and second Georges, it is quite true that many members received emoluments from the Crown to secure their support to the Government of the day, but there is nothing to prove that that corruption was owing to the long duration of the parliaments. It was owing to an entirely different cause. If that were the cause of the corruption, why should it not still have gone on in the same way? The Minister for Lands, in his speech, argued that the last Parliament existed a great deal too long, as was proved by the fact that certain measures were introduced towards the close of the life of that Parliament which there was great danger would be passed, and that the risk was one to which the country would not have been submitted otherwise. If the danger was great at all it would have been much greater had the duration of parliaments been three years instead of five. It was not until the last two sessions that it was looked upon or treated as a danger. At the time the Railway Preliminary Bill was passed it was a popular measure with members of the House, and if that Parliament had had only a three years' life the next Parliament that came in would have been strongly in favour of the Transcontinental Railway, and the land scheme which accompanied it. I say that the danger, instead of being removed, if it was a danger, would have been ten times increased by its being carried out and being now in operation. Another argument the Colonial Treasurer used was that, because we are now endeavouring to give this federation scheme practical effect, we should therefore try to assimilate the position of the colonies as much as possible. But what is one of the things which that federation scheme proposes? Instead of assimilating, it does not propose that each colony should have either non-elective or elective members, but allows each colony to choose whichever form it likes of appointing its members. It is useless, therefore, to use an argument of that

kind when there is an inconsistency in the Federation Bill which is greater than the inconsistency which now exists in the duration of parliaments in the different colonies. The hon. gentleman's argument is an absurd one. Setting aside these matters, the Bill itself is not an important one. It has been shown, as we all know, that two parliaments existed pretty nearly their full length of time; but, with the exception of these, our parliaments have been short in duration. All the other parliaments we have had, with the exception of the last two, have not lasted for more than about two years and a-half, or, at all events, for considerably less than three years; and the fact that two parliaments have existed so long is no argument in favour of the Bill. Again, if we come to the fact that much more interest is taken in politics now than was taken a few years ago, the argument is very much in favour of parliaments, in future, being very much shorter than the last two. The fact that so many changes do occur, as has been said, is also an argument that parliaments in future will be much shorter. Again, I say the fact that the last two parliaments were so long does not arise from the circumstance that the law allowed them to last so long. The colony was in a great state of prosperity, and in an increasing state of prosperity, from the time the last Parliament was elected until the time it was dissolved. There is no denying that fact. In the case of the Parliament before that, the Government managed to come in when the country was not in a prosperous state, and it got worse and worse every year until they left. But then that was all owing to Providence treating the colony and Ministers so badly every year, and entering the Treasury and making a big deficit in every year. Of course, all that was due to Providence. But when the next Government came in Providence took a turn in the other direction, and seemed to be in favour of the McIlwraith Government. The hon. gentleman spoke of bad seasons, but it did seem strange that Providence should have provided bad seasons for the hon. gentleman's Government, and then have provided good seasons and an overflowing Treasury for the next Government.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: With the help of the Railway Reserves Fund.

Mr. NORTON: I admit that. I do not wish to pass over the Railway Reserves Fund, as it was owing to it that we got a start. It helped to fill up the enormous gulf the hon. member left in the Treasury. It was something terrible; and it took nearly the whole of that fund to fill it up, and bring things to a level for the next Government to start with. From that time forward there was an improvement in the railway receipts every year, and after the second year there was a surplus instead of a deficit, and that surplus increased until the last half-year of the McIlwraith Government being in power. From July of last year to the end of December there was a larger surplus than there had ever been in the Treasury before, but now we know pretty well things are going the other way. They have commenced at once to go backwards, and of course it is all attributed to Providence. Putting aside all these questions, however, I will say one word with regard to the Bill itself. Is it necessary? Does anyone care twopence about it, or is it merely a political Bill? We all know very well it is a political Bill. Apart from the mere matter of politics, nobody cares two straws whether a Triennial Parliaments Bill is brought into this House or not, or whether a word is spoken or heard about it. We know it was brought in during the last session in which Sir Thomas McIlwraith was Premier, and, I think, in the

session before; but it was brought in then for political reasons; and nothing but political reasons. Knowing this, can it be expected that hon. members will take any special interest in it? I do not, for one. So far as the absolute duration of parliament is concerned, I care little whether it is three years or five years, but I object to this Bill passing without some stronger reason being given why the present term should be reduced. No reason has been shown yet. We know it is a sham, because it is not made to apply to the present Parliament. We know that perfectly well. Hon. members opposite think they will have the run of the Treasury benches for another five years.

Mr. MOREHEAD: You forget there is to be payment of members.

Mr. NORTON: With regard to the question of payment of members, that is, perhaps, a little outside the scope of the Bill, but if it is the intention of the Government to bring in a Bill—and I believe they have brought one in this evening, though I have not seen it—to make payment of members applicable during the present Parliament, I say the whole basis of their arguments in favour of the principle of this Bill not being applied to the present Parliament is cut from under their feet at once. I say it is worse than absurd to use an argument that the Bill before us should not apply to the present Parliament, and then attempt, as soon as this Bill is done with, to introduce another Bill making a much more dangerous system apply to the present Parliament. I have not much more to say upon the Bill, as I do not wish to detain the House. I presume the second reading will be carried, but I hope it will not go beyond that; and I can only say that if it does I for one will do my best to get the 1st clause either amended or cut out altogether. I am perfectly satisfied that the members on this side of the House, however far they may acquiesce in the Bill as a Bill, will offer very serious objection to the 1st clause being passed in its present state. Either this Bill should apply to the present Parliament, or it should not be enforced at all.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought the strongest arguments in favour of the passing of the Bill were contained in the fact of so many members taking an interest in its second reading. Hon. members would have observed that all the Bills introduced during the present session had been so accurately drafted, and the Premier had so clearly introduced them, that there had been no amendments made in them.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why, the Government have been amending Bills all this session!

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was saying that the Premier had introduced Bills during the present session in such a clear, logical, and decisive way that argument was shut up altogether, and there had been no arguments, either on one side or the other. He should like to see a little more interest taken in the second reading of Bills on both sides of the House. He did not know whether it was that Bills were so well prepared or were placed so clearly before the House, but they were being passed through very fast during the present session, and he thought it would be well if hon. members gave a little more time to the measures passing through.

Mr. NORTON: Hear, hear! Stick to that!

