Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 29 JULY 1884

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 29 *July*, 1884.

Petition.—Motion for Adjournment.—Proposed Federation of Australasia.—Appropriation Bill No. 1.—Motion for Adjournment.—Questions.—Skyring's Road Bill.—Formal Motion.—Jury Act Amendment Bill.—Deeds of Grant and Leases to Deceased Persons Bill—committee.—New Guinea and Pacific Jurisdiction Contribution Bill—committee.—Native Labourers Protection Bill—second reading.—Triennial Parliaments Bill—committee.—Adjournment.

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

PETITION.

Mr. MELLOR presented a petition from the residents of the Isis Scrub district, asking that the survey of a railway route from the Burrum to Gayndah be made *viâ* Isis Scrub.

On the motion of the hon. member, the petition was read and received.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. NELSON said he was glad to see the hon. Minister for Works in his place again, and he should take the opportunity of moving the

adjournment of the House for the purpose of setting the hon. gentleman right with regard to some erroneous statements he had made respecting the Wambo Divisional Board. He did not know where the hon. gentleman obtained his information; and when he first saw the statements in *Hansard*—he was not present when the Minister for Works spoke—he was quite struck with the ingenuity that the hon. gentleman displayed when he made them. The Minister for Works said:—

"Well, I know a divisional board, pretty well in funds, where a resolution was moved by one of the members that a deputation should wait on another member, to ask if he was willing to sell a certain property for the use of the board as an office or place to hold their meetings. As a matter of course, the deputation waited on the member, and the end of it was that they bought a whole lot of rickety buildings for £1,700. I only wish I had the power to stop it. They had the use of the town hall at a rent of 5s. a month, and, not satisfied with that, they squander away the money among themselves in the purchase of property they have no use for."

The hon. gentleman did not stop at that; but the week before last, when he was bringing in a Bill to double the endowment to divisional boards, he referred to it again. On that occasion he stated—talking about boards squandering their funds and employing men there was no use for:—

"There are some boards where the members, not knowing what to do with the rates, are dealing them out amongst themselves. There is the Wambo Board, who have the use of the town hall from the Municipal Council of Dalby at a rental of 5s. a month. It is an excellent building, and the clerk of the division is also clerk to the municipal council."

He also said:—

"I believe this is the only instance that I actually know of, and if I could put a stop to any such practices I would willingly do so."

The whole thing arose from some bad information which the hon. gentleman had got hold of, and a great deal from his own bad memory. He could distinctly contradict what was said in disparagement of the Wambo Board. The Minister for Works began by saying the board had the use of an excellent building; that was quite wrong. Then he said they had the hall at the rate of 5s. a month; that was wrong also. Then he said some members of the board brought forward a resolution with regard to a deputation. There was no such resolution ever brought forward, and there was no deputation.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He was piling it on.

Mr. NELSON said the hon. gentleman then concluded by saying that was the only board he had had any experience of. The hon. gentleman was a ratepayer of that division, and was a member of the board for a long time. He did not mean to say that he was elected by the ratepayers; but he had had the honour of a seat conferred upon him by the late Government. He was a very good member during the time he was on the board, and attended meetings with a very commendable regularity, and served out his term of three years, which he would not have done if he had not been a ratepayer, as otherwise his seat would have been vacated. During that time the board got on very well except, perhaps, on one or two occasions when they had to sit upon the hon. gentleman. He (Mr. Nelson) did not know how the hon. gentleman got on with his colleagues in the Ministry; but they found on the Wambo Board that he occasionally got infected with the idea that his wisdom was greater than the wisdom of the whole board, which was a sort of thing that no board could stand, and consequently they had to perform the process he had mentioned; but it was not often—only once or twice, and it had a very salutary effect. The hon. gentleman had parted from the board on the very best terms, and there had been no animosity that he had heard of. In fact the hon. Minister for Works took the *rôle* of the "Joe Hume" to the board, going in for great cheeseparing and keeping down their expenses to the utmost. That was perfectly right, especially with a board like the Wambo, where there was such a large area of country, and where spending money in driblets would be simply throwing it away. Therefore, they allowed their funds to accumulate in order to be able to do as they were doing now—to go in for very large works. They were building bridges, one of which cost £700, and were about to undertake another; they were also sinking wells all over the district, and works of that sort; therefore he was surprised to find the hon. gentleman blaming members of boards in general, and, he presumed, the Wambo Board in particular, for hoarding up their money. That was the very thing they ought to do, and the very thing the hon. gentleman approved of himself and aided them in doing. However, when he left the board and got into another position his principles changed. Being a ratepayer, and having been a member of the board for so long a time, he ought to have known how to get at the truth if he heard any rumours with regard to the squandering of the money. He knew that every ratepayer had a right to go to the board's office, and look up books and papers, and everything there. That was a right conferred upon him under the Act. He did not, however, appear to have done so, but to have been content to get his information from some other quarter which he (Mr. Nelson) did not know of. The hon. gentleman knew very well that the office there was open every day except Sunday; and there was a good, intelligent, and very willing clerk there, who would explain everything the hon. member did not understand. There might be some things the clerk could not explain to the hon. gentleman, but he was sure he would do all he could. The hon. gentleman knew that as a ratepayer he had access to the board, and if there was anything he found fault with he could write to the board, or come to them personally, in his capacity as a ratepayer, and object to any proceedings or make suggestions. But the hon. gentleman had done nothing of that sort, but chose rather, in his position as Minister for Works, to go and make statements to that House in an authoritative way; but he did not state from what authority, whence, or how, he got his information. He might state the facts of the case in regard to the first statement about the town hall. Everybody who knew the town hall of Dalby, knew what sort of a building it was. It was in a very inconvenient part of the town. It was where Dalby was supposed to be about twenty-five years ago, but where the modern town of Dalby was not. It was on the opposite side of the creek, and altogether away from the business part of the town. The hon. gentleman described it as an excellent hall. It might have been, one day, but now it was in a very dilapidated state. He did not wish to injure the Dalby Municipal Council's property by saying too much about it, but he could state for a fact that the council had for years past contemplated removing it altogether and building another in the town; for the present hall could hardly be said to be in the town, and it could hardly, by any stretch of imagination, be said to be waterproof. It was very old, and had suffered much from time and the ravages of white ants, and moreover, it was in such a situation that it was liable to be flooded. During the large flood in Dalby the water in the town hall was up nearly as high as the table of that House. That was no place for divisional boards' meetings; they had maps which they could

not replace under a cost of £150, besides books and other property; and yet that was what the Minister for Works called an excellent hall. Then he said they could get that hall at 5s. a month. It was on the hon. member's own motion as a member of the board that they agreed to give the council 5s. a week—not a month—for the use of the hall. That had evidently escaped the hon. member's memory, only, having repeated it twice in the House, it looked as if he was trying to make it as bad as he could. They had, on the hon. member's own proposal, agreed to take the use of the hall temporarily—only for a year—at 5s. a week. According to the hon. member's last version of things, one would think that the board had gone in for some kind of log-rolling, and agreed amongst themselves to buy some other member's property. He (Mr. Nelson) was stating what the facts of the matter were. The idea of having a new board-room had been before the board for a very long time—two or three years—and the present matter commenced a long time ago. It commenced on a motion he (Mr. Nelson) made at a board meeting in the month of March. According to their rules, every motion coming on was circulated to all the members of the board seven days before the board met to consider it. That motion came on; the clerk had sent him down a copy of the whole proceedings, but he was not going to inflict it upon the House, and would simply state the substance of it. The motion referred to came before the board on the 5th April. On that day, the board affirmed that it was desirable to get a new hall for the use of the board. That was the first part of the proceedings. Consequent upon that there was a select committee of four appointed, of whom he was one, with instructions to look out for an eligible site or property for the purpose. The select committee met, the members having, in the meantime, busied themselves in getting offers; and a number of offers were made, some in writing and some only verbally. The committee met, and, after consideration, reduced the offers to two, and brought up a report in writing, signed by the chairman. That report was delivered to the board, and read at their next monthly meeting, which would be in May. They did not even then jump at a purchase. One of the offers made was of a vacant allotment, and the other was an allotment with some buildings on it. What the board did next was to order their inspector of works to examine both offers, and to report upon them as to their suitability for the purposes of the board. He was ordered to make a plan of the buildings on one of the allotments, and also to prepare plans for a new building, in case the board should decide to buy the vacant allotment. The inspector's report, according to instructions, was drawn up on the 7th June. It lay on the table for a week before the board met, on the 14th June. They then had all those plans and specifications before them, and a resolution was passed not to accept either offer, but to make an offer to one of the parties who had submitted an offer. In course of time the board's offer was accepted, and the matter then came before the board again for final approval. That was on the 12th of the present month, so that they saw the matter extended over a period of three or four months; and every one of the meetings of the board which he had mentioned were open to the public, though he could not say that there was a very large attendance of the public. But on every occasion there was a representative of the Press—Mr. Plint, a gentleman not unknown in journalism in the capital—present; and the whole of the proceedings were reported in the papers published in Dalby, and of course circulated throughout the district. Up to the very last—the 12th July—he never heard a single intimation from any ratepayer dissenting from the proceedings of the board. Indeed, he did not know of a single ratepayer, excepting the Minister for Works, who did not heartily approve of its action. That hon. gentleman ought to have made his complaint to the board, and not to the House; and the board was ready to attend to any well-founded complaint, whether brought forward by the richest or the poorest ratepayer in the district. But the hon. gentleman did nothing of the sort; he brought his complaints before the House, with the sole apparent object of disparaging the board. The hon. gentleman was at one time a member of the board, and now he seemed to take a delight in turning round upon it whenever he had an opportunity. He did not think he need say more on that point.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles): Go on; it is very interesting.

Mr. NELSON said that as to whether the board made a good bargain or not he would say nothing, for the board was not responsible to the House or to the Minister for Works, but to the ratepayers; and if the ratepayers were satisfied he did not see that the Minister for Works had any right to interfere. The only way in which that hon. gentleman could interfere was under the saving clause in the Act, which gave the Governor in Council power to step in if there was any maladministration or dishonesty going on by the board. On that point neither the Minister for Works nor anyone else could say a single word. There was another matter he wished to mention before resuming his seat. The Minister for Works had been blaming boards in general for paying their chairmen.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Booroodabin Divisional Board pays its chairman.

Mr. NELSON said the hon. gentleman made particular reference to the Wambo Board, and he must know the whole facts of the case, because it was argued strongly when he (Mr. Miles) was himself a member of the board. On that occasion the hon. member took a very high tone, and said the colony would go to Jericho if it could not find chairmen of boards willing to pay their own expenses. Other members did not take that view, and it was urged that, as the poorest member of the board was eligible to be its chairman, it was only fair, in so large a division, that he should be recouped for the money he was out of pocket for railway fares, horse hire, or anything else. The Minister for Works pushed the question to a division, with the result that all the rest of the board were with the "Ayes," and the hon. gentleman was left lamenting by himself. The sum voted was £50 a year, but the hon. gentleman knew very well that not a farthing of that money had ever been drawn. Indeed, the whole expenses of the chairman—from the initiation of the board in 1879 till the present time, including the conducting of elections and other matters—had not amounted to more than £55. The gravamen of the hon. gentleman's charge against the boards was that there was some underhand work going on with regard to the purchase of the hall; but he believed he had said enough to convince the House and the public that any insinuation of that sort was utterly baseless. He would now ask the Minister for Works to tell the House upon what authority he made the statement he did. He begged to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) said they had had a most interesting maiden speech from the hon. member for Northern Downs, and he only regretted that the hon. member had

not chosen a more lively subject than the miserable one of the Wambo Divisional Board. The hon. member knew very well that that board were making "ducks and drakes" of their money and spending it among themselves. The hon. member knew as well as he did that the foreman of the works, a thoroughly practical man and a good carpenter, would not recommend the purchase of that rotten building for the divisional board.

Mr. NELSON: It is false.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the costly bridge which the board had built over the Condamine was not a highway at all—it had simply been built for the convenience of the hon. member himself. By a mistake of the reporter, he had been represented as having said £1,700 instead of £700; and he repeated that the building which the board gave £700 for was not worth £150. It would take as much money to fit it up as a board-room as they could have got a new building for. But the whole thing was paltry, and he deeply regretted that the hon. member had not made his maiden speech on some question more interesting, instead of on such a miserable, wretched question as that of the Wambo Divisional Board. He (Mr. Miles) should not occupy the time of the House longer with such a miserable, drivelling, wretched subject.