Mr. MACFARLANE: The hon. the leader of the Opposition said that if the Bill passed into law it would be a most damaging measure, but he did not tell them where the damage was to come in—whether it was to damage that side

of the House, or the other, or to damage the colony as a whole. From the hon. member's standpoint it might be a damaging measure, but from his (Mr. Macfarlane's) it was one that would please the colony perhaps as much as any Bill that had been passed during the present session. He knew that during the late election in his district it was one of the principal matters brought before the constituencies—one of the test questions of members being returned to the House; and he might say that the measure was particularly pleasing to himself, because he was brought up as a Radical, and his recollection of the charter demanded by the old Chartists—many of whom lost their lives, foolishly perhaps, in the way they went to work to demand their rights—was that this was one of the points of it, and therefore he was very pleased to see it introduced into that House, and he hoped it would be passed during the present session. The principal argument on the other side had been that the Bill ought to apply to the present Parliament, and so far as he was concerned he should like to see it applied to the present Parliament to this extent: that from the passing of the Bill into an Act the present Parliament should last for three years. That he thought would be only fair, and he should be very pleased if the hon. the Premier would accept the suggestion, and please the Opposition by going with them thus far. The hon. member for Bowen referred to the galleries when speaking, to show that no one took any interest in the Bill; but he would point out that it was not because people did not take interest in the Bill that there were so few in the galleries, but because legislation was going on at such a rapid rate that the public outside did not know when Bills would come before the House, and, consequently, were not present. He believed that had it been known that the Bill was coming on that evening the galleries would have been crowded. He believed that the majority of the members of that House and a majority of the electors of the colony were in favour of the Bill; and if that were the case it was one of the strongest arguments why it should be passed. He believed that if the Bill were passed into law it would be very beneficial to the colony. It would give electors much more interest in the elections than they took at present. Although they took a great amount of interest now, he believed that the oftener members had to go before their constituents and receive their approval, the more interest electors would take in the affairs of the colony, and in everything that concerned its welfare and material prosperity. By that means the Bill would not only do no harm, but great good, to the colony at large; and he had very great pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Mr. FERGUSON said he had listened with a great deal of attention to all the arguments used in favour of the Bill, but he had heard nothing yet to convince him that there was any necessity or any reason for making the proposed change in the Constitution of the colony. As a rule, he always listened with pleasure to the hon. the Premier when introducing any measure to the House, because he generally did so very clearly, and used very good arguments from his own point of view; but that night he had not used any arguments whatever in support of the Bill. To his mind the hon. gentleman had not got the measure at heart, or he would have introduced it in a much abler manner. They had been told that the average duration of parliaments in Queensland had been three years, and if the proposed change was made, taking the same basis, the duration would be about two years; and he was sure that no hon. member would say it was desirable to have a general election every two or three years.

Everyone knew that at the time of a general election the whole colony was disturbed for six or eight months. Commerce was disordered, everyone was upset; and if elections had to be contested as often as proposed, one result would be that they would be put into the hands of men who could afford to contest them. There was a good deal of expense attached to elections. As the colony grew in importance those expenses would increase in proportion, and then, instead of having men who were not in a position to stand the expense of an election every two or three years, they would have those who were able to do so; and he was sure that frequent changes would not be for the benefit of the colony. In proof of that, he considered the change that took place at the last election a loss to the colony. Everyone knew that the prosperity of the colony had been greatly checked by that change. Two of the most important industries of the colony, the pastoral and the sugar industries, had received an enormous check through it, and if such change were to take place every two or three years the people of the colony would never be settled—they would never know what was going to happen. No matter what change took place, it affected the commerce and industries of the colony to a certain extent. He did not say it applied to one side of the House more than another; but it was very clear throughout the colony that since the last change the sugar industry had come to a standstill; not that the Government had done anything to effect that change, but because the public, to a large extent, had lost confidence in that respect. The pastoral and agricultural interest had lost confidence as well; and very likely, before three years were over, if the Bill passed, this change would take place, when the people were beginning to find that the present Government were not so bad as was expected, and to have confidence in them. If continual changes were to take place in that way, the country would always be unsettled. No matter what Government were in power, they must be in office two or three years before they could mature their policy and carry it into effect. Any important measure would take twelve months to prepare and carry through, and if changes were to take place every two or three years the term of office of a Government would have almost expired before their measures could be properly explained to the country; and there was no one so likely to administer measures so well for the first year or two after they were passed as the Government who passed them. The last Government, he thought, was in power about three years when the Divisional Boards Act and the British-India mail contract were passed. Suppose a change had taken place then, they could judge, from the opposition those measures received from the party now in power, whether they would have been administered properly. Would they not have been strangled in their very birth? A case of that sort showed quite clearly that a Parliament with a duration of only three years would be a mistake to the colony. Some hon. members had said that if the Government would agree to make the Bill apply to the present Parliament they would not oppose it so strongly; but he would oppose it even if the Government were to grant that. He opposed it last time it came before the House; and twice, when he was before his constituents, at election time, he had brought the question up himself, and stated that if ever it came before the House he would oppose it; and each time he was returned at the head of the poll. So that the whole colony was not in favour of the measure, as far as his electorate was

concerned. He hoped that if it passed the second reading, as no doubt it would, it would be opposed in such a way in committee that it would not be allowed to go much further.

Mr. ALAND said he wished to take notice of an argument, which appeared to be the argument of the hon. member who had just sat down, and also of several other members on the opposite side of the House. They seemed to think that a triennial parliament necessarily implied that there was only to be three years' tenure of office by an existing Government.

Mr. NORTON: Not at all.

Mr. ALAND said, notwithstanding the interruption of the hon. member for Port Curtis, that was the argument used by the hon. member who had just sat down; and he had also stated that the time of an election was always a disastrous time for the country; and in support of what he said he referred to the cloud that came over what he was pleased to term the two principal industries of the colony. Now, he (Mr. Aland) did not attribute that cloud to any change of Government, but to the express wish of the people that certain laws and regulations should be made in other terms than those which were in force. Personally, he was somewhat unlike some other members on the opposite side who had expressed themselves as not caring very much personally for this thing, and had said that they would as soon have an election every three years as every five years. He confessed that, for his own part, he would rather go up for election once in five years than once in three years; but he believed it was the will of the people of the colony that they should have triennial parliaments. At the last general election, he thought he was right when he stated that in the electorate represented by the Speaker and himself the question was not much talked about; but he knew that on previous occasions the Speaker had frequently advocated triennial parliaments, and the voice of the constituency of Drayton and Toowoomba was certainly in favour of them. He held that it would be a good thing for the country for this reason: that if a Government were in power who were really giving satisfaction to the people they would be returned to office with such a majority as would help them most materially in their efforts for the advancement of the colony. The hon. member for Port Curtis had made some allusion to the fact that in the home country there was no large outcry—no manifestation of public opinion—as to the length of the parliaments in England. Perhaps there had not been very much feeling shown upon the subject; but he thought they all knew that in the old country they were very slow indeed in matters of reform. It was only recently that they had adopted voting by ballot, and everyone knew that at the present time, although there had been an agitation for many years upon the subject, the political franchise at home was not so large as in these colonies. They knew that the matter of triennial parliaments and the matter of payment of members were also being agitated in the old country; and he had no doubt they would find at some future time that members were being paid in the Parliament of England, and that their sittings would only be for three years.

Mr. PALMER said he thought it would be admitted that the small Bill before the House dealt with a matter of very great importance—the alteration of the Constitution of the colony—and, although he supposed it mattered very little to the House what a new member might have to say on the subject, there were two points which had struck him to which he would refer. One of these had been alluded to by the hon. member for Bowen—namely, that the Premier,

when he introduced his Bill in September, 1881—at the close of the session, when he had very little chance of carrying it—included in the Bill the Parliament then sitting. He had also noticed that in introducing some very important measures within the last few days the Premier had displayed a great amount of ability and even eloquence. He would ask the House whether he had evinced the same amount of sincerity in introducing the small measure now before them. There certainly was a great lack of warmth and earnestness in the Premier's manner in putting that Bill before the House: he did not display the tact and eloquence of which he had given such striking examples, especially when he introduced the Federal Council Bill. The proper time for the duration of parliaments was, no doubt, a good deal a matter of opinion, as might be seen from the different practice in different countries. Some thought annual parliaments were best, some triennial, some quinquennial, some septennial: they ranged from one year to seven. The results in all cases were still uncertain. He would ask them to look at the ages of the Queensland Parliaments. The first one lasted three years—he admitted that was rather a happy coincidence for the Premier; the second, three years and ten months; the third, one year and three weeks; the fourth, one year and eight months; and the fifth, only seven months. The next two had been alluded to as being rather long; the first was for four years ten months, and the second for four years six months. The ninth was still sitting, and he hoped it would continue to sit until they hatched something. If the average with a quinquennial régime was two years and a-half, the probability was that it would come down to about eighteen months with triennial parliaments. They all knew that at elections a great many promises were made by those who were anxious to be returned. Hon. members came to that House with good intentions—a certain warm place was, they were told, paved with good intentions—but the first year that a member was in the House was lost in trying to learn its forms and in getting used to its ways; the second year he could make himself useful; and the third year was spent in trying, like a man on a buckjumper, to find a soft place to fall on. That would be the case if they had triennial parliaments. As the hon. member for Rockhampton had said, elections always disturbed people's minds; and if there was a general election every three years they would be disturbed a great deal more. He thought the jump from five years to three was too great. He scarcely followed the Premier when he said that members after a certain time did not represent their constituents.

The PREMIER: Some of them.

Mr. PALMER said he thought that was an argument for a redistribution of electorates, rather than for shortening parliaments. And how would it refer to districts in the far North and the West, where a member had to ride 1,500 and 2,000 miles to visit the different parts of his constituency? The Colonial Treasurer had gone back to the year 1771 for a precedent, which seemed rather a far way back. Reference had also been made to distant countries, such as Belgium, France, and Portugal, where the circumstances were quite different from those here, and where the same rule would not apply as here. The hon. gentleman urged that it was not desirable that the present Government should commit *felo de se*, which would be done if they applied the Bill to the present Parliament. It was also said that the question was set before the constituencies at the late election. He did not

think he had fallen away in the opinion of his electorate—he had not the slightest fear of going before it at any time—and he could state that the question was never mentioned there during the late election.

Mr. KATES said he desired to dispel the idea outside the House, that the Bill had anything to do with the Bill to recoup the expenses of members, which was to be read a second time next Tuesday. He did not at all identify them. He was as much opposed to payment of members as he was in favour of triennial parliaments. He had been before his constituents for the last five or six years. He had submitted to four elections in that time, and on each occasion he had ascertained that his constituents were in favour of a Bill like the present. So it was at Warwick, Toowoomba, and Aubigny. It often happened that members got into the House who did not represent the opinions of their constituents. Were constituencies to put up with a bad member for five years, if they could get rid of him at the end of three years? If a member was a good member he ought to be elected again; if not, he ought to be dismissed at the end of three years. He had no objection to limit the duration of the present Parliament to three years, and if the Premier introduced an amendment to that effect he would support it. New South Wales, Victoria, New Zealand, and South Australia had, after mature consideration, he supposed, adopted triennial parliaments; and if the system was good for them it was good for Queensland. If the present Parliament went on as it had done during the last three weeks, it would have done more business at the end of three years than any five years' parliament had done.

Mr. FOOTE said he did not wish to give a silent vote on the question. A great deal could be said both for and against the Bill. He could not say that he was so wrapped up in it as some hon. members were. He thought political commotion was not a thing to be desired. At a general election there was a great deal of strife which did not die out quickly, and which in some cases was remembered for years. That strife, however, could not be avoided. The franchise was placed in the hands of the people, and there were contending parties, some having one view and some another. He thought it should be the desire of the House to act on the voice of the people in the way that would be most conducive to the interests of the country. He had no doubt every member of the House had the interest of the colony at heart, and desired to adopt such legislation as would cause it to progress. Although he intended to vote for the second reading of the Bill, he must say that while the question of triennial parliaments had been before the constituencies it had not been so prominent as other questions; at the same time, whenever it had been mooted, as a general rule it had been accepted by the people. The Bill had been regarded as a liberal measure—as one which was calculated to benefit the people—but he must say that, taken in conjunction with the Payment of Members Bill, it seemed rather dangerous. He intended to give his opinion upon that measure now, although he had not often had an opportunity of doing so before; but hon. members who knew him would know that on previous occasions he had voted against the Payment of Members Bill. On one occasion he did support it, but only that it might pass its second reading, and with no intention of its going any further. He intended to adopt the same course again, as he did not consider that measure a safe one. More especially would it be dangerous when taken with the Triennial Parliaments Bill, for the simple reason that they would then have men in Parlia-

ment whose only recommendation was that they had the gift of the gab, and who had no great stake in the country. If that class of men could see sufficient emolument in the payment of members they would find them setting themselves up as politicians, and, in many instances, becoming members of Parliament. It would be hard to say what effect that would have, but for his own part he thought the interests of the colony were best entrusted to those men who had a stake in the country, and its welfare at heart, rather than to clap-trap politicians who were here to-day and gone to-morrow. That was one of his reasons why he should oppose the Payment of Members Bill; in reference to the present Bill, he had a reason for supporting it. He was in the House during the two long Parliaments, and he must say that the first of those Parliaments, at any rate, sat two years too long. It was known to hon. members that although the Government had a majority at their back, they had not a majority whom they could control, in the manner they ought to be able to control them in order to carry important measures and reject objectionable ones. It would have been much better if that Parliament had gone to the country at the end of three years. Now, he would refer to the last Parliament, and it must be known that if that Parliament had gone to the country at the end of three years they would have stood a good chance of being sent back again, but for the last year of its existence it was quite clear that it was not representing the wishes of the country. That was the second instance which they had before them to show that a triennial parliament would be a great deal better for the country and better adapted to the interests of the colonies. It was hard to say how long the present Government might exist; they could not possibly tell. They were bringing forward some very important measures; and he must say they were plucky so far, because they had introduced a Land Bill which, if passed, would revolutionise the present state of things; and what effect that might have upon them it was impossible to say. It might therefore be found advantageous, if the House thought fit, to apply the Triennial Parliaments Bill now before them to the present Parliament, because if the Government were engaged in passing very great and important measures and they got into difficulties, they could then appeal to the country. As he believed the Bill was for the benefit of the colony he should support it.

Mr. BLACK said it seemed to him that the strongest argument brought forward by the other side in favour of the Bill was the fact that the two previous Governments, each of which lasted nearly five years, had outlived their usefulness, and outlived the confidence of the country. Well, if there was anything in that argument at all, it was one reason why the Bill should not be allowed to pass, because it was not made to apply to the present Parliament. If there was anything in that argument—if it was true that the country suffered by the previous Parliament lasting nearly five years, why should that injury to the country be perpetuated for the next five years? Personally, he did not feel very strongly upon the subject. He thought a great deal might be said both for and against the measure, and he was not prepared to say that he was opposed to triennial parliaments. Notwithstanding what had been said about the result of the two previous Parliaments, he could endorse what the member for Rockhampton (Mr. Ferguson) had said. After speaking about the undoubted prosperity which the colony had enjoyed under the previous five years' administration, that hon. member went on to say that that prosperity had undoubtedly received a severe shock the very moment the present Government took office; and he (Mr. Black) had