Mr. JESSOP said he was sorry the Minister for Works had lost his temper about that little divisional board business; but as the hon. gentleman had made his accusations against the Wambo Board before the House in the absence of the hon. member (Mr. Nelson), who was chairman of the board, and himself, they felt it their duty to contradict the statements of the hon. gentleman in the place where they were uttered. The board was accused of squandering the money of the ratepayers, and he (Mr. Jessop), as well as his hon. friend, gave that an entire denial. The Minister for Works had expressed his regret that the hon. member for Northern Downs had made his maiden speech on such a miserable, drivelling subject. That hon. member had at all events kept his temper, and said what he had to say in a gentlemanly way—which was more than could be said of the Minister for Works, in his reply. He could not give any further particulars than had been laid before the House by the hon. member for Northern Downs, as that hon. gentleman had stated everything in connection with the affair so fully and so truthfully. The statement of the hon. the Minister for Works as to the valuation was totally untrue, as the architect valued the place at £550 or £600. How the hon. gentleman made up his estimate of £150 he (Mr. Jessop) could not tell, but supposed it was like many other statements made by the Minister for Works at various times about divisional boards. With reference to the hall, he found from the minutes of the municipal council—he was there as a member of the council to defend the council as well as the divisional board—that on the 2nd of September, 1879, in consequence of the town hall being almost unapproachable from the effects of floods, the meeting had to be held in the school of arts. On the 24th and 25th of September there were two feet of water in the town hall, the marks of which still remained, and everything outside, including the fence round the reserve, was carried away, and the fence had not been re-erected to this day. The municipal council continued to hold their meetings in the school of arts—on the other side of the creek, where modern Dalby, as it had been called by the hon. member for Northern Downs, now was—for nearly a year before they went back. As to the premises themselves, it was decided by the council that they were not worth even painting, and there was not a member of the council at the present time who would not be glad to remove the buildings if they had the necessary funds available. As to the bridge which had been referred to, he might inform hon. members that it was on the main road to St. George, to the Western district, and to Cunnamulla. He thought that when any hon. member, even a Minister of the Crown, made such statements as had been made to that House on the subject under discussion, if the statements were false they should be thrown back upon him and let the House see who was wrong and who was right. He confirmed all that had been said by the hon. member for Northern Downs.

Mr. ARCHER said he only wanted to say a few words on the subject, and especially to call attention to the amiable temper in which the respected Minister for Works had addressed the House. Had the hon. gentleman not got into such a fuming passion he (Mr. Archer) would have taken but very little notice of the matter, but he generally observed that when people found themselves in the wrong they tried to get out of it by getting into a passion. He hoped that the recent injury the hon. gentleman had sustained had not affected his brain or the general good temper and amiable manner he displayed in that House. There was one remark made by the hon. the Minister for Works in reference to the hon. member for Northern Downs to which he (Mr. Archer) must allude, and that was that he (the Minister for Works) was surprised at the hon. member for Northern Downs making his maiden speech on such a miserable subject, or words to that effect. But was it a miserable matter to point out to a Minister that he had made a great mistake in a statement addressed to that House?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I made no mistake.

Mr. ARCHER said, so far as they could judge from the remarks made by the different speakers, the hon. gentleman had made a great mistake; and he (Mr. Archer) said that a Minister who got up in his place and gave way to blustering, instead of answering an hon. member courteously and proving that he was in the wrong, if such was the case, was in the wrong himself. He thought no more proper occasion could arise for a gentleman who was not only member for the district, but also a member of the divisional board, to address that House than when statements were made respecting the local government in his particular district, which could not be proved or which were very much exaggerated. If the hon. the Minister for Works would only consider the grief hon. members suffered at his absence, and how glad they were to see him return, he probably would avoid such a display of passion as had just been seen by that House.

Mr. NELSON said he was sorry the Minister for Works had lost his temper over the matter, because everything that he (Mr. Nelson) had stated to the House was capable of proof. He simply asked the hon. gentleman what proof he could adduce for the statements he made, but the Minister for Works did not say a word about that. But he said that he (Mr. Nelson) knew perfectly well that the board were misusing the funds. He (Mr. Nelson) denied that *in toto* to his face, and defied him to prove that there had ever been a single sixpence diverted by the board to an improper use; he had not the courage to try to do it. The hon. gentleman further attempted to justify his action by saying that in his opinion the property was not worth the money paid for it, as if that were any justification for his

statements. If it appeared to his judgment that the board had been "had" like the Minister for Lands in the Clermont case, why did he not say so? But such was not the case. He (Mr. Nelson) was satisfied that the investment was a good one, and one that could be made to yield a revenue to the board. The Minister for Works also said that he was surprised at him making his maiden speech on such a miserable subject; but he would remind the House that the matter was introduced by the Minister for Works himself, who was a member of the board, and who could have had the matter discussed and settled at a board meeting. With the leave of the House he would withdraw the motion for adjournment.

Motion withdrawn accordingly.

PROPOSED FEDERATION OF AUSTRALASIA.

The SPEAKER announced that the Address agreed to by the House on Wednesday last had been engrossed, and he had laid it before His Excellency the Governor, at Government House, that afternoon, and, on behalf of the House, asked His Excellency to transmit it to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for presentation to Her Majesty. His Excellency, in reply, stated that he would comply with the wishes of the House at the earliest possible opportunity.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1.

The SPEAKER also announced that His Excellency the Governor had formally assented to this Bill.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. HAMILTON said he intended to conclude his remarks with a motion. On the 17th July, a deputation waited on the Minister for Works to request him to investigate some charges made by them against Warden Lukin. On that occasion the Minister for Works made a statement regarding Warden Hodgkinson, of the Palmer Gold Fields. He (Mr. Hamilton) would read an extract from the report of the deputation in the *Courier*, which extract had been stated by the gentlemen present to be perfectly correct. The Minister for Works said:—

"He had on his table a report from Gold Warden Hodgkinson, which he was prepared to say was intended to ruin the public, and had been prepared with that purpose; and Mr. Hodgkinson had been paid for doing so. No doubt some of the gentlemen present had seen it; it was about two claims on the Palmer."

What did that mean? It meant, if true, that an official holding the highest position on one of the most important goldfields in the colony had conspired with some scoundrels, for the sake of a bribe, to swindle the public; that he had prostituted his official position in making an official report containing false statements, for the purpose, as the Minister for Works stated, of ruining the public. He had been under the impression that the Minister for Works was a man of honour—and personally he esteemed him; but he considered that no man of honour—no man with one scintilla of manly and honourable feeling—could be capable of making such statements regarding any man unless he was convinced that he had proofs which justified him in making them. What he (Mr. Hamilton) wished to know was, whether Warden Hodgkinson had been dismissed; because if the Minister for Works believed that Warden Hodgkinson had been guilty of what he had charged him with, then that officer was not worthy of his position, and should not have been allowed to retain it for a single moment; if, on the other hand, he had been allowed to retain his position, then the Minister who allowed him to do so, after having made such charges against him, was unworthy of his position. He begged to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that as a motion on the subject had been tabled that afternoon, and as he did not wish to prejudge the case, he had no intention of making any remark on it at present. He would wait till the proper time came.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman had already prejudged the case; he had prejudged it outside. He would ask the hon. gentleman a question that had not been asked by the hon. member for Cook—Had he taken steps to suspend Mr. Hodgkinson? If the hon. gentleman believed that the statements he had made the other day were true, surely he must have taken some steps to prevent that officer from doing any further wrong—if he had done any at all—until, at all events, the Select Committee that was appointed brought up its report, which might not be agreed to by the House. That the Minister for Works had been guilty of a lamentable fault no one would deny. Having made sweeping charges against Mr. Hodgkinson, he now sheltered himself behind a put-up motion for a select committee to inquire into the truth or otherwise of his rash statements. Surely the hon. gentleman would tell them the reasons which induced him to make those statements?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will tell you before I have done.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman said he would tell them before he was done; but they wanted to know now what induced him to make those charges—deliberate charges against the honour and character of an official holding a high position in the Government Service. Instead of that, he intimated that he would not give an answer because a select committee was to be appointed. Would that select committee have been moved for had it not been for the notice taken of the matter by the public Press? Would that committee have been moved for to allow the Minister for Works to skulk behind it had it not been for a leading article in the *Courier*, the other day, plainly setting forth that either the Minister for Works should retire from his position or that Warden Hodgkinson should be dismissed; that there was no middle course. He (Mr. Morehead) hoped the House would not submit to such a course of procedure. He hoped they would drag from the hon. gentleman, if they could get them in no other way, the reasons that caused him to cast such an apparently foul aspersion on the character of a high official. If Ministers were allowed to make such statements, ruining the reputation of those they attacked, there was no safeguard for any Civil servant in the colony. Those were matters that should be fully gone into by that House. He did not know whether an action for libel would lie against the Minister for Works or not; he hoped it would, though his legal knowledge was not sufficient to enable him to give a definite opinion on that point; but if such an action would not lie in the case of a Civil servant, then it ought to do. He held that a Minister had no right to make such charges unless he was prepared to defend them, and give full reasons for having made them; but in the present case the hon. gentleman had elected to shelter himself behind a committee which had not yet been appointed, and which might not be appointed. He would ask the hon. gentleman whether, in the meantime, he had suspended Warden Hodgkinson?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will give an answer at the proper time.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said the statements made by his hon. friend, the Minister for Works, were undoubtedly of a very serious character. The matter was one that should be thoroughly inquired into, and he knew no better mode of inquiry than by a select committee of that House. He was, therefore, very glad to hear his hon. colleague the member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, give notice of motion for the appointment of a committee for that purpose, before whom all the papers and information could be laid. When the whole of the material connected with the matter was before the House it could be fully discussed, and the blame placed where it should lie, if it should lie anywhere. But in the meantime the House was not in a position to discuss the matter. They had no information as to the circumstances under which the report was made. Hon. members had, of course, seen the report, because it had been laid upon the table of the House; but they had not seen the papers relating to it, nor were they aware of the circumstances surrounding the case. He did not profess himself to be thoroughly conversant with it, but as soon as he saw the report of his hon. colleague's speech he at once came to the conclusion that the matter required inquiry. As to the question, what was to be done with Warden Hodgkinson in the meantime? Of course he could not continue to occupy his position, and when the inquiry was going on his presence would be required in Brisbane. The Government had not yet had an opportunity of dealing with the matter, and he did not wish to prejudge it in any way. He should advise his hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, when the Cabinet met to-morrow, which was the first opportunity since his accident, to relieve Mr. Hodgkinson of his duties for the present. In the meantime it was not practicable or possible for the House to discuss the matter.

Mr. ARCHER said he thought the House would agree entirely with the hon. the Premier, that they were not prepared to discuss the matter at present. What hon. members complained of was that the hon. Minister for Works had not only not discussed it but had prejudged it, and allowed it to go forth to the public that there was a man in the Public Service who had undoubtedly prostituted himself so far as to take bribes for the purpose of benefiting himself and of defrauding the country. If the Minister for Works had had the slightest suspicion, he should have suspended the officer in question, and it did not require a Cabinet Council to meet together for that serious purpose. It was not a case of dismissal, but for inquiry, and if the Minister for Works had had the slightest suspicion that the charges made against Warden Hodgkinson were true, he should have suspended him before he had seen one of his colleagues. The suspension would have gone forth at once, and then the question would have arisen as to dismissal; and the whole case would have been gone into. That would have been the usual course, and the hon. the Premier knew it quite well; but he now came forward to try and shelter his colleague, the Minister for Works, who, when answering a deputation upon another subject altogether, made the vilest charge against a public servant that had ever been made against any public servant in the colony. That was what hon. members complained of—not that they wanted the matter discussed at present. Nobody expected that. They wanted the facts before them before they could discuss the matter; but they had asked the Minister for Works if he had taken the steps which any ordinary man would have taken, when he was prepared to use such language in regard to a public servant — that was, to suspend him until he could inquire whether the charge made was true or not. But he had not done so. He had stated the charge as a matter of fact; and, whether it was true or false, the hon. gentleman had put himself in a position such as he believed no other Minister of the Crown had ever put himself before in this colony. When he used the words he did to the deputation, he should have suspended the person to whom he applied them, long before he came into the House prepared to defend them.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said, seeing no other member on the Ministerial benches was willing to follow up this very unpleasant subject, he wished to say a few words upon it; and he might say that if no other member of the House had taken it up that afternoon he intended to have done so. He was perfectly thunderstruck when he saw the statement made by the Minister for Works, voluntarily and quite apart from the subject upon which the deputation came to him upon, that a public officer—a judicial officer—had been guilty of receiving a bribe to make a false report for the purpose of swindling the public, without that officer having been suspended and the whole thing inquired into. The Minister for Works did not seem to understand his responsibility. The Premier could not shield him behind the excuse of waiting for a Cabinet Council. Any member who had ever been a Minister, or any member of the House, knew full well that the Minister for Works as Minister for Mines had full power, and if he believed—as he undoubtedly did—the charge he made against Warden Hodgkinson, he should have suspended him at once, and not have made the matter public, and still have kept him in his place for weeks afterwards. The hon. the Premier knew that his colleague had made a great mistake. Even if the charge proved untrue, it would do serious injury to Mr. Hodgkinson. It had gone forth to the whole of Queensland—the whole mining population of the colony knew the charge against him. Hon. members had been told that a motion had been tabled asking for a select committee—for what purpose? Did the Premier not know as well as he (Mr. Macrossan) did, that a select committee would find out nothing? Did he not know that, to be able to judge of the truth or falsehood of the report in question, it would require a committee of mining experts, who would have to go to the Palmer, and judge the ground from its appearance? What did hon. members of the House know about the truth or untruth of the statements made in the report? The thing was ridiculous. It seemed to him that the proposal for a committee had been put up by the Minister for Works, knowing that some member would call his action in question for making the charge he did. He could put it down to nothing else. It was simply a blind. And then, who were to be the members of the committee? The only member upon it who knew anything at all about mining was the hon. member for Gympie, (Mr. Smyth); and he (Mr. Macrossan) contended that the men upon it should understand mining thoroughly, and not be squatters, lawyers, or retired ironmongers. They should all understand mining, and even then it would be nearly impossible for them to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the report made by Mr. Hodgkinson. It should be investigated on the ground, and then the question could only be decided by an inspection of the different claims reported upon by him in his report, dated October last. He was surprised that the Premier should have attempted to shield his colleague in the way he had. The hon. gentleman admitted that it was not fitting for Mr. Hodgkinson to remain any longer in his position, because he would probably be required down here. That was a very milk-and-

water way of putting it, seeing that he ought to have been suspended four weeks ago. He (Mr. Macrossan) hoped the hon. gentleman would teach his hon. colleague the Minister for Works to keep his tongue more under control, and not express his opinion that an officer of his department had been guilty of receiving bribes.