no hesitation in saying that, if they did not succeed in applying the principle of triennial parliaments to the present Parliament, the almost utter ruin of some of the chief industries of the colony must be the result. On those grounds, although a great deal could be said in favour of five-year parliaments, if the ruin which the present Government had initiated in the principal of our industries did not receive a check, three years of ruin would be found quite enough for one industry, that he knew of, to stand. If they were to have five years of the present system, he thought the public might generally understand that that one industry at all events would be annihilated. What the effect was going to be on the squatting industry was a matter he should not enter into at present, although he might say that the want of confidence which had been brought about by the present Administration was just as apparent in connection with that industry as it was with the agricultural industries of Queensland. It had been said by several hon. gentlemen that the present was a matter that the constituencies thought strongly about during the last election. He could not say what might have been the case in the southern portions of the colony, but he was certain it was not a matter that the constituencies cared much about in the northern portion. If, however, the subject were to be brought prominently forward he was perfectly certain the electors would say that any member who voted for the continuation for five years of the present Government, and then three years for all future Governments, was extremely inconsistent, and that if the measure was to pass at all it should be made to apply to the present Government. One dangerous element in connection with the Bill was the proposed principle of payment of members. It had been said that because quinquennial parliaments existed on an average for only two and a-half years that triennial parliaments would last a proportionately shorter time; but he differed from the hon. gentlemen who held that view. Triennial parliaments, together with payment of members, would have the probable effect of making all the parliaments exist three years, for the reason, as pointed out by the hon. member for Bundamba, that a different class of men would enter the political arena. There would be the ordinary stump orator.

The PREMIER: Wait till you have seen the Bill.

Mr. BLACK said he had seen the Bill. There would be the man who would say—"Now I can afford, in consequence of the emoluments attached to the position, to go into the House"—a position he otherwise would never assume; and, actuated by the desire of securing those emoluments, he would take good care to retain them as long as he possibly could. And a Government coming into power, supported by a majority of such gentlemen, would take very good care to remain in office for the whole of the three years. They saw the thing exemplified in Victoria, where a number of professional politicians stuck to the Government for the sake of the £300 a year. They did not want to go back to their constituencies, because they knew that with every general election they risked the loss of what was, in many cases, their means of subsistence; and the consequence was, that they voted with the Government for the sake of keeping them in power. The hon. member for Ipswich (Mr. Macfarlane), in speaking about the probable short duration of parliaments, referred to the very complete way in which the Government had brought in their measures. Did the hon. gentleman remember the lamentable attempts made at legislation last session, when Bills were brought in which, when they left the

House, could hardly be recognised by the hon. gentleman who introduced them?

Mr. MACFARLANE: I was speaking in reference to this session.

Mr. BLACK said he hoped that, seeing the lamentable result of their Bills last session, the Government would take a little more care in drafting their measures in future. Up to the present time, with the exception of measures of no particular interest to the community—of course, he excepted the Land Bill—all the measures introduced during the present session consisted of one or two clauses, and even those short Bills had been considerably altered. The legislation of the colony was apt to suffer by the system of triennial parliaments. Assuming that the present Parliament lasted only three sessions, of which one had already elapsed, and assuming, which was very probable, that the Land Bill would not go through during the present session—with a triennial parliament, fair play would not be given to that measure, which might be a very good one, if it were passed in the last session of Parliament. The Government which had the framing and passing of such an important measure should undoubtedly be allowed a fair and reasonable time to test their policy, and to test the action of their important measures, before a Government, which probably had been hostile to some of their principles, came into power and had the opportunity of reversing their policy, or of giving it such a lukewarm support in its administration as to make it a failure. In connection with that, he need only refer to what was mentioned by the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Ferguson). Had Sir Thomas McLlwraith not had the opportunity of three years in office to put the Divisional Boards Act into force, the opposite party, who were extremely hostile to him throughout the passage of that measure, would undoubtedly have repealed it during the first session they were in power; and by that means a measure which had been of undoubted benefit to the colony at large would never have had the trial to which it was fairly entitled. On those grounds he should oppose the Bill as it stood; but should the 1st clause be struck out in committee, and the principle of Triennial Parliaments made to apply to the present Parliament, he should give the measure his hearty support.

Mr. JORDAN said he hoped the Premier would adhere to the Bill in its present form. Some of the arguments used by the hon. member for Mackay were quite sufficient to show that it would be unwise to alter the measure. It was very important that any Ministry should have time, if they made important changes in legislation, to see that their measures had fair play and were fully carried out. He did not agree with the hon. member for Bundamba that the Land Bill was revolutionary, in any sense of the word. A Land Bill was the most important of all the measures that could possibly be brought before the consideration of the Parliament of Queensland, where there was such a vast territory at present unpopulated; and it would be a great calamity if, after passing such a measure—he felt sure that it would be passed during the present session, in spite of what the hon. member for Mackay said—its administration should not be left for a time in the hands of those by whom it was introduced. Hon. gentlemen opposite were generally fair, and they would no doubt forgive him if he said that, from his peculiar idiosyncrasies and the peculiar way in which he had been accustomed to look on Australian politics and politics generally, he held the opinion that Queensland could not suffer a greater calamity than that her government

should be for a lengthened period in the hands of the hon. gentlemen opposite. He would not say anything disrespectful of hon. gentlemen on the other side. He had always listened to them patiently, and generally with a great deal of pleasure; but he held it to be the greatest calamity that could possibly happen to the country that it should be for any lengthened period under their control. He was disposed to think it would be a long time before that calamity overtook them again. There was one faculty which they possessed more than any other which he would give them credit for, and that was one for sticking to their offices. They were beaten over and over again, but they did not leave office if they could possibly help it. They had had a long time of office, and did the colony a great deal of harm; they might have been inclined to do good, but they had done harm. The hon. the Premier had just come in time to save it from utter ruin. The hand of Providence came forward just when the colony was about to be precipitated into an abyss of ruin. The Premier had been carried into his position by the voice of the people, and the people would be disappointed if he accepted the suggestion to alter his Bill. If the Land Bill became law, and they got a suitable Immigration Bill alongside of it—as he hoped they should—there would be a prospect, if they were given time, of populating the colony. They would introduce a system which would really bring about prosperity; but they must have time to work it out. He held that it would be a fatal mistake if the Premier accepted the suggestion to limit the present Parliament to three years. Let them have five years to repair the mischief that was done by hon. gentlemen on the opposite side during the past five years.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I will give you seven.

Mr. SALKELD said he rose to make a few remarks with regard to what was said by the hon. member for Mackay about the payment of members. It would be far better to have members' expenses paid, or even to pay them fixed salaries, than to have them paid by cliques or classes. One of the arguments, or rather matters, brought forward by the members of the Opposition was that the Premier had not displayed his usual earnestness in bringing the Bill forward for its second reading. The Premier, to his mind, put the matter most clearly before the House. He did not consider it absolutely necessary to go into any very elaborate details, but certainly he (Mr. Salkeld) did not think that the hon. members opposite should have found fault with him for not having opened the debate by showing the dangers incidental to the present system of five years' parliaments, and citing examples from the doings of the late Parliament. That would immediately have raised anti-feelings on the other side. Hon. members had pointed out that the late Parliament, and the one before it, for the last two or three years of their existence, did not represent the people of the colony. He believed that if the Douglas Ministry had left office at the end of three years they would have been returned to power again, and anyone who took an interest in politics at that time would be of that opinion. He did not think that the late Government would have come back to power again; but still they would not have been anything like so unpopular as they were. Perhaps they would not have had time to disclose their plans so fully before the country. He did not see what reason hon. members could have for objecting to the House going before the country every three years. The spirit of

representative government would demand that they should be returned every year; and perhaps the reason why that was not the custom was that it was found impracticable. But to do so in every three years would be practicable. Some hon. gentlemen seemed very much afraid of having an election every three years although they professed to be quite willing to go before their constituents personally. The hon. member for Toowoomba put the case very plainly. He believed in the principle; but, for his own part, would rather have an election only every five years. There was a great deal of worry and excitement, and also a great deal of expense connected with elections. It was alleged that by reducing the term of parliaments the cost of elections would be increased; but he believed that it would be considerably reduced—there would not be that anxiety of interested persons who were those who spent money at elections. He certainly heartily approved of the Bill. Nothing short of triennial parliaments would satisfy the great mass of the people of the colony. But there were some drawbacks to be considered. The hon. member for Burke looked at it from a personal point of view. To him an election would be a matter of great inconvenience. If all the colony were so widely scattered as the electorate represented by that hon. gentleman, it would be a very serious matter; but while he saw the force of the hon. member's argument in regard to that electorate, and one or two others, was it reasonable to say or suppose that the settled parts of the colony, with a mass of population, should put up with five years' parliaments because two or three electorates were sparsely populated and of wide extent? He did not intend to say any more on the matter, and trusted that the Bill would become law.

The Hon. B. B. MORETON said he would like to offer a few words on the Bill before the House, not so much to bring forward any fresh arguments on the subject, which had already been thoroughly discussed *pro* and *con.*, as to state the reason for the vote he intended to give. He was not going to support the Bill, because, when before his constituents at the general election, he gave out distinctly that he was not in favour of triennial parliaments. There had been some reference made to the additional expense which the triennial system would cause, and the hon. member who had just sat down had evidently alluded to the argument on that aspect of the question, with the idea that it was used with respect to members themselves, but, as he understood the argument, it was applied to the expenses which the country would incur. At the present time every election cost about £5,000, and if the Bill became law, the cost every six years would be £10,000, instead of £5,000, as was the case under the existing system. Another hon. member who spoke in favour of the measure said corruption was more likely to occur in a five years' than in a three years' parliament. He (Mr. Moreton) doubted that very much, because if there were people who would be corrupted, and others who would corrupt them, corruption would occur whatever might be the duration of Parliament.

Mr. FRASER said that for a similar reason to that given by the hon. gentleman who had just resumed his seat, namely that he had promised his constituents that he would support a measure of the kind, he intended to vote for the Bill. It was not a measure upon which he felt very keenly. He admitted that a great deal might be said on both sides of the question. He observed that during the whole of the discussion one of the principal

arguments advanced by the Premier, in moving the second reading, had been entirely ignored or overlooked, and that was that the circumstances of a new country like Queensland changed at such a rate that, in every period of three years, there was a complete alteration in the circumstances of the constituencies, and very likely in the views and opinions of the constituents. Looking at the question from that point of view he was induced to give his support to the Bill. It was a very singular thing that it was admitted on both sides of the House that the only two parliaments in Brisbane which lived the full term of five years, had during the last two years of their existence completely outlived their usefulness. It might perhaps be said by some that the last Parliament did not outlive its power of useful legislation, but he thought there was proof to the contrary in the fact that as soon as they appealed to the country the Government came back to that House largely in a minority. And hon. members knew perfectly well, and freely admitted, that the Douglas Administration, which lived the full length of the tenure in one form or another, outlived its usefulness for two sessions. He thought, looking at the history of previous parliaments, that it would do no harm to the colony if they recognised the triennial system as a principle of their Constitution. A good deal had been introduced in the course of the discussion which had really no bearing on the question. For instance, they had been assured that, at the advent of the late administration, the affairs of the colony were in a deplorable condition, and that no sooner had they taken their seats on the Treasury benches than the tide of prosperity turned. But they knew differently; they knew that it was only towards the end of the second session that the affairs of the colony began to revive, and that that revival—he said this with all due deference to the ability of that Administration—was owing to a change which not only came over Queensland, but over the whole of the colonies, and over the whole commercial world. It had been attempted to damage the measure before the House, by associating it with another measure, the Members Expenses Bill. Hon. members were told that if they adopted the triennial system, together with payment of members, they would very seriously interfere with the character of the House. He admitted that there would be some force in that argument if it was intended to make compensation to members, but, as he understood the proposal, it was for the payment of the expenses of members who came from a distance. If there were stump orators sent into the House, as it was said there would be, it would be from the great centres of population; and members from such populous constituencies as those around the metropolis would not be benefited by the proposed Bill. Reference had also been made to political events in England, and they were told that the system in force there was even longer than the quinquennial system, and had worked well. It had been justly observed that changes of the kind under discussion were brought about in a very gradual manner in the old country. How long did it take before vote by ballot was obtained in England? It was, he was sure, only a question of time before, along with the arrangement of the electorates and the extension of the franchise, triennial parliaments would be adopted in England. He knew that, in the case of many members, there would be a great deal of inconvenience in connection with triennial elections, and they were also told that such elections would involve the country in a large additional expense. He questioned very much whether the expense incurred by a system of triennial elections might not be on the whole a great saving to the colony. Supposing that during the last two

years of a parliament it pursued a course adverse to the best interests of the colony, would any one deny that it would be far cheaper to the country to turn out that parliament at the end of three years and incur the expense of an election, than that it should continue a course of hurtful legislation? Great objection had been taken to the idea that the Bill was not intended to apply to the present Parliament. He (Mr. Fraser) was quite indifferent as to whether it did or did not so apply; but he would point out that it was no part of the principle of the system. It was merely a matter of detail which could be dealt with in committee, and if the majority thought proper it might be made to apply to the present Parliament. So far as that objection was concerned it had no force whatever, as far as he could see. He was not very much bound up in the question, and did not care personally whether the duration of parliaments was five years or three; but he was influenced in the vote he intended to give on the second reading of the Bill by the fact that this was a young country making such rapid progress in every direction that three years was as long as they could reasonably expect that any Parliament could expect to represent the feelings and sentiments of the constituencies.

Mr. STEVENSON said the Bill was evidently not one of the non-contentious measures to which the Premier alluded the other night, for they found that every argument advanced in favour of it centred in the assertion that the late Government were too long in power; and the idea seemed to be that if ever the Opposition got into office again care would be taken that they should not remain in power very long. That was the whole gist of the arguments advanced in favour of the Bill. The hon. member (Mr. Fraser) had just said that the late Government outlived its usefulness.

Mr. FRASER: And the previous Government too.