Mr. HAMILTON said that the Premier had conveyed the impression that the report which had been referred to was one which had been made lately; but that was not the case. It was made nine months ago. The Minister for Mines had stated that he would answer his question in proper time, but he (Mr. Hamilton) said that now was the proper time. Mr. Hodgkinson was a warden in his constituency—one of the most important goldfields in the colony—and he was in a manner a judge exercising authority over the properties of men; and therefore, if there was the slightest suspicion of anything but fair dealing on his part, he should be suspended at once. The head and front of Mr. Hodgkinson's offending was this: That he had spoken in favour of some claims in which the hon. the Minister for Mines had stated Sir Thomas McIlwraith was interested; and they all knew that the name of Sir Thomas McIlwraith was like a red rag to a bull when mentioned before the Minister for Mines. As a matter of fact, Sir Thomas McIlwraith did not happen to be a shareholder in any of those claims; that, he (Mr. Hamilton) had ascertained from the registered list of shareholders. He would draw attention to the fact that the Colonial Secretary had withheld the information that Warden Hodgkinson had wired to him asking for a departmental inquiry. Mr. Hodgkinson was entitled to have such an inquiry instead of an inquiry by a select committee, one of the members of which was his accuser. Warden Hodgkinson's report, which he held in his hand, was perfectly correct, and the statements which had been made affecting his honour were utterly false. He would read the parts of the report to which exception had been taken. He referred to three reefs, but one was only incidentally mentioned, and no particulars were given in connection with it, so that none of the statements could refer to that reef. The reefs were the "Comet," the "Queen," and the "Ida"; and the following was what Mr. Hodgkinson stated in the report, which the Minister for Mines declared he framed for the purpose of swindling the public—

"At the Gregory, operations are being languidly carried on, crippled by the want of capital; the only company at work having started in debt and being dependent upon the forbearance of their bank for permission to meet present wants, by eating out the eyes of the mine, and destroying all hope of proper development.

"It is to be noted, in conjunction with subsequent remarks upon the 'Ida,' that the 'Queen' Reef in this district (the Gregory), after having crushed 3,499½ tons of quartz for 11,186 ozs. 7 dwts. 8 grs. of gold, came upon a belt of poor stone, owing to the intrusion of a sandstone bar.

"This check brought the proprietary upstanding, and a valuable mine now lies idle from a cause of such frequent occurrence on all goldfields as to be unworthy of consideration, were its effects not so disastrous as in the instance under notice.

"Speaking broadly and despite these difficulties, the following figures will give some faint idea of the richness of the Palmer reefs.

"The first crushings took place in 1876, from which year to the end of 1880, 13,340 tons of quartz yielded 29,222 ozs. 8 dwts. 11 grs. of gold. In addition to this the 'Queen' line of reef yielded 3,499½ tons, returning 11,186 ozs. 7 dwts. 8 grs.; the 'Ida' 4,782 tons, yielding 11,636 ozs. 8 dwts. 21 grs.; while, during 1881, 1,394 tons returned 2,393 ozs. 9 dwts. 3 grs.

"This gives an average per ton for 24,000 odd tons, taken from more than 100 claims situated in various portions of this extensive district, of 2 ozs. 5 dwts. per ton, which, bearing in mind that every pound of stone from every worked reef in the district is included, is a yield, so far as thirty years' personal experience of mining goes, to me unparalleled.

"The great gold-producing colony of Victoria cannot exhibit an average of half-an-ounce per ton.

"Again, the average earnings of quartz miners on the Palmer Gold Field were, for 1880, £197 per man, and for 1881 £226 per man.

"It does seem strange that within a brief period more than £1,000,000 (one million) of British capital has been sunk in reefing (on most imaginative report) in the Wynaad, one of the most notoriously unhealthy spots in British-Indian territory. The only proved authorisation to date for this outlay has been a few trial crushings, one of which, a small parcel, yielded (4) four ounces to the ton; and the others some (2) two dwts. It would be difficult to find gold-bearing reefs on the Palmer so poor as the latter, but many lodes have crushed large parcels of stone for returns far exceeding the former. Yet such is the influence of official representation from that country; so intimate the association between its residents and home capitalists, and so powerful, and I may add erroneous, the vulgar connection between wealth and India, that subscribers flock to throw their money into a jungle, where it is necessary to treat every European miner as an expensive and imported exotic, leaving unheeded the vastly more legitimate and less hazardous forms of mineral investment open to them in fields like the one under notice.

"The 'Queen,' 'Comet,' and 'Ida' reefs have been worked to a greater extent than any others. Being all three analogous in their characteristics, I will confine description to the latter as the more important and the first taken up for mining.

"The 'Ida' line of reef is situated on a gentle rise one mile north by east of Maytown, the official and commercial headquarters of the Palmer Gold Field.

"The bearing of the reef is north 106 degrees east, the underlay dipping south. The lode, according to Mining Surveyor Kayser's official report, averages (18) eighteen inches in thickness, and is unusually persistent and free from faults. It (the lode) consists of a dense white crystalline quartz with blue amorphous laminations very regular, and showing gold freely both in the stone and lines of cleavage. Foot and hanging walls are well defined and formed of black slate."

The rest of the report was simply general. Further on it stated:—

"The crushings of the 'Ida' mine to date have, from a total of 7,099 tons, yielded 13,246 ozs. 8 dwts. 2 grs. A list of the several crushings, as also a plan of the lease and workings, will be found annexed."

How could any select committee of the House ascertain the truth or untruth of that report? The way to ascertain it was by inquiring of the mining registrars upon the Palmer. The statements were true: he was in a position to know that as well as anyone in the House, for he had been six or seven years in the "Queen" reef, though he was not interested in it now, and could have no motive for speaking well of it. He threw back the foul statement of the Minister for Works, that Mr. Hodgkinson had acted in any way dishonourably; and he was sure there were hon. members on both sides of the House who felt perfect confidence in his integrity before hearing his denial of the charges made against his character.

Mr. BLACK said he thought it was very much to be regretted that the hon. the Minister for Works should have allowed his tongue to outstrip his discretion as he had done, not only in this particular matter, but also in his official utterances in the House in connection with divisional boards. He thought it was only reasonable that the public should look upon Ministerial utterances with a certain amount of respect; otherwise the public would lose all confidence in the Ministry for the time being. When they found one member of the Ministry giving utterance to statements which, judging from the very lame explanation which had been given to the House, appeared to have been made—to say the least of it—in a very rash manner; and when they found that, although there were no less than twenty-five hon. members in the chamber on the Government side of the House, they all sat there quietly, and not one of them got up to say a single word in connection with a matter which was of very considerable importance to the people of the colony—when

they found them all sitting there like so many dumb sheep, allowing the Premier in a lame sort of way to try and whitewash the hon. the Minister for Works—what confidence could the public of the colony have, not only in the Ministry for the time being, but in the probable result of an inquiry by a committee nominated by hon. gentlemen on the Government side of the House, and composed as they saw this committee was to be composed? It was not very long since they had a parliamentary committee—the Elections and Qualifications Committee—composed of four members from the Government side of the House and three from the Opposition side; and what had they now? They had a committee composed of Messrs. Foxton, Smyth, and Brookes, from the Government side. As regarded the hon. member for Carnarvon (Mr. Foxton), he believed him to be a very able lawyer, but he knew, probably, as much about mining as he (Mr. Black) did. Mr. Smyth, the hon. member for Gympie, he believed, was a gentleman who was tolerably familiar with mining——

The PREMIER: I rise to a point of order. Has the hon. gentleman any right to refer to a motion of which notice has just been given, and which has not come before the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: I must call the hon. member for Mackay to order. It is out of order to discuss a motion which is not before the House.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman was only speaking of possibilities. There is no committee of this House yet, therefore the hon. gentleman was quite in order in pointing out what might occur if the gentlemen mentioned were put upon that committee.

The SPEAKER: Of course if the hon. member puts a hypothetical case he may do so.

Mr. BLACK said that in order to conform to the rules of the House he would speak hypothetically. Assuming that the junior member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes—if such a thing were credible, or possible—were placed upon a committee of that sort: what would the public think? I think I am in order in putting it in that way.

Mr. BROOKES: I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman did not put that very hypothetically.

The SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. gentleman is out of order in putting it in that way.

Mr. BLACK said he thought the Speaker's ruling was perfectly correct. They would assume that two other hon. gentlemen, whom he would mention by name, Messrs. Donaldson and Jessop, well known in the House—if the public knew that those two gentlemen, well versed in the affairs with which they had been connected for years past, namely, squatting—if the public were to imagine that they could possibly be selected to act on a committee requiring an infinite knowledge of mining affairs, would they not believe that the result of the committee must be a lamentable failure? Even before the committee was appointed by the House, he could tell hon. gentlemen that in his opinion the attempt to have the committee was simply to burk the whole thing and to whitewash the Minister for Works. If it had been necessary that the committee should have been appointed, he maintained that it was the duty of the Minister for Works, directly the facts came to his knowledge, to have at once suspended Mr. Hodgkinson, and have held a departmental inquiry without delay. But what were they told? The hon. Premier gave them to understand that to-morrow the Cabinet would take into consideration the necessity or otherwise of suspending Warden Hodgkinson—or rather he would recommend his colleagues to do so. Would they suppose the hon. Minister for Works ever went to the Premier for permission to do anything? They knew from his independence of character that he did things straight off; he did not go and consult his colleagues. Had he consulted them before he made that most libellous charge against Warden Hodgkinson, they would have advised him not to be too hasty. But he knew the hon. gentleman, and respected him as a man who had a will of his own, and who was not going to be led by the advice of his colleagues in the matter. A charge such as had been made against Warden Hodgkinson was, to say the least of it, a most cruel one, and the result of the committee would be that the whole thing would be left very much as it was at present; and Mr. Hodgkinson, although he might be reinstated, would have a stain left on his character which it would be impossible ever to remove. He did not know Mr. Hodgkinson, but he believed he had most ample grounds for entering an action for libel against the Minister for Works. He did not believe that any Ministers were privileged to slander private individuals like that, or even public individuals; and that was the position the hon. Minister for Works had placed himself in. He had, so far as the public could judge, brought a most unfounded charge—unfounded because, had the Minister for Works evidence to substantiate the charge, it was his duty to have suspended Warden Hodgkinson at once, and not have allowed him to remain there, carrying on the duties of his office, and, if the charge was correct, continuing to swindle the public, as the hon. Minister for Works said he had reason to believe he was doing. The position of the hon. Minister for Works was a very lamentable one indeed. He thought the accident which the hon. gentleman received lately was one which would entitle him to a certain amount of consideration, and its ill effects were painfully apparent just now when he referred to the hon. member for Northern Downs in the way he had. He entirely lost his temper, and referred to a matter which he considered one of considerable importance to the colony—the general management of divisional boards—as a miserable affair. It was not a miserable affair at all. The divisional board system was on its trial throughout the colony, and the public were only too glad to see that it was to have a thorough trial. The Minister for Works on one occasion described it as a "curse to the colony," and then went still further by denouncing a reasonable complaint, such as that brought forward by the hon. member for Northern Downs, as a "miserable affair." That was enough to make them lose faith in the divisional board system, or else in the Minister for Works, who had the duty of administering it.

Mr. BROOKES said that unfortunately he was obliged to be absent from the Chamber during the remarks of some hon. gentlemen on the matter before the House; but from what he heard of it he must confess that he was simply astonished. He really did not know what the hon. members meant. There was one meaning, and only one, that he could attach to the speeches they had been making for the last hour—and that was, that they wanted to waste the time of the Assembly. He might remark to members of the Opposition that, if they thought that the people who read *Hansard* were not quite well able to judge between commonsense and "balderdash," they were mistaken. A great deal of what had been said had really nothing to do with the question at all; that was very obvious, especially in the case of the last speaker, who merely wished to vent his spleen on the Minister for Works. There was no virtue

or strength in anything he said against the Minister for Works; and he showed exceedingly bad taste in endeavouring to excuse the Minister for Works on account of his recent accident. They were really in danger of forgetting they were gentlemen. He could remind hon. members opposite, through the Speaker, that a similar accident might befall any one of them at any moment. He believed they were gentlemen, but they were run away with by their violent partisan spirit. Frequently during the present session he had seen the hon. leader of the Opposition get up when he had not a word to say, and not a single idea in his head; yet he talked "balderdash" for half-an-hour, interspersing it with coarse-spun levities which, in his own opinion, were wit. With reference to the motion of which he had given notice that day, he would just say one word, if in order. He was really innocent of any of the motives imputed to him. He did not know and did not care about the Minister for Works in the matter, but in common with every other hon. member he read the papers and saw what had been said about the Minister for Works in a paper which was ostensibly the leading paper of the colony. He saw there the most extraordinary statements made, and if they were true or only half-true, and the Minister for Works could not rebut them, he should be as willing as any hon. member opposite to say that the hon. the Minister for Works had been ill-advised in his speech. People in cold blood—people in possession of calm dispassionate senses as he was at present—would say that, to bring the matter to a point and get at the truth, it was very proper that notice should be given of such a motion as he gave notice of that afternoon. Why in the name of common sense and justice there should be all that hubbub about the motion of which he had given notice he could not understand. As for the hon. member for Mackay going so far as to name the members of the committee and assume they would do this and that and the other, he must say the hon. member mistook the office of a legislator altogether. The hon. member prejudged the matter; he prejudged him and other gentlemen besides him. He objected to be prejudged. It was quite time to judge him when something was found out against him that was blamable. He must say he regarded the style of debate that had taken place as showing to the world at large that the Opposition was a weak Opposition—weak mentally and weak politically; and that because they could not find any solid subjects upon which to found a debate, they talked all round the compass upon every possible subject, and did not hesitate to behave in a very ungentlemanly manner when everything else failed.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. gentleman who had just sat down said the Opposition had wasted the time of the House; but he would like to know whether the hon. gentleman had himself thrown any light upon the subject before the House. The real question was not in connection with the appointment of the committee—that was a mere side issue; but the real question was whether the Minister for Works did his duty as a responsible Minister when he believed a warden was guilty of the deliberate acceptance of a bribe, and still allowed him to retain his office. That was the question before the House. The Minister for Works was bound, as a responsible Minister, to take notice of the actions of officers under him, and if Warden Hodgkinson was an officer under his control, was it not a proper thing for the Minister to do, when circumstances came before him which induced him to believe that Warden Hodgkinson accepted a bribe in a way that amounted to robbing the public—was it not his duty to suspend that officer? It was not a matter for that House or for the Ministerial Cabinet to decide, but for the Minister himself to decide. It was a matter he was responsible for, and it was his duty to accept the responsibility. What was the use of having a responsible Minister at the head of a department, if the officers of that department were to be allowed to perpetrate iniquities of that sort? He did not take any particular heed of the notice given that day. He did not think a discussion of it was appropriate to the occasion at all. The question resolved itself into this: The Minister had a duty to perform, and he was responsible as a Minister for neglecting to do that duty. So far as Warden Hodgkinson was concerned, although he believed the Minister for Works was making what he believed to be correct statements concerning that gentleman, he hoped he was led to form his conclusions by some matters put before him which were not before the public. He did not know very much about Mr. Hodgkinson, but he had always heard him spoken of as a gentleman of the very highest reputation. He said it was a cruel thing to make such charges as those against any man, whoever he might be, and it was especially a cruel thing for the Minister for Works, at the head of his department, to ignore his own responsibility and make those terrible accusations against officers who were his own subordinates.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. SCOTT asked the Minister for Works—

1. Is the survey of the Emerald and Springsure railway completed?—if not, when will it probably be finished?

2. When will tenders for this line probably be called for?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. No.

2. The Chief Engineer has been instructed to prepare plans, and tenders will be invited as soon as they are sufficiently forward.

The HON. B. B. MORETON asked the Minister for Works—

If he will cause a Survey to be made of a Railway Route from the Burrum to Gayndah by the Isis Scrub, in accordance with a petition forwarded to him from the residents of the Burrum and Isis Scrub?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

Yes.

SKYRING'S ROAD BILL.

Mr. BEATTIE moved—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill to close a road privately dedicated to the public over subdivision "A" of portion 59, parish of North Brisbane, county of Stanley, and to open in its stead a road over subdivision "d a" and "d b" of the said portion.

Question put and passed, and Bill read a first time.

FORMAL MOTION.

On the motion of Mr. MOREHEAD, it was resolved—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, all Papers, including the Report of the late Mr. R. J. Smith, connected with the selections taken up by Mr. Greenup and others on Texas Run.

JURY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. CHUBB moved—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill to amend the laws relating to jurors and to amend the Jury Act of 1867.

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

DEEDS OF GRANT AND LEASES TO DECEASED PERSONS BILL—COMMITTEE.

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

The various clauses and the preamble were agreed to.

The House resumed, and the Bill was reported without amendment.

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

NEW GUINEA AND PACIFIC JURISDICTION CONTRIBUTION BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill. The various clauses and the preamble were agreed to.

The House resumed, and the Bill was reported without amendment.

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

NATIVE LABOURERS PROTECTION BILL—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said: This Bill is introduced to restrict the employment of aboriginal natives of Australia and New Guinea on ships in Queensland waters, in connection principally with bêche-de-mer fishing. I have reason to believe that, at the present time, great abuses prevail in that respect, and that great numbers of natives of Cape York Peninsula, both on the eastern and western side, are frequently taken on board vessels without supervision, and that sometimes they are brought back, and sometimes not; it is not known whether they are or not. There is no real reason why we should not protect the aboriginals just as the Polynesians are protected; they, as we know, are amply protected. In 1881, an Act was passed called the Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery Act. That Act has done a great deal of good in regulating those fisheries. The provision contained in it on the subject of native labourers is the 11th section, which provides:—

"It shall not be lawful for any master or other person to employ any Polynesian or native labourer in the pearl-shell or bêche-de-mer fishery, unless under a written agreement recorded in the custom-house or shipping office nearest to the place where it is intended to employ such labourer; or under a license issued under the provisions of the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, 1875.

"All engagements of Polynesians or native labourers made out of Queensland shall be strictly in accordance with the shipping laws of the colony or country where made.

"Any master or other person who employs any Polynesian or native labourer in the pearl-shell or bêche-de-mer fishery otherwise than as herein prescribed, or who fails to produce the agreement of any Polynesian or native labourer when required so to do by an officer of customs or member of the police force, shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten pounds."

These provisions have been found to be insufficient. It was reported to the Government in 1882, by Mr. Fahey, the Sub-collector of Customs at Cooktown, that very serious abuses existed. Natives were taken under very suspicious circumstances, on the coast to the north and also to the south of Cooktown; they were collected in small boats, and brought up sometimes to Cooktown, and then drafted into different ships. Since then, Mr. Chester, of Thursday Island, has called the attention of the Government to the same evils in connection with ships in Torres Straits; and lately, within the last month, and after directions had been given to have this Bill drafted, I have received similar complaints from the present Police Magistrate at Cooktown. It is quite necessary, therefore, to take some steps dealing with the matter. That being the object of the Bill, I will point out the way in which the Government propose to deal with the question. Of course, only ships engaged in our waters can be touched; but, as all the ships engaged in the trade will come into our waters, because the islands where bêche-de-mer fishing is carried on belong to Queensland, we shall be able to catch them at some time. It is proposed, in the first place, to repeal the 11th section of the Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery Act. Then it is proposed that—

"No native labourer shall be employed or carried on board of any vessel trading in Queensland waters unless he is carried on the ship's articles in like manner as a seaman forming part of the crew of the vessel, and has been engaged to serve in accordance with the provisions of this Act."

This provision is analogous to that in the Act regarding the kidnapping of Pacific Islanders. Then, by the next section—the 4th—no native labourers must be engaged except by the master or owner of a vessel, and except in the presence and with the sanction of the shipping-master of the port at or nearest to which the engagement is made. In the 5th section, it is provided that the shipping-master is to explain the agreement to the labourer and see that he understands it; and attach his signature. He is also to keep a register of all engagements, and both the master and the labourer are to sign their names in the book. It is also provided that the shipping-master shall also enter—

"Particulars of the personal appearance of the native labourer, sufficient to identify him, and shall deliver to him a metal token, inscribed or impressed with such letters and figures as shall be sufficient to show where the entry relating to him can be found; and a copy of such particulars, letters, and figures shall be entered in the official log of the vessel."

This has been suggested by one of the officials I have referred to, as necessary for the purpose of identifying an islander or labourer. Clause 6 provides:—

"Every such agreement shall contain the following particulars as terms thereof, namely:—

(1) The nature, and, as far as practicable, the duration, of the intended voyage or engagement.
(2) The capacity in which the native labourer is to serve;
(3) The amount of wages which the native labourer is to receive;
(4) A scale of provisions is to be furnished to each native labourer."

Then come the penal provisions for enforcing the Act, which are, of course, very necessary. Clause 7 provides that any vessel violating the provisions of the Bill by carrying "any native labourer, with respect to whom the provisions of the Act have not been observed," shall be forfeited, and the master and owner shall be jointly and severally liable to a penalty not exceeding £500. There is no other provision practicable.

Mr. ARCHER: It is too strong.

The PREMIER: It is not too strong, with the exceptions we have provided for. What we have to do is to prevent the kidnapping of Australian natives as well as South Sea Islanders. The provisions with respect to Pacific Islanders are exactly analogous to these. I have information that the kidnapping of our own natives has been going on for a considerable time; and we should be prepared to put it down with an equally strong hand as the kidnapping of South Sea Islanders. Then there are provisions respecting the discharge of natives. At the present time there are no satisfactory provisions for their engagement, and some

of them do not come back, and what becomes of them we do not know, and there is no way of finding out. Therefore it is provided that if the master or owner of any vessel, or any other person, discharges or pays off a native labourer otherwise than as provided—*i.e.*, in the presence of the shipping master—he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £50; and if he arrives in any port of Queensland having a less number of native labourers on board than are carried on the ship's articles, he shall be liable to a penalty of £100 for every labourer he cannot account for. That is the only way we can get at the difficulty. Of course, if a labourer should die or desert, the master will be able to say what has become of him, and if he cannot account for him, he, together with the owner, will be liable to the penalty. I think, with the assistance of the police boat we have up north now, and the boat likely to be sent there—one of the new gunboats—we shall be able to put down the abuses that are going on. The next clauses are formal provisions, and then we come to clause 13, which contains the exceptions :—

"The provisions of this Act shall not apply to any native labourer who is employed as a boatman on board of any boat in any port in Queensland, with the sanction in writing of the principal officer of Customs of that port."

Of course there is no reason why natives should not be employed as boatmen at Cooktown or any other place, provided it is done with proper supervision. The clause goes on—

"In the case of a native labourer who is carried direct in a vessel to any such port for the purpose of being engaged under the provisions of this Act (the proof of which purpose shall be upon the person alleging the fact), the provisions of this Act shall not apply in respect of such native labourer while he is being so carried."

The provisions of a Bill of this character, to be effectual, must be stringent. It is no use making them so that they may be evaded. I believe that these provisions will be sufficient; that is, that with proper supervision and inquiry—seeing whether there are more labourers on board vessels than are on the articles—they will be sufficient to put down the abuses complained of. Of course, the Government can only deal with the subject upon the information of their officials, who have, on several occasions during the last three years, called the attention of the Government to the necessity of remedying the existing state of things. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. ARCHER: I am certain, sir, that no hon. member on this side of the House would ever think of opposing any measure for the purpose of doing justice to native labourers employed on board vessels. I have not the slightest intention of adversely criticising this Bill, although when the hon. the Premier was speaking in regard to a particular clause I interjected that it was too strong. I refer to clause 7, which says :—

"If any vessel trading in Queensland waters carries any native labourer with respect to whom the provisions of this Act have not been observed, such vessel and her cargo shall be forfeited to Her Majesty, and the master and owner shall be jointly and severally liable to a penalty not exceeding five hundred pounds."