Mr. STEVENSON said the Minister for Lands had also given them something in the same direction, but his argument went very much against himself, as he actually disproved what he wanted to prove. The hon. gentleman told them that the late Government brought forward revolutionary measures which were calculated to do great harm to the country, and that had it not been for the stand taken against them by two or three members they would have become law. Did not that prove that there was no necessity for the present Bill—that, if any measure was brought forward which the country did not want, it would make its will known through the representatives, whether they had triennial or quinquennial parliaments, and thus prevent any such measure from being passed? One hon. member (Mr. Jordan) had told the House that he considered it would have been a great calamity had the late Government remained any longer in power. He (Mr. Stevenson) was of opinion that a majority of the people of the colony now believed it would be a very great calamity if the present Ministry remained very long in power, and the longer they remained in power the more strongly would that feeling prevail. They had been told over and over again that the late Ministry were doing harm to the colony—bringing in measures to do injury to the colony. But what were the facts? Everybody would admit that during the reign of the late Government, the colony had nothing but prosperity, whereas, as soon as the present Government assumed office, people outside lost confidence in the colony; no capital to speak of had been introduced since that time, and the great idea amongst them was to get what they had invested in Queensland out of it, instead of investing more. The Minister for Lands, with the Premier, had already done far

more to injure the colony than the late Government did during the whole of their long term of office—the Premier with regard to the sugar industry, and the Minister for Lands with regard to the pastoral industry. No argument had been adduced showing that there was any necessity for the present Bill. On the contrary, it had been plainly shown that there was no necessity for it. The Minister for Lands twitted the leader of the Opposition for having claimed credit for the late Ministry for bringing prosperity to the colony. He (Mr. Stevenson) did not think the Minister for Lands, if he remained in office as long as the late Ministry had done, would ever be accused of bringing prosperity to the colony. A good deal had been said on the point that the Bill should not take effect on the present Parliament. It would be very desirable that it should do so, and if it did he should feel inclined to give his consent to the measure. No doubt it would take the Minister for Lands five years to get his Land Bill through Parliament, and perhaps that was one reason why it was not intended to bring the present Parliament under the operation of the Bill before them. If the Bill was to be passed at all it was very desirable that it should be made to apply to the present Parliament. They had been told several times that the question of triennial parliaments had been made a test question at the late elections; that he (Mr. Stevenson) denied. He believed the Premier was the only candidate who brought the question prominently before his constituents.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. STEVENSON said he was rather surprised to hear the hon. member for Moreton (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) calling out "No," because that hon. member was defeated twice for Northern constituencies before he found a seat in the House, and it showed that neither of those constituencies which rejected him agreed with him on the question of triennial parliaments. He (Mr. Stevenson) was a good deal in the North during the late elections, and he never heard the subject mentioned once. In fact, it was never taken at all into consideration at the elections, and, as he had said, he believed the Premier was the only candidate who brought it prominently before his constituents. It was very hard to say what were the test questions in that election. They had been told that night, particularly by the Minister for Lands, that it had a good deal to do with the Trans-continental Railway. He denied that. That might have had some little to do with the election of a few members of the House, but he thought that it was the Coolie question which had to do with it. He did not think triennial parliaments had anything to do with the late elections, and that question should not influence any vote given in that House now. He was sorry the Minister for Lands was not in his place, because he would very much like to apply the principle of the Bill before them to that hon. gentleman. That hon. member generally went out when he fancied he was going to be drawn. He should very much like to apply to the Minister for Lands the arguments he brought forward that night, when he said he would even like to see a parliament of two years. He would like to see that applied in the hon. gentleman's case, and let him go before his constituents again, and he was perfectly satisfied he would never come back to that House. If the hon. gentleman were present, he would ask him to resign his seat to-morrow, and he (Mr. Stevenson) would resign his—they need not go so far even as a two years' parliament—and he would contest the same electorate with him, and they would see which of them would come back. Although the hon. gentleman talked in his high-

falutin style, he knew very well how he came back to that House the last time, and he was sure that if his own argument was applied to himself he would not come back again. He was not at all in favour of the Bill—with the exception he had just mentioned—and he thought it should be taken into consideration in connection with the Bill for the payment of members, because he was perfectly satisfied that, as the hon. member for Mackay had said, it had a great deal to do with that Bill. It was very likely that a three years' parliament would last longer than under the present system if they were to have payment of members, because many men would come forward simply for the sake of the emoluments, and would do everything they possibly could to guard against any dissolution of parliament, because it was very likely they would not be returned again, and they would perhaps consider it an undesirable thing to risk giving up their emoluments. He thought, for those reasons, that the Bill before them ought not to pass, and he for one would have very great pleasure in doing all he could to prevent it.

Mr. BROOKES said he would like to say a few words on what he considered a very important Bill, and he would like to approach it as far as possible in an impartial and unbiassed way. His wish was to look at the question as it would be looked at by any person not influenced either in one way or another by party politics. The question which presented itself to his mind was this—What will be the effect of the passing of this Bill upon the colony? To his thinking the effect of the Bill upon the colony would be good. It was in perfect unison with all their political notions, and with the democratic spirit of the colony; and he could conceive no harm which could possibly result from it. When hon. members spoke of expensive elections, and thought that the expenses of elections ought to weigh in the matter, an entirely erroneous ground was taken. The people themselves paid the expenses of elections; and he thought that any measure that would facilitate the intercourse and make it clear and more intelligent between the constituencies and the members—any such measure as that should have the approval of that House. There was undoubtedly such a thing as that House losing its hold upon public opinion; they had seen that, and had seen it very lately. They had seen also a Ministry holding on to power in the teeth of the public wishes and will. He had no wish to ever see that again. It worked for evil—unmitigated evil. The Speaker would bear him out that that House witnessed efforts being made by a Ministry sitting on his side of the House to pass measures which were not in the interests of the people of the colony at all, but in the interests of capitalists—in the interests of foreigners, he might say; and the whole tenor of their policy was to work their public funds, and their public lands, and their public property of every form, not for the welfare of the people, but for the welfare of a favoured few. He thought that any impartial observer of the events of the last two or three sessions must arrive at the conclusion that, if the measure now before the House would put ever so slight a barrier against such a state of things ever occurring again, it ought to pass. Some allusion had been made to the short period of parliament taken as an average ever since they had parliaments; but there might lie hidden a fallacy in that remark. At all events, according to the way he had been looking into the matter it seemed to be the fact that members of that House representing the pastoral interest had their elections three years running, or, at all events, three elections

in four years—in 1870, 1871, and 1873. No mention had been made of that. This was the ninth Parliament, and yet they had three elections in four years. He had alluded to it principally to point out that it was the friends of the people who advocated short parliaments. When he said the friends of the people he meant those who would do most for the people of the colony, whoever they might be—farmers, pastoralists, shopmen, workmen, or wholesale or retail merchants—all and sundry, as opposed to plans and political schemes working for the benefit of the few. He said distinctly that the safety of the colony would be best consulted by bringing the members of that House and their constituents together as frequently as was compatible with prudence and safety, and to regard the question of expenses in such a matter was really very mistaken economy; because, if they wished to exercise it, they might have Ministries in that House spending thousands and hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the representatives of the people powerless to resist. Those were incidents touching parliaments of long duration. It was the wish of the present Government to limit that risk, and bring it within compass. Some hon. members said that they were not particularly anxious with regard to the Bill, one way or the other. Very well, some persons were of an evenly balanced mind; he was not. He wanted the Bill to pass, because he believed it was the right thing, and for other reasons. Was it not odd that, besides Queensland, there was only Tasmania, in all the Australian colonies, that had a five years' parliament? Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales had three years' parliaments; and were they in Queensland, who, when occasion suited, boasted of being the most go-ahead colony of the group, willing to linger behind—to take a back seat in this matter? If he did not wish to be perfectly fair, and to say nothing that would hurt anybody, he thought he could, without much trouble, assign a reason for thus wishing to be behind. He could point out that there had always been a class in the colony wishful for the colony to be behind. But, not to digress too much—the Bill was, in his opinion, a measure that was exactly abreast of the times and the progress of legislation all over the world. In the United States members of the Lower House sat for two years; so that they certainly could not incur any violent danger by having parliaments elected every three years. They were perfectly safe in following the example set by other countries in this matter. There were many other matters that might be touched upon, but he only wished to put the question before the House as it appeared to him as an old colonist. He thought that there was urgent necessity for measures to be taken in the interests of the great body of the people—that it was an indispensable and paramount necessity to make it impossible that there should be a majority on the Government side of the House who would carry measures antagonistic to everybody's interest but their own. He wanted to put an end to that, and he knew of no better measure to secure that end than the Bill before the House; and he should therefore most cordially, without any reservation whatever, vote for the passing of it.

Mr. STEVENS said he did not like to give a silent vote on the question before the House, more especially as it was considered one of great interest in the Logan electorate during the late election. At the same time he could hardly hope to bring forward anything new on the subject, which had been threshed out again and again. It seemed to him that the chief argu-

ment in favour of the Bill was that the condition of things altered so much and so rapidly in the different constituencies of the colony in a few years. He was of that opinion. He knew that at the time he became member for Warrego the district was thoroughly united and unanimous on almost every possible public question, and before five years were over there were three distinct factions in the district upon public matters; and he believed that the same thing would continue for many years in a growing colony like this. He had an objection to the Bill, with respect to the time at which it should take effect. He thought that if they passed a Bill limiting the duration of parliament to three years it should take effect as soon as it passed. He did not see why the present Parliament should last five years, and any succeeding one only three. Any argument that might apply to the duration of future parliaments must apply equally to the present one. He should support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. ARCHER said: I shall not detain the House long, but I wish to say a few words upon the question before the House. I do not intend to go over all the arguments that have been used with reference to the Bill, simply because the matter has been pretty well threshed out by the different speakers. But I should like to say a few words in reference to a matter introduced by the hon. the Premier when he brought the Bill under the notice of the House. He very minutely, and at some length, drew a comparison as to the number of years during which parliaments existed in England, and in countries which have adopted the English Constitution; or, if not adopted it, at all events tried to come as near as possible to that form of government which England enjoyed for years before any other European country had it. He enumerated the different times when the French, German, Scandinavian, and other parliaments sat, and concluded that as the parliaments in the greater number of those countries—in fact, all of them—had a shorter duration than the Parliament of England that was a reason why we should shorten the duration of our Parliament from five years to three. But the hon. gentleman forgot the main question. Let us ask which of those countries that he enumerated have succeeded better, under their shorter terms, than England under her longer term of parliament, in carrying on, not only what we call good government, but in raising the country—taking into consideration territory and population—to that state of prosperity and power to which England has been carried? It is not five years, or three, or seven, that we should look at. It is the effect produced by the longer term. If that can be proved to have been faulty, condemn it, and if you can bring forward any instance of a country with the shorter parliament that has succeeded better in carrying on, in the opinion of the whole world, the principles of liberty for the country it was governing, then, of course, give the preference to the shorter term. But if the whole world still looks to England as the pattern from which they are beginning to draw their constitutions, then to say that because the Parliament of England has a longer term it must be a bad one, is, I think, one of the greatest absurdities I ever heard uttered in this House. Sir, I say that England, with her longest parliament, is the pattern which the whole world is now trying to follow. Even the most intelligent countries of Europe—France, Germany, and Scandinavia—are only now trying to follow in the footsteps of England. We know quite well, sir, that in none of those countries, except perhaps Scandinavia, is personal freedom

respected as it is in England. In France or Germany, a policeman can push you about as much as he likes; and yet they have a triennial parliament. The effect of that despised seven years' Parliament of England has been to show the world how people can govern themselves when they sit long enough to grasp the measures that come before them. I think, therefore, that the first argument of the Colonial Secretary may be put aside as one telling exceedingly much against the Bill that is now before us. There was a good deal said, to my astonishment, about the corruption of the English Parliament in the last century. The corruption of the English Parliament, sir, was very great in those days; in fact, it went so far that one of the most distinguished Premiers of England declared that every man had his price; but it was not from the length of the parliament that it became corrupt;—the long parliament still continues. It was because in those days it was not considered utterly dishonourable to take bribes. Men were known to take bribes for the sake of their votes and were not condemned by society. It is the improved public opinion that has improved the morals of parliament; not shortening the duration of parliament. The American Parliament has been mentioned, and we were told that it sits for two years. It is really for four years, though one-half retire every two years.

The PREMIER: It is two years.

Mr ARCHER: I know one-half of the members retire every two years.

The PREMIER: No; the second article of the Constitution of the United States makes it two years. Here it is.

Mr. ARCHER: It matters little to me how long they sit, sir, but I will say this: that if any hon. gentleman wishes to compare the Representative House of America with the English House of Commons he does exceeding injustice to the English House of Commons. I will not say it is from the short time they sit that they are corrupt, but the popular literature of America, the novels which are read most eagerly in America and on the Continent, dwell upon the fact of the entire corruption of the great mass of the American representatives. I do not say this is caused by the term of service, but it is certainly caused by the payment of members. There is a batch of professional politicians who look upon entering the American House of Representatives as a means of making a very good living, and storing up a good supply for years of want that may come. Why the venerable and highly respected Earl of Chatham should be brought into the debate I do not know. I think the gentleman who introduced his name did so to show that the great man had at one time thought the duration of Parliament ought to be shortened; but although it is 100 years or more since he expressed that opinion, nobody has taken his advice. He was a very great man—perhaps one of the greatest men that ever occupied a seat in the Government of England—but even to this day the English have not seen the necessity of accepting his advice; so that this argument really weakens the case instead of strengthening it. It is not because a very wise man or a very great man has once advised a thing, which has been utterly neglected without any disadvantage, that we are now to adopt it. I may, however, say that, for myself, I am not specially interested in this Bill whether it passes or not. I do not care, personally, one iota; but I do believe that it is my duty to try and prevent its passing as far as I can, believing as I do that a great deal of the benefit which the rulers of this