Now, sir, would it not have been as well to have mentioned some less penalty that could have been imposed without having to refer the matter to the Executive Government? As I read the clause, if anything is broken under this Bill—it may be some trifling matter—still it is imperative that the vessel and cargo are to be forfeited, and that the owner and master are to be fined in the sum of £500. Breaches of this measure might take place for which no just man would ever suppose such a punishment ought to be imposed; and when the courts which have to pronounce the penalty have done so, the case will have to go to the Executive Government for relief. I am now speaking under correction; there may be some wonderful legal way of getting out of the difficulty, but I see many breaches that might be committed under the Bill, but which would not justify any such punishment as this. The hon. the Premier said, "In that case do not employ native labourers." That is all very well, but why make it prohibitive to employ native labourers? In fact he can hardly do that, because he exempts native labourers in the employment of the Customs. The 13th clause says :—

"The provisions of this Act shall not apply to any native labourer who is employed as a boatman on board of any boat in any port in Queensland, with the sanction in writing of the principal officer of Customs of that port."

We know perfectly well that many natives are very useful in the management of boats in bad weather. I myself owe my life to the pluck and endurance of a South Sea Islander when I was capsized from a boat. They are splendid fellows in a boat. I have known several occasions when white men would undoubtedly have perished unless they had been saved by South Sea Islanders. I do not see why native labourers should be exempted simply on the sanction of the collector of customs at any port, when under clause 7, for the slightest breach of the regulations, the whole ship and cargo are to be forfeited, and the master and owner fined £500. It will certainly lead to people not being convicted many times when guilty, because people will see that it is perfectly absurd to carry such provisions into operation. It would, therefore, be better to amend the clause so that the law will not have to be qualified by the Executive. I am perfectly in favour of what the hon. the Premier is trying to effect by this Bill; I wish that every native labourer on board ship, or in any other place, should be properly treated—have fair play and the same protection as white men; but unless some hon. gentleman learned in the law will get up and explain that clause 7 does not mean what I understand it to mean, I should certainly like to see it amended in such a way that all who have not had a legal training could see their way to support it. The Bill has my complete sympathy. I do not think I ever ill-used a man on account of the colour of his skin, and I do not want to see him ill-used. I shall do what I can to pass the Bill through committee, but the 7th clause is too difficult for a layman to understand; and unless there is some alteration made in it, or some fuller explanation given of it, I shall certainly oppose it in committee.

Mr. PALMER said he was glad to see that an attempt was being made by the Government to protect the natives of New Holland. It was the first time any attempt had been made to really protect them, and, from a visit he had lately paid to Thursday Island, he was quite sure there was plenty of room for some guardianship such as the present Bill was intended to supply. He knew it was the custom of the pearl-shellers to go on the mainland and capture natives, following the camps for days and taking men to employ them as divers. The question was, were those men returned to the place whence they were kidnapped? There was nothing in the Act to ensure that, and they knew that the tribes were so cut up that if a native were not restored to his own district he would get out of the frying-pan into the fire, and very probably be killed before he reached his own tribe. He had no doubt that a great deal of the animosity shown by some of the natives of Northern Australia towards Europeans was due to the injustice to

which they were subjected by the pearl-fishers and others. He was inclined to think, with the hon. member for Blackall, that clause 7 was too stringent, and would be in practice prohibitive. It was a pity that the services of the aborigines should be altogether ignored, as they were valuable to many fishers in the Straits. He could quite bear out what had been said with regard to the injustice frequently dealt out to the native inhabitants of the colony, and as far as he could he should support the Bill.

Mr. BEATTIE said that the penalty in clause 7 at first sight looked very severe; but taken in conjunction with the latter part of clause 13 he did not think it could cause any great hardship. The latter part of clause 13 said:—

"In the case of a native labourer who is carried direct in a vessel to any such port for the purpose of being engaged under the provisions of this Act (the proof of which purpose shall be upon the person alleging the fact), the provisions of this Act shall not apply in respect of such native labourer while he is being so carried."

Therefore, if anyone who obtained the services of aboriginals did not proceed at once to some port to make the necessary agreement, he deserved to come under the operation of clause 7; but if he meant to employ the natives legitimately he was protected by clause 13. The penalty looked heavy, but it was necessary to make it heavy so as to compel those who employed natives to make the necessary agreement. He understood that the Government would have some supervision over vessels belonging to other colonies.

The PREMIER: Yes, if they are in Queensland waters.

Mr. BEATTIE said that in that case of course all vessels employing those aboriginals would be compelled by clause 7 to come to some Queensland port and place themselves under the operation of the Act; and so long as that was done he believed the necessary protection would be given to aboriginals employed in the pearl fisheries.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: I shall certainly not oppose the second reading of this Bill, although I think that sentimentalism in the way of protection of the black aboriginal race of this colony is running rampant. I am perfectly certain the hon. the Minister for Lands could point out how he and others assisted in sweeping the blacks out of the western portion of the colony, and very properly, too, no doubt. Where the white man appears the black man disappears, as was said by a very great authority, John Arthur Roebuck, in speaking with reference to the New Zealand war. There is no doubt it should be so, and it is so. We may mitigate the severity of the process, but that is all, and this is merely a measure of mitigation. I am sure the junior member for North Brisbane thinks the sooner the black races are swept out the better. I am sure he detests them, and I think he would support a measure which would hurry their departure to another and possibly a better sphere than they now occupy. I think a great many of the details of this Bill will require amendment in committee, but so far as it goes on the philanthropic lines which the Premier loves so much, and so far as it is intended to ameliorate the condition of the decaying races, which must be swept out before half-a-century is over, he will have my cordial support, and that, I am sure, of every member of this House. At the same time, I think that by bringing in measures of this sort and attempting to stave off the inevitable, he is doing an immense amount of injury to existing interests. After all, the white man—so I was frequently told at the last election—is the person to be particularly considered. I think the white man is perhaps not altogether considered in this measure. Some of its provisions will tend considerably to hamper two very important industries in the northern portion of the colony—the pearl fishery and the bêche-de-mer trade, which have certainly been interests of very considerable magnitude in the past, and probably will be equally so in the future. As I said at the outset, I do not intend to oppose the second reading, but I certainly think the measure should be amended in detail. Some of the penalties proposed to be inflicted for any breach of this measure must be reduced. Further, I may point out that the Government are taking upon themselves an enormous responsibility when they prefer to use black labour to white labour in the Government service. That is, I think, the meaning of the 13th clause. We can only assume that it has been introduced at the instance of the hon. member, the "fifth wheel," or at the instance of the Minister for Lands, who has always expressed a strong opinion in favour of black labour against white. He has told us he always managed his own station with black labour instead of white, as he found it more reliable, and—what is, no doubt, of more importance to him—cheaper than white labour. I trust we shall have some amendment to clause 13—a number singularly enough known as "th devil's dozen." I trust we shall have that amended so that none but white men will be employed by the colony of Queensland—that there will be no attempt to introduce black labour in that direction; but these are matters of detail, that will be amended in committee. I shall not oppose the Bill. Black men must disappear; but we can make their departure as pleasant as we can; they have to go.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: I agree with hon. members who have spoken on the Bill who are all of opinion that something ought to be done to remedy the evils that are known to exist in the northern parts of the colony in the treatment of the aboriginal natives. Cases have recently come under my observation in which not only have aboriginals been kidnapped, but the death of some of them has been caused in the effort to abduct them. Quite recently, a vessel, anxious to obtain some of the natives from our northern coast, ran deliberately into a canoe containing a number of natives, destroying the canoe. Two or three of the natives lost their lives, and the others were captured and taken away for the purpose of bêche-de-mer fishing. I think that this Bill strikes at the illegal employment of aboriginal natives in connection with bêche-de-mer fisheries. A provision is made that all the natives taken on board a vessel must be on the ship's articles, but the fact that they are is no preventive to their being employed for the purpose of diving in connection with the bêche-de-mer fishery; so that really the passing of a measure like this will not affect the number of natives who may be legitimately obtained and employed in connection with the development of these fisheries. Although the provisions of section 7, which have been adverted to as somewhat stringent, do seem severe, it must be borne in mind that those provisions cannot be made operative in the same way that the provisions of sections 8 and 9 can—by summary proceedings before a justice of the peace. The Government would have to be satisfied first that such a breach of the provisions had taken place as to justify the interference of the Colonial Secretary; and when he was satisfied that such a breach had taken place he would set the law in motion, in order to have the parties guilty of the breach punished. The breaches of sections 8 and 9, where the penalty is small, can be heard before a justice of the peace. There is a slight misapprehension in the minds of hon. gentlemen with regard to section 13. Now although there is reference there

to the permission of the customs officer being obtained, it in no way implies that the employment of these natives in boats is to be confined to boats that are the property of the Government, or employed by the Customs Department. All that is required is that any private person, who has aboriginals who are expert boatmen, shall obtain the authority of the local customs officer before he can employ those aboriginals for the purpose of manning his boats. In reference to what fell from the hon. member for Burke, I think there is ample provision made here for those natives being returned, so far as is possible, and to the place from which they were taken. They must be taken before the shipping master at Cooktown or Thursday Island, or wherever the shipping master is, and he will ascertain all the facts connected with the place where the men lived, and they must be taken back to the place where they were shipped; and every proof of *bona fides* with regard to these men will have to be given before those who employ them can discharge themselves of liability. Although some of the provisions do appear at first sight to be stringent, they are no more so than the circumstances require. No one can be more anxious to have all the interests of the colony protected than the present Government; and I think members of the present Government, while doing that, do not claim that they, more than members of the Opposition, are anxious that while the existing interests of the colony are maintained they shall not be maintained at the expense of the violation of all those principles of humanity that ought to guide us in dealing with an inferior race, who, as the hon. member for Balonne has said, are bound to go, by the very natural process which results from the contact of white with black races. There is no reason why we, by any active violation of these principles, should expedite their going by one day sooner than in the natural course of events they ought to do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said: The unqualified condemnation in which the hon. leader of the Opposition indulged of this measure, on the ground that it would interfere with the success of the bêche-de-mer fishery—if he thinks that the preservation of an industry of that kind is of much more importance than the destruction of the natives of the colony by any ruffians who choose to engage them without control at all—will not be agreed with by many members in this House. The natives have been grossly ill-used along the coast, as I know they have been in the interior, to which the hon. gentleman also referred. He spoke of my having some knowledge of the way in which the blacks have been treated in the interior; and all I can say is that if there had been a measure conceived or framed some fifteen years ago on the same principle that this Bill has been, and applied to the interior of the colony, it would have been a very good thing indeed for the whites and the blacks too, as we should not have suffered to anything like the extent we have from the depredations of the blacks. A measure of this kind is absolutely necessary to control the ruffians who exist among white men, in a country where they are positively without check, as when a country is first settled. I shall not attempt to relate the horrors and atrocities I have known committed in the interior of this country. It would take up the time of the House, and only horrify hon. members, to relate such a history of villainy as I have known perpetrated under the auspices of the Government of this colony, some fifteen years ago—I do not care who the man is. The native police were reserved by them, and protected against the representations of those who were cognisant of their ill-doings. The Government did that on all occasions, and there was no chance of getting bare justice done to the blacks. The same villainies have been perpetrated on the northern coast, and I believe this measure will have the effect of deterring villains from committing such acts as they have been guilty of in the past.

Mr. MIDGLEY said the question before the House was one which justified him in feeling that the present Government were actuated by feelings of friendship and sympathy towards the weak. If he were to try to say something to designate the character of the late Government, he should say, perhaps, that they were the friends of the strong. He gathered from the speeches of the hon. Premier and the hon. Attorney-General that they knew of cases of abuses and cruelties which justified them in taking some prompt and decisive measures to remedy those abuses and put an end to those cruelties. He was sorry, but not surprised, to hear the hon. member for Balonne say that the aboriginal race of the colony must go. He was more sorry and surprised to hear, in any measure, the same expression and the same opinion endorsed by the hon. Attorney-General. He did not know himself where the necessity lay for forming such an opinion as that. He believed that if the aboriginal inhabitants of the colony had been humanely, kindly, and properly treated by the white men of the colony, they would probably never have had, with regard to the North, any labour difficulty; and never have been under the necessity of introducing and discussing the measures which had been advocated from time to time to meet the requirements of the sugar-planters. He believed that kind of work, at any rate, was a kind of work which they would have been willing and able to have done. He did not see where the moral or physical necessity arose for the black race being exterminated;—that the advent of the white man to any part of the earth where the black man had lived for centuries should mean that the black man must go. It had been the violation of the law with regard to the sale and supply of intoxicants to those ignorant aboriginal natives of the land that had been the cause of their decay and ruin, and he hoped that amongst the measures which the Government would seek to supplement the one before them would be one with regard to the supply of intoxicating drinks to aboriginals, because he knew the law in that respect was very frequently violated. Without going to the North of Queensland for cruelties and violations of the law—without going further away than Sandgate, there were from time to time hardly disguised violations of that humane and merciful law. The sights he had witnessed and the sounds he had heard satisfied him that the law intended for the protection of those men was very frequently violated in that neighbouring watering-place; and the reproach would hang over the whole of the publicans of Sandgate until those violations of the law were sheeted home to the guilty party. He was in sympathy with the measure; but he noticed, in reading through the Bill—and before the discussion began he mentioned it to the senior member for Ipswich — that the 7th clause was perhaps excessive, and might make the Bill unworkable by its severity. The penalty to be inflicted for a violation of the law seemed out of all proportion to any penalty inflicted for any similar offence against any white man in the service of any employer of labour. The second part of the 7th clause was to his mind the most objectionable. Other speakers had dwelt upon the first part of the clause, but that did not seem to him to be so objectionable as the second part, because it was there provided that, on reasonable suspicion that any of the provisions of the law had been violated, the police magistrate or the

officer of Customs might seize and detain the vessel of the supposed transgressor. In those northern ports there was, at times, a good deal of friction between the captains and sailors of vessels and the Government officials, police magistrates, or custom-house officers as the case might be. Allegations had been made in the past of acts of injustice inflicted by them on men engaged in the northern waters, without any sufficient grounds. There was now, and had been for some years past, a petition or something of that sort in the Colonial Secretary's office—it would be a waste of time to discuss whether the allegations contained in it were true or not—in which the captain of a vessel trading in the northern waters alleged that his vessel was wrongfully seized and detained, and left to rot on the beach, by the unjust action of the Police Magistrate at Somerset.