House might do the country—if they are sitting long enough to become acquainted with the forms of the House, the method of dealing with Bills, and other matters of the kind—will be lost if they only sit three years. I believe it is a good thing to have an influx of new members occasionally, but an influx of new members following each other too rapidly will certainly not be a benefit to the House. It will really be a disadvantage if those older and tried members who have done service to the State, are suddenly to be deprived of their seats from caprice or any other reason. I was rather astonished at a few words which fell from the hon. member for Ipswich, complaining of Bills being passed rapidly through the House. I will explain to him one thing. He appears to have forgotten that a very important Bill which passed its second reading to-night—the Lunacy Bill—has been before the House for two or three years. Both sides of the House are perfectly prepared to pass it, simply because it has been before the House so often that everyone is satisfied it ought to become law. Another measure, the Bills of Exchange Bill, has certainly not taken much discussion. It, too, was introduced by the previous Government and passed the Upper House in a previous year; and comes down to us now when there is no political question at all involved in the matter. If the hon. gentleman wants to hear a long discussion, he will probably get one when Bills come down as to which there is a decided difference of opinion on the two sides of the House. Why we should prolong discussion on matters in which we are entirely agreed with the Government, I really cannot understand; and one reason why we should not discuss them at length is that they have been beaten out in previous years and we have come to an agreement that the Bills ought to become Acts for the benefit of the country. Now, I have repeatedly, when sitting on the other side of the House, both as a supporter of the previous Ministry and as a member of it, heard of that tyrannical majority who were going to carry measures in spite of everything. I feel now that the time of the tyrannical majority has come; it is no use speaking; it is like speaking to the wind to use arguments against that tyrannical majority. I only say this to show the absurdity of talking of a tyrannical majority. I heard it often on the lips of hon. gentlemen last year. Now if a tyrannical majority is a majority the people have sent to govern them, it is folly to talk like that. I repeat it now, and hon. gentlemen smile on that side of the House; they used to whine and complain formerly. I do not complain. The hon. gentlemen have got the majority of the country at their backs; and now they have become the tyrannical majority, against which argument is vain. I hope they will never, when they come to this side of the House, complain again about the tyrannical majority. They now know what it is, and we have been told by the venerable junior member for South Brisbane: "Now we have got a majority, we will do as we like." I do not care about arguing so very much about this Bill; but I will say a few words about what fell from the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Jordan) with regard to the immigration policy of the late Government. The hon. member mentioned several things that had been done by the Government, and, amongst other things, that they would introduce population into the country. I am not aware whether the hon. member thinks that the late additions to the population are good or bad. I only say this: that unfortunately the greatest number of those who have been unable to obtain employment are in the highest ranks of labour—intelligent skilled artisans. I say that ploughmen

and labourers of all kinds, who have come from home, and who are the least intelligent and the least skilful, have found employment; and I find that the people who are now left in the *depôt* are skilled mechanics, carpenters, engineers, and also clerks. I do not think, therefore, that the hon. gentleman should complain that the population introduced has been bad; but it is peculiar that those who cannot obtain employment are the most skilful and intelligent. Clerks ought never to come to this country. Since the educational system in force here has obtained a real footing, I believe there have been numbers of young men in the colony who are prepared to do that kind of work better than any we can import. Young men coming from our schools make admirable clerks, and therefore no more ought to be imported. I want to call the attention of the hon. member for South Brisbane to the fact that immigrants, except clerks and artisans, can find labour; and to point out that there was a great deal of doubt on the part of the people of Brisbane on the subject; and that when it came before the Colonial Secretary he only informed the House there was a good deal of humbugging about it. I would also like to call attention to the fact that at no time did so many men who can do solid work, as labourers, ploughmen, and mechanics, come into the country as under the late Government. The hon. member for South Brisbane wishes the new Immigration Bill to pass, and says it will effect a revolution. I am quite sure he will be very much disappointed. We will not get any Immigration Bill which will introduce the same class of people. The hon. member for South Brisbane, and the junior hon. member for North Brisbane, are what I call one-sided on this question. They fancy they can get a large number of that class from Europe who will work. I mean the lowest classes from Europe; perhaps I ought to define what I mean by that. I mean the men from some parts of Germany, from Italy, and from Malta, all of whom are a lower race than our own—men who have no idea of personal liberty, and who would take years to understand the principles of this country. They are what I call the lower classes from Europe. I believe that they are a lower civilisation than ours.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

Mr. ARCHER: I insist that they are. There may be a difference of opinion about it.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: There can be no difference of opinion.

Mr. ARCHER: I look upon these men as very low in civilisation. It has been urged that we should introduce a number of these people to supply the labour wanted here, and that they will become citizens in the same sense that our own countrymen have become. That I deny—

Mr. KATES: I rise to a point of order. We are discussing the Triennial Parliaments Bill.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Speaking to the point of order, I may say that my hon. friend the member for Blackall is referring to possible electors of this colony, who will, if brought here, assist to return members to triennial parliaments. I think, therefore, that he has a perfect right to say what he is saying, and that he is perfectly in order.

Mr. BROOKES: I rise to a point of order, too. My point of order is that the hon. member for Blackall is grossly misrepresenting me.

The SPEAKER: The question before the House is the second reading of the Triennial Parliaments Bill. The Immigration Act Amendment Bill will come on for its second reading next Tuesday. Hon. members cannot, therefore, discuss the immigration policy at the present time.

Mr. ARCHER: The men I am speaking of are possible future electors of this colony, and I was

answering the arguments used by the hon. member for South Brisbane when he tried to prove what a miserable Government the late Government was. Why was not the hon. member called to order when he spoke about immigration? I am speaking of possible future electors of this country and the evils they may bring upon us. I say again that they are of a lower civilisation. Hon. members on the other side of the House wish to flood the country with a kind of labour which will not only come into competition with the working men of this country as a lower class of labour, but will also compete with them at the hustings. They will have a deadly effect on the whole community. They will not come here to go home again. They will come to this land, which I always say is the easiest land possible for men to live well in, and will not hanker after the fleshpots of Egypt, but will remain amongst us. They will bring their lower kind of civilisation to mingle with our own, and it will no doubt have a lowering effect. I say that the late Government introduced immigrants in greater numbers than the previous Governments—immigrants who have mixed with the people, and who have not tended to lower but to advance the colony. Probably the hon. member for South Brisbane, who has talked so much of immigration, will find, when he comes to count noses next year, that during the time the present Government have been in power they have not introduced so many valuable men into this colony as the last Government did during the last year of their reign. This discussion has been brought about by the style of argument used by the hon. member for South Brisbane, and I have nothing more to say, except that I believe that this Bill will be productive of much evil. I believe that it is a misfortune for the country to be often subjected to the passions and convulsions of a general election. I may offend one class of the community by making the statement I am going to make, but I honestly believe and know that a great many contested elections are not tried in this country on the merits of the candidates. They are got up by keepers of public-houses. I do not say that this is done by the higher class of men who keep respectable houses, but I do say that in almost every election a great deal depends upon whether the publican wants a contested election or not, knowing quite well that he will make a profit out of the loss of the country. These statements may cost me my election, but it is just possible that I may not stand again. I say that every time a general election occurs it is a most unfortunate thing for the country, and if it only occurs once in every five years there will be an enormous saving and benefit to the country. That, however, is hopeless, and no parliament—unless it is a very exceptional one—will last as long as five years. No Minister has ever been followed in this colony by such a gathering as the present Premier. He has come into power with a majority which one might almost call crushing, but even that may not last for five years. Probably his wishes will be fulfilled, and he will call for a new parliament before the three years are out. However, the probability is that not one parliament out of five or six will last five years, and I see no reason why—unless under very extraordinary circumstances, such as the undoubted change of opinion by the country at large—we should be called upon for a new general election.

Question put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 26.

Messrs. Rutledge, Griffith, Dickson, Dutton, Sheridan, Foxton, Foote, Macdonald-Paterson, Beattie, Bailey, Salkeld, Grimes, Buckland, Kates, Mellor, Bale, White, J. Campbell, Jordan, Isambert, Smyth, Aland, Brookes, Fraser, Macfarlane, and Stevens.

NOES, 13.

Messrs. Norton, Archer, Morehead, Chubb, Hamilton-Moreton, Donaldson, Ferguson, Palmer, Higson, Nelson, Stevenson, and Black.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment of the House, said that as there was very little private business on the paper for to-morrow, he hoped to be able to get on with some of the Government business upon which there was not much difference of opinion. The measures which would stand first on the paper would be the two Bills introduced that afternoon—the Insanity Bill, and the Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Bill.

The House adjourned at twenty-one minutes to 10 o'clock.