The PREMIER: If you ask for the papers you can have them.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he did not want them, as he had seen them and knew what the man alleged. He could conceive it quite possible for there to be jealousies and heartburnings, and the supposition that one man was encroaching upon the authority and position of another; and to give any official the very great power which the 7th clause contemplated, to the collector of customs or police magistrate, would, he thought, be placing in the hands of an unscrupulous man, or any other man, too great power and authority. Supposing an aboriginal employé happened to lose his copper or brass token—it might be his only article of wearing apparel or adornment, perhaps—while diving, or through carelessness, the police magistrate might demand the production of it, and on its not being forthcoming might proceed to extremities with the captain of the vessel. The penalty under the clause ought to be diminished—ought to be made more in proportion to the penalty provided in similar cases—so far as there were similar cases of transgression of the law. With an amendment of that kind, he trusted the Bill would pass, and that it would be followed by other measures to more efficiently and completely protect the aborigines of the colony from the greed, lust, and unscrupulous practices of white colonists.

Mr. STEVENSON said he had no doubt the hon. member (Mr. Midgley) had said what he had said, believing that every word of it was true; but had the hon. member's experience of blacks been as extensive as his (Mr. Stevenson's) own, and had he been as well informed about them, he would not have stated that had the blacks been more humanely treated in the past they would now have been living side by side with the white colonists. The hon. member also commented on the statement of the hon. member for Balonne, that the blacks must disappear before the whites. He (Mr. Stevenson) did not understand that hon. member to express his satisfaction that such a state of things should exist.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Certainly not.

Mr. STEVENSON said it had been the universal experience, in other countries as well as in Australia, that a weak race disappeared before a strong one. The hon. member must have noticed that in Brisbane and other thickly settled parts there were now very few blacks to be seen, not because they had been intentionally wiped out by the white man, but because they had contracted the vices of the white man without his virtues, and were gradually disappearing in consequence, and there was no help for it. Not a single member of the House, he was satisfied, wished to treat the black race cruelly, but the fact remained the same that it was disappearing before the white race, and the white race could do little or nothing to prevent it. As to the Bill itself, he did not at all disagree with it, for he believed it would correct abuses which now existed. At the same time, it would be as well to meet those abuses as fairly as possible, and not introduce clauses which were likely to operate in a way that was not intended. He had noticed lately that some hon. members on the other side only answered arguments adduced by Opposition speakers, by abusing some member of that side or some person or some class which was supposed to be friendly to it. The Minister for Lands, for instance, in his speech on the Bill, had not made use of a single argument in its favour. In fact he never spoke about the Bill, but restricted himself to a tirade of abuse against the squatters and inhabitants of the interior, for the way in which they had ill-treated the blacks. As one who had a large experience amongst the blacks of the interior, and of the way they had been treated by the whites, he (Mr. Stevenson) could give a flat denial to what the hon. gentleman had said. His experience amongst the blacks in the interior of the colony had been far larger than that of the Minister for Lands, and, with one or two exceptions, he had never seen among the pioneers any cases of ill-treatment of the blacks except where they deserved it. If white men were to colonise and civilise the country, there was not the slightest doubt that they must take measures to defend themselves when attacked. He would say—and hon. members who had had experience in outside country would agree with him—that when the blacks did attack, the most humane way of treating them was to treat them decisively, and give them a salutary lesson which might do good and prevent great loss of life in future. It was all very well for the Minister for Lands to talk about blacks' protection. If the hon. gentleman did not go himself, he sent men who could as well defend themselves against the blacks as anyone. Although he sat down in a quiet corner, and was like a little king in the country, he got them to do his work, and did more harm than anyone. That was well known on the Dawson. He was supposed to be a blacks' protector, and what was the result? When they committed depredations, they went to the hon. gentleman for protection, because they knew that he worked his station by blacks. Those attacks on white men were known to tribes at a distance, and it was known when they were to be made; and when they used to fly to the hon. gentleman for protection, and the police came after them, they of course got frightened, and ran away, accompanied by all the civilised blacks working on the station. Then the hon. gentleman used to blame the police; and in fact it was men like him who worked up the agitation against the native police. He (Mr. Stevenson) contended that it was impossible to hold property and protect lives unless at times such action was taken as had been referred to. Of course the blacks had sometimes to be attacked, but it was in self-defence. How otherwise were pioneers to go on? If an overseer were killed, were they to sit down like dumb dogs and not do something to avenge themselves? It was all very well for the hon. gentleman to sit in a civilised part, and make tirades against men up country who had done his dirty work. If the hon. gentleman knew as much about innocent lives being taken as he (Mr. Stevenson) did, he would be more careful in what he said about the injury done to the blacks. No one who knew his (Mr. Stevenson's) life in the country would say that he ever ill-used blacks; it was well known that he had always been friendly towards them. He did not deny that he had used the blacks on his station, the same as the Minister for Lands; but he was kind to them, and he had men under

him who were kind to them. He spoke warmly on the subject. He saw the other day that a man who was his overseer for years, and afterwards his manager—a man who was always kind to the blacks—and who, having lately taken up an outside station, had been murdered by the blacks when out after his cattle. Would the Minister for Lands blame the residents or the police in that district for acting in a decisive manner to prevent such a thing happening in the future? He was sure there was not a single member of the House—whether they liked the blacks or not—who would blame them for defending themselves. He was sure that no hon. member with any common sense would accuse them of taking the lives of blacks, except where it was actually necessary for self-protection. He was glad to say that during all the time he had been in the colony he had never known of any men he had had under him, or any of his neighbours, ever indulge in lawlessness in any way, or who had ever taken action against the blacks unless it were necessary. It was not fair for the Minister for Lands, the representative of a squatting district, to get up and lead the general public, who did not know any better, to believe that the blacks were being wiped out in a lawless manner. With the provisions of the Bill, except the objectionable parts that had been pointed out, he agreed; and he would do his best to support any measure for the protection of the blacks of the colony.

Mr. JORDAN said he had not understood the Minister for Lands to cast any reflections on the pioneers of settlement in Australia; he thought his remarks pointed in this direction: that great cruelties had been perpetrated from time to time among the aboriginals. There was scarcely a single hon. member, he thought, who would not admit that. He did not understand the Minister for Lands to say that those cruelties had been committed by the squatters. No doubt the law was that, when civilised people occupied large tracts of country, the original inhabitants must disappear before the footsteps of civilisation. If those people could be civilised or taught the value of labour, then that law would not operate. While he believed that great cruelties had been perpetrated, he rather thought the Government had been to blame in the matter, because they had initiated a system of black police, which he thought was a cruel system and could not be properly regulated. Of course the country must be settled, and the earth must be tilled. The law was that barbarous people, who did not put the land to its legitimate use, and who simply hunted over it, would disappear before people who would till the soil and who knew the value of labour. That had proved to be the case in all countries where aboriginals had been found. He took exception to the general tenor of the remarks made by the hon. member for Balonne, who seemed to think that there was an inconsistency in that part of the Bill which provided for the legitimate use of aboriginal tribes in the coasting trade, and the general tendency of legislation under the present Government against the employment of black labour. The two things were to his mind perfectly distinct. He was utterly opposed to black labour in the ordinary sense of the word—that was, the importation of large numbers of people from other parts of the world in order to give cheap labour to the sugar-planters, or any other class of people. But he held that the aboriginals of this country had a natural right to employment; that was a very important distinction in his mind. Could it be said that they should come and take possession of a country like this, and refuse employment to its inhabitants?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why don't you give them representation?

Mr. JORDAN said he would give them representation when they were educated. He said it was not absolutely necessary that the aboriginals should go, if they could be taught the value of labour; then they could hold possession of land, because they would put it to its legitimate use. On that principle he had always held that they should employ aboriginals whenever they could; and he thought the Government made a mistake in not trying to get hold of the young people of aboriginal tribes and teach them the value of labour. Efforts had been made in that direction, which had been to a certain extent successful. The South Australian Government had been endeavouring for many years to civilise the aboriginals, and had set aside reserves as agricultural establishments in order to teach them the value of labour; but they had not been generally successful. He thought that in the northern parts of Queensland, where there were still large numbers of aboriginals, reserves should be set apart for their use. In 1881, he took some trouble to find out the number of aboriginals in the North, and, through the kindness of the Commissioner of Police and other gentlemen interested in the subject, he arrived at something like a rough idea of the number. It was a rough approximation, at the least, but a great many were still there; and he held that reserves should be set apart for those poor people, and an effort made to teach them agriculture and the value of labour. He knew that there was a great deal of truth in the remarks of the hon. member for Normanby—that the squatters must protect themselves, and that it was necessary that those people should occasionally receive a salutary lesson. But he was afraid that there was a great deal of cruelty sometimes covered under the idea of giving "a salutary lesson." Some years ago, he became part proprietor in a station at Caboolture, about 33 miles from Brisbane—125 square miles of country which had been given up some years before, because the aboriginals were very troublesome and some people had been murdered there. They held that place for about five years, and they were subject to the visitation of those people, who came in considerable numbers from Bribie Island, and very fierce they were; but during the whole of that time none of their servants were ever maltreated or molested in any way.

Mr. ARCHER: What year was that?

Mr. JORDAN: 1853.

Mr. ARCHER: The place was settled sixteen years before that.

Mr. JORDAN said he knew it was, but that particular country had been given up because the blacks were so troublesome. A housekeeper and some other people had been murdered.

Mr. MOREHEAD: How many years before?

Mr. JORDAN: Three or four.

Mr. ARCHER: My brother took up the place sixteen years before—in 1840.

Mr. JORDAN: Just so. He would not detain the House long. The rule they laid down was that the blacks were never allowed near the house. When they came to the station, some person was sent to show them where they were allowed to camp. They were not punished if they killed cattle; it was considered when they did this it was because they were hungry for food—and not from wantonness—and they killed very few. They were never punished by being given "a salutary lesson"; and in a short time the people on the station were perfectly secure. Men went out looking for cattle, leaving no one in the houses but women, and servants, and children, and they were never insulted or disturbed in

any way. He believed that there was a great deal of truth in the remark that the outrages committed by blacks were generally in the way of retaliation. He should be the last to say that squatters generally had behaved cruelly to them, because he believed that generally they treated them humanely; but there had been individual cases of cruelty, and they knew in what direction they, in the first place, often occurred. Improper proceedings took place on the stations sometimes by the servants or overseers, and then the tribes retaliated. He believed that if they were treated humanely, a great many of those people might still be saved. He heartily approved of the Bill, and should give it his cordial support.

Mr. BLACK said hon. members had got away from the Bill before the House, into a discussion upon the aboriginals of Australia—a subject that, from their utterances, some of them knew very little about. The last speaker referred to the aboriginals as having a natural right to employment, and he (Mr. Black) did not think any hon. member or any sensible man was likely to object to that. The hon. member advocated the Bill because it was intended primarily to afford that means of employment to which those people were legitimately entitled; but he (Mr. Black) found from the title of the Bill that it was a measure "to restrict the employment of natives of Australia and New Guinea." It seemed that the New Guinea native was to be introduced into the colony for the the bêche-de-mer fisheries, whereas the Government, in their wisdom, had prevented them from being employed on the sugar plantations. It seemed to him a strange anomaly that those people should be allowed to be employed in the bêche-de-mer fisheries, where every possible supervision over any labor of that kind was required, and yet, for an industry vastly more important than the bêche-de-mer fisheries, and where the Government had every opportunity of exercising the most careful supervision and protection to those people, they were prohibited from being employed. Whilst the Government apparently wished to pose well before the working men of the colony, so far as the sugar industry was concerned, by doing all in their power to prevent the employment of coloured labour in that industry, yet they came down to the House and actually proposed that the same description of coloured labour should be actually introduced into another industry in Queensland. That was one of the inconsistencies which the hon. the Premier might be able satisfactorily to explain, but which seemed to him to be a very strange piece of inconsistency. The House had been told by one hon. member that if the aboriginals had been properly treated in the past they would at the present time probably form a satisfactory solution of the Labour question in tropical Queensland—that was to say, they would be sufficiently numerous to supply the agricultural industries of the North with a sufficiency of suitable labour. From that view he entirely dissented. He did not care if they had the same aboriginal population as was in the colony fifty years ago; the aboriginal native never did any work in his own country. The aboriginal native of Queensland, or of Africa, or of the South Sea Islands, did no work in his own country: he hunted; it was the women who had to do the arduous work. An aboriginal of this country might work very well if he were taken over to Fiji, but he would never work here—that is, he would never engage in continuous work. The native of the South Sea Islands engaged in no continuous work in his own island, but when brought under our somewhat higher civilisation, he worked; and so it would always be. In this country the process was going on which took place in all the other countries of the world — the survival of the fittest; and all that they could do was to see that so long as the aboriginal race of the country existed, their decrease and gradual extermination should be made as painless and as comfortable to them as possible. More than that they could not do; more than that no country in the world had ever been able to achieve; and beyond that they could never expect to go. With regard to the Bill, whatever might have been the intention of the Government in it, it contained such conflicting clauses as to render it almost inoperative unless amended in committee. He referred especially to the conflicting nature of clauses 3, 4, and 13. Clauses 3 and 4 read thus:—

"3. No native labourer"—

which, of course, included natives of New Guinea—

"shall be employed or carried on board of any vessel trading in Queensland waters unless he is carried on the ship's articles in like manner as a seaman forming part of the crew of the vessel, and has been engaged to serve in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

"4. No native labourer shall be engaged to serve on board of, or in connection with, any such vessel for any voyage or period of time, by any person other than the master or owner thereof, nor shall any native labourer be so engaged except in the presence and with the sanction of the shipping master of the port at or nearest to which such engagement is made."

According to those two clauses, he would like to know how a ship engaged in the bêche-de-mer trade was ever to get a crew on board. They were conferring upon shipmasters the ability to go to New Guinea to get a crew; but what did they find? If they were even carried, they could not be engaged except before a shipping master. Did the Government propose to send a shipping master to New Guinea for the purpose? Clause 13 was probably intended to provide for the case of a vessel which had to go away to get a crew; but it might happen that a vessel would sail away from some northern port, or from New South Wales, with half a crew on board, and procure the necessary labour there without ever taking them before any shipping master. They might then go away and engage in the bêche-de-mer fishery, and after a time go into Cooktown or some northern port; and they were actually allowed by the Bill to have those men on board, and employ them for the whole time in the pearl fishery. The Government were about to provide for the introduction of the New Guinea native to carry on the work of the pearl fisheries, as the aboriginal natives were not nearly numerous enough to supply the demand. He would not say it was not a good principle. If the New Guinea native could be found to do the work which our own countrymen were certainly unable to do, and if the colony of Queensland could benefit by the prosecution of the pearl-shell industry, Queensland would be doing wrong if she did not allow it to be carried out; but it must be undoubtedly under the same proper regulations as would apply to all coloured labour introduced in the colony; and the Bill did not provide for that regulation. Hon. members had already spoken about the extreme penalty to be inflicted in the event of any evasion of the Act under clause 7. That was a most arbitrary clause. A stupid interpretation of the Act—such as many Government officers were very prone to give—might cause very serious loss to a trader engaged in a lawful occupation—an occupation which the Government of Queensland had invited him to prosecute. The vessel and the whole cargo might be forfeited, and the extreme penalty of £500 be inflicted. The whole Bill, like a great many others that the Government had introduced, was very

crude in its provisions. It had been hastily written, and had evidently been written by people resident in the southern portion of the colony, who were not conversant with, or, if they were conversant with, were not in sympathy with the industries of Northern Queensland. He had no doubt that the Bill would pass its second reading; but before it became law it would require very careful revision in committee, and such amendments introduced into it as would enable it to meet the requirements of that portion of the colony to which it was intended to apply.

Mr. BROOKES said he thought the Bill was a very good Bill. It had been very carefully drawn up indeed, and he regarded it as a Bill that had been drawn up on the advice and suggestion which the Government had received from people in the northern parts of the colony. So far from its being a southern Bill—whatever that might mean, if it meant anything at all—it was one which represented northern industries; and he was very glad it had been brought before the House. He had never seen anyone so ingenious as the hon. member for Mackay was in twisting and turning everything to his own little and pernicious views. With reference to the way in which the late speaker spoke of the 13th clause—a clause as plain as it could be to any grown-up man—the hon. gentleman approached the subject with a bias. He regarded the employment of coloured labour in Queensland waters as exactly the same thing as sweating and working them to death on sugar plantations on the land. The Bill was intended to correct certain abuses. The hon. member for Mackay did not seem to recognise any abuses; or, if he did, he regarded them as the inevitable consequences of the bêche-de-mer fisheries. There were other speakers that afternoon who regarded the Bill as an interference with vested interests—that was the sugar-planters' cry again. They were not to behave like Christian men because of some vested interest. The colony would endanger every interest, whether vested or not, if it stood in the way of morality and institutions, or sully the fair fame of their British name and lineage. Surely that was intelligible, and he trusted that the hon. member for Mackay would cease his childish talk on the subject of coloured labour. The Bill was a good one and would recommend itself to even the persons employed in the trade. All persons in that trade were not rascals and villains; some of them would be very glad to be protected; and the bêche-de-mer men and pearl fisheries could be conducted on honest principles. It was unfair for the hon. member to treat the Bill as an intriguing way of bringing in the natives of New Guinea. That argument recoiled upon those who used it. If the aboriginals were too few to do the work, it was because they had been stolen away and killed off or landed in places they never came from, and were consequently killed by other natives, or by the other vices which characterised the people engaged in the trade, and the kanaka trade. The Bill was a preventive, and as he believed it would encourage the trade and give it an air of respectability, he would vote for it.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. member for Mackay was something like the man who believed that there was nothing like leather, only he believed in sugar. He never rose to speak on any subject without dragging in black labour and the sugar industry. The hon. gentleman might take the hint and say a little less on that subject in future, seeing it had been so thoroughly trashed out in the House during the last few years. The title of the Bill before the House was unfortunate; it was not a Bill to restrict so much as to encourage the legitimate employment of aboriginals. The natives of New Guinea, and the north generally, were often kidnapped and employed against their wills, and the Bill was intended to regulate that matter so that those natives, if employed at all, should be employed in a legitimate way and properly treated. Like some other members who had spoken, he did not believe in the 7th clause, although he had no objection to a vessel being seized on suspicion. Still he thought the fine of £500 mentioned in the first part of the clause might be reduced. He trusted the Bill would tend to the better protection of the natives who were engaged in the fisheries.

Mr. NORTON: I was rather surprised to hear some hon. members getting up and advocating the employment of black labour—members from whom we are accustomed to hear the very opposite arguments on other occasions. That is the argument followed by the hon. member who has just sat down, and it is also the argument which has fallen from the junior member for North Brisbane.

Mr. BROOKES: It is not.

Mr. NORTON: That I say is the argument used by those gentlemen. I know the hon. member did say he was opposed to black labour; but this Bill provides for the employment of black crews on vessels trading in the bêche-de-mer fisheries. The whole of the crew, it appears to me, may be blacks, and yet we remember the time when hon. members here were creating all the excitement they could—and that at a time when there was quite enough excitement without any particular agitation on the part of leading men—against the employment of any but white labour in ships. Do hon. members not remember the time when the A.S.N. Company were employing Chinese on their boats?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That was not the bêche-de-mer fishery.

Mr. NORTON: I am not going to split hairs about the bêche-de-mer fishery. I am talking now about the vessels trading in Queensland waters; and I do not care whether they are employed in bêche-de-mer fisheries, or in the coasting trade. It is nothing but a case of legal hair-splitting, to speak of the Chinese not being engaged in bêche-de-mer fishing. I cannot see what difference it makes in this case. They were employed in vessels trading in Queensland waters.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The seamen on the A.S.N. steamers do not dive.

Mr. NORTON: I am glad to hear that they do not dive. I think we are pretty well aware that it is not part of the business of the sailors on the A.S.N. boats to dive. Anyone who sails up north, however, will find that it is often the business of the natives about Bowen to dive, but the sailors do not generally join in the pastime.

Mr. BROOKES: They only die.

Mr. NORTON: I find by this Bill that anyone engaged in this trade is to be allowed to discharge every white sailor he has, and employ blacks in their place. The blacks are not confined to diving, by the Bill, but may be engaged in every employment about the ship, so far as I can see; and therefore we are quite justified in saying that members, in advocating the passing of this Bill, are really advocating the employment of black labour.

Mr. BROOKES: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. NORTON: I do not pay any very great deference to the Attorney-General's opinion.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I did not speak.

Mr. NORTON: Because it is not very long ago, in a Supreme Court case, the hon. gentleman drew a definition between the killing of a black man and a white. The hon. member was prosecuting a man for killing a blackfellow; and he prosecuted him for manslaughter, and took the opportunity to tell the judge that if he had been a white man who was killed he would have prosecuted the prisoner for murder.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I said nothing of the kind.

Mr. NORTON: I am sorry to rile the hon. gentleman.

Mr. BROOKES: It is not true.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You know that is not true.

Mr. NORTON: It is a most lamentable fact that the hon. members sitting on the Treasury benches now are always being misreported. I remember reading that, and I was very much struck with it at the time. I know the Attorney-General is a very humane man; and it struck me as a very unusual distinction for him to make. I hope the hon. gentleman has been misreported, as usual. So far as the employment of natives of the country is concerned, it is a good thing that they should be employed, as far as they can. This Bill, however, not only restricts their employment, but almost prohibits it, because, in order to engage them at all, they must be engaged in some seaport town. We know, in the North, in most of the seaport towns, there are not generally a very large number of natives congregated. They come there for a time, but do not stop. What is more, it is not desirable that they should be encouraged to come there at all. The object should be to keep the natives away from the towns as much as possible, because they have a tendency to take up all the worst habits of the white population. When they become more civilised, as we call it, they come into the towns and acquire the very worst habits the white men have. Instead of merely restricting the employment of the aboriginals the Bill almost prevents it. With regard to New Guinea, I do not exactly see why we should limit the employment of the natives in this particular service. If the Bill said they should be employed as divers, I would admit that there was some sense in it. But there is no such distinction; and I am inclined to doubt whether it is a wise provision, now that vessels are trading in the labour business, they should be restricted from going to New Guinea while we allow others to go there. I am quite sure that if this Bill passes, an attempt will be made on this side of the House, if it is not done by the Premier, to restrict the employment of these natives solely to the occupation of diving. Apart from that, as the Bill now stands, I would ask hon. members if they consider it at all probable, when black men are taken away on board these vessels, miles from where there is any supervision or chance of supervision, that they are likely to be treated with any more humanity than blacks are on plantations? I do not think it at all probable. For that reason I believe it is a very dangerous thing to allow bêche-de-mer fishers to employ any number of these blacks more than are actually required for the purpose of diving.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: The hon. Premier, in introducing the Bill this afternoon, said it was drafted principally on the representations of two Government officers in the North, whose names he mentioned—one was a gentleman in charge of Customs at Cooktown, and the other was, he believed, Mr. Chester, at Thursday Island. He said that these gentlemen had, at different times within the last few years, made representations of outrages having been committed against the aboriginal population of Australia, in the North. The only outrages which the hon. gentleman mentioned were that some natives were taken on board vessels in the North, and sometimes they were never brought back again. That is about the coolest reason I ever heard for introducing a measure of such importance. Because a few natives may have been taken away from the North, and some probably died or were drowned before they could be returned to the same place, a Bill is brought in legalising the employment of aboriginal natives in a condition of life in which they are not now employed.

The PREMIER: The Bill you brought in yourself legalised it. This is simply amending your own Bill.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman might just as well keep his temper till the close of the debate; and when the Bill goes into committee he will have a chance of repeating all he has said before, and saying as much more as he likes, and we will listen to him patiently and without interruption. Throughout this Bill the word "trading" is employed, and the word "fishing" only comes in incidentally. We have a great many ships employed trading between Queensland ports, and I think I may defy any hon. member to say that he ever saw a blackfellow employed on any one of them. This Bill has been brought in by gentlemen who are utterly opposed to the employment of black labour; who have said, "Perish the sugar industry, if it cannot live without black labour"; and yet its object is to encourage the employment of black labour in situations now occupied by white men. I am rather surprised that the Premier does not see it in that light. I give him credit for being animated in the matter by the best intentions, but we may be mistaken in them, and we all know that the way to a certain place is paved with good intentions. It is also unfortunate that the name "New Guinea" should have been employed in the Bill. We all remember that when the late Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, took the bold step of annexing New Guinea, through Mr. Chester, it was charged against the colony of Queensland that we wanted to take possession of New Guinea, not for the purpose for which we said we wanted it, namely, to prevent any other power from taking possession of it, but for the purpose of procuring labour for the plantations. To attempt to legislate for New Guinea would tend to give a colour to the charge then made against the colony. This is the first time, I think, in our history, that we have attempted to legislate for New Guinea.

The PREMIER: No. In 1881 we passed the Bêche-de-mer Fisheries Act—your own Bill.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Seeing that we have been charged with trying to establish the slave trade in New Guinea for our sugar plantations, we should be extremely careful in our dealings with that country, until it is formally taken possession of, which we all hope will be very soon, and then it will be under the protection of a Power which will prevent us, or anyone else, from taking away the natives of New Guinea for any purpose whatever. I was rather amused at the tendency of the discussion shortly after tea. It seemed to be drifting into the usual annual discussion when the police vote comes up in the Estimates. When I entered the Chamber the hon. member (Mr. Jordan) was on his legs, and the tenor of his discussion seemed to me to be a rather murderous one. Certainly that hon. member was about—

> "The mildest-mannered man
> That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

But his intention seemed to be to civilise the natives of Queensland off the face of the earth. The hon. member said that if they would accept our civilisation, and learn to work, and become educated, they need not die off; but that if they did not do these things they must inevitably go before the white man. That is a most murderous doctrine for such a Christian gentleman to preach to the House. There is no necessity for the black man to disappear from the face of the earth, even if he does not become civilised. There is plenty of room in Australia for all of us; and it certainly seems to me a strange theology that God created the white man to chase the black man from the face of the earth. My friend, the leader of the Opposition, says it is being done all the same. If it is, all I can say is I am afraid it is being done contrary to the laws of nature. This Bill, though framed with the best intentions, will require to be carefully revised in committee to make it what the Premier evidently intends it to be, a Bill to prevent the kidnapping of aborigines. If it is simply confined to them, and if they are restricted to the work they are employed in now, and are not permitted to engage in occupations which are very seldom followed but by white men, it will be a good Bill. But if we legitimise their employment in trading vessels we shall make a very grievous mistake. I hope the Premier, before the Bill goes into committee, will put his ingenious mind to work, eliminate all reference to trading, and confine the Bill entirely to kidnapping for fishing purposes. It will then be a very good measure, and prevent a recurrence of those outrages which have been represented by those officials, Messrs. Fahey and Chester.

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

TRIENNIAL PARLIAMENTS BILL—COMMITTEE.

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

Preamble postponed.

On clause 1—"Repeal of 31 Vic., ch. 8, s. 29"—

Mr. MOREHEAD said that, after what fell from hon. members the other night, he thought the Premier ought to give some reason why the duration of the present Parliament was to be extended beyond that of any future Parliament, as proposed in the Bill.

The PREMIER said he had given quite sufficient reasons, in moving the second reading, why he did not then think it desirable that the Bill should apply to the present Parliament. In the last Parliament he introduced a similar measure, and hon. members now sitting on the Opposition side were then unanimous in their condemnation of the idea that the Bill should apply to the then existing Parliament. They declared that it was entirely inconsistent with constitutional practice. He was convinced by their arguments, and intimated his intention of modifying the measure accordingly; and he did so when he brought in the measure a second time, in exactly the same language as that of the present Bill. He did not know why hon. members changed their opinions when they changed sides of the House. He had never done so himself. Hon. members might laugh, but they could refer to his records for the last twelve years and see whether he had changed his views according to the side he occupied of the House. He could give another reason, and a very forcible one too, why the Bill should not apply to the present Parliament. If it did, the present Parliament would cease to exist in October, 1887. That would probably be in the middle of a session, which would be extremely inconvenient——

Mr. MOREHEAD: Call Parliament together earlier.

The PREMIER: In the year 1886, too, the census would be taken, and it undoubtedly would be the duty of whatever Government might be in power, as soon as possible, to provide for a redistribution of electorates. It would be perfectly impossible to do that before the session of 1887. The result of being compelled to dissolve the present Parliament in 1886 would be that either the new Parliament would have to meet in its present form, as it was very unlikely that it would assist in destroying itself, or else the redistribution would not come into operation until the expiration of that Parliament. Those, he thought, were sufficient reasons to justify the course that had been taken with regard to the Bill; and he did not know any good reasons why it should have been brought forward in any other shape.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if the Premier had tried to tie himself in a political knot he could not have been more successful. He said there would have to be a redistribution in 1887; but he forgot that, according to the Governor's Speech, an Additional Members Bill was to be brought in during the present session. What did the hon. gentleman mean? Why did he not bring on that Bill before he gave them the Triennial Parliaments Bill? Why should not the additional members have something to say about extending the present Parliament to five years? The hon. gentleman's whole argument went for nothing. He had not given an answer to a straightforward question. What had they to do now with the next census? All they had to deal with was the system of triennial parliaments—was it a good one, and if so, whether it should not apply to the present Parliament. The question whether Parliament would be dissolved in 1886, 1887, 1888, or 1889, was nothing if the principle was a good one. The hon. gentleman had brought forward nothing in favour of not applying the Bill to the present Parliament. Of course he had a majority at his side—that was a convincing argument so far as that Committee was concerned; but he (Mr. Morehead) did not know it was so far as the public were concerned. The wounded snake was to be dragged its slow length along; because it would be wounded before the five years were past, and it would drag a very seedy tail before the end of the time for which the hon. member proposed to insure his life. It was simply a Life Insurance Bill which the hon. member proposed; but he did not know whether he would succeed with it. If the principle of triennial parliaments was good, let it be so admitted, and let it be applied at once. Let not the hon. gentleman give himself a larger sentence than he deserved. Let him be content with three years. That would be quite enough to enable him to become "honourable" for all time, and probably to obtain the title "Sir S. W. Griffith." If he would limit the duration of the present Parliament to three years it would at all events give him the "honourable" title. The hon. gentleman certainly ought to give the Committee some good reason for his objection to so applying the Bill. Were hon. members opposite afraid to meet their constituents in three years? The members of the Opposition were quite willing to meet their constituents; but it seemed as if hon. members opposite were afraid of that. Hon. members of the Opposition were willing to accept the principle of triennial parliaments; they were willing to abide

by the decision of the Committee if the Bill was made to apply to the present Parliament; but they would not assent to the measure as it stood—allowing the present Parliament to last for five years.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not believe in the Bill at all, and if he had been present at the second reading he should have voted against it. The reasons given by the Premier for not applying the triennial system to the present Parliament were very weak indeed. The first reason he gave was that the Opposition had convinced him that it would be wrong. He was very glad that hon. members on that side were able to convince him of anything; but it seemed that in regard to another Bill—that dealing with the payment of members—they had not been able to convince him that it should not apply to the present Parliament. They were consistent, but he was afraid they convinced the hon. gentleman very much against his will, and that he was of the same opinion still. The next reason he gave was, that in 1886 a census was to be taken, and it would be very inconvenient if Parliament was to dissolve before a redistribution of seats took place. But that was a matter entirely in the hands of the Government. They could arrange, if they wished, that the Redistribution Bill should come into operation with the new Parliament that would come into existence in 1887, if the Bill under discussion became law as a three years' Bill; so that really both reasons were very weak ones, and he thought all hon. members must admit that they would scarcely hold water. He believed that another reason given by an hon. member, if not by the Premier himself, was that it was not likely they were going to commit suicide. That was a very tangible reason; it was one that appealed to their self-interest; and no doubt it was the only reason for which the Bill brought in was not to apply to the present Parliament. The only argument he ever had heard in favour of triennial parliaments was that it was a good thing for members to meet their constituencies often and give an account of themselves, and that if they had served their constituents well they would be re-elected; and if not, their constituents would be able to say, "You shall go; we will get better men." He believed the hon. the Premier expressed himself as being in favour of the annual system, so that, if the triennial system was good at all, it was good for the men comprising the present House. Surely, if it was good for their successors, it must be good for them, and there was therefore great inconsistency in the Premier's action in not applying it to the present Parliament.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that on the second reading of the Bill he stated that he was in favour of triennial parliaments, and always had been so. At the same time, however, he thought the Government would do well to give way on the point of applying the principle to the present Parliament from the passing of the measure. He would not apply it from the beginning of the present Parliament, but from the passing of the Bill, or the end of the session. He thought that would be fair to both sides of the Committee, and he should vote for an amendment to that effect.

Mr. CHUBB said the Premier had stated just now that hon. members on that side seemed to change their opinions in the House as they changed sides: but that could not apply to him, because he was not in the House when the hon. gentleman introduced his Bill on a former occasion. On the second reading of the Bill, he (Mr. Chubb) said it would be only honest, when they were altering the Constitution, to make the law apply to themselves as well as to their successors, and that he would introduce an amendment to that effect in committee. It was all very well to say that there were difficulties in the way of making the Bill apply to a certain Parliament, but there were no difficulties in the way of people who desired to act honestly and fairly. The amendment he had to propose now was, that all the words in the 2nd line of the clause, commencing with "shall," and concluding with "be," be omitted, with a view of inserting "is hereby," so that it would read:—

1. The twenty-ninth section of the Constitution Act of 1867 is hereby repealed.

Mr. NORTON said that, when the second reading of the Bill was moved, the Premier had given as his reason for not making it apply to the present Parliament that the House could not be expected to commit suicide; and the same objection was raised by the Colonial Treasurer. Why did they not use the same argument now? Why make other excuses?—for no one would ever regard their attempted explanations as anything but excuses, if they talked the whole evening. One argument just used was that the Government had been convinced by the arguments of the other side when the Bill was before the House some time ago. He (Mr. Norton) did not think any argument was ever used by any hon. gentleman on his side of the Committee against the measure applying to the then existing Parliament. The only instance which had been quoted of such an argument being used was the case of the Colonial Treasurer, who used it when he saw there was no chance of it passing at all. If members now sitting on the Opposition side did believe in that argument at all, something similar must have taken place to what was recorded in a tale of a Protestant and Catholic who argued for a long time, each endeavouring to convert the other. Finally, the Protestant's arguments convinced the Catholic, and at the same time the Catholic's arguments converted the Protestant. For his part, he never believed in the principle of triennial parliaments, and had heard no satisfactory reasons adduced in support of it. He would particularly oppose the present clause. As for the argument that they did not think the House should commit suicide, it was only a question of time. It must come a little sooner or later. He did not think it was a matter of very great importance whether the term was three years or five; but, if the Premier's principle was adopted at all, it must be made to apply to the present House. If they were going to give sauce to the goose they must give it to the gander. It would be much more reasonable, and would be some evidence of sincerity on the Premier's part.

Mr. STEVENS said he did not think the action of the Bill should be retrospective. He was quite in accord with the principle of triennial parliaments; and he thought if it were to apply to future parliaments it should apply to the present one; but the three years should commence from the end of the present session, and not from the beginning of the Parliament.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it appeared to him that if there was any good in the principle it must commence *ab initio*. If the Government did not agree to that, they could not be honestly in favour of triennial parliaments. Surely the Opposition, who were in the minority, ought to be the ones afraid to meet their constituents! Those on the other side, who had everything to give and everything to promise, had every advantage in making the present the first triennial Parliament. What did it matter whether the Parliament closed a year earlier or a year later, as far as those hon. gentlemen were concerned? The members on the Opposition side bowed their

necks to the axe; they admitted they were defeated; they denied the expediency or propriety of triennial parliaments; but, having been defeated on that subject, they wished the thing to be done thoroughly, and to have the present Parliament made triennial. He was sure the hon. gentlemen opposite could not object to the stand they took.

Mr. JORDAN said he did not agree with the condition laid down by the hon. member who just sat down—that if the principle were a good one it should apply to the present Parliament. The present Parliament had been elected all over the colony on the understanding that it was to last five years. A large majority of the population of the colony would be very much disappointed if the Parliament were to commit any act of suicide. A gentleman who had been Premier of the colony—a man of large mind and great ability—was notorious for having declared that what the colony wanted was administration rather than legislation. That was Sir Arthur Palmer. He (Mr. Jordan) thoroughly endorsed it. They had had admirable legislation in the colony. During the very first session of the first Queensland Parliament, they passed laws on the most important questions that could affect the interests of the colony, which, if they had been faithfully and honestly administered, would have lasted the colony till the present time. He alluded especially to the Alienation of Crown Lands Act. They had been cobbling and pulling down and trying to build up some land system ever since—for more than twenty years—and were beginning again now. He believed that the Bill about to be introduced would be the best Land Bill that had ever seen the light in the Australian Colonies, and that that view would be endorsed by a great majority on the second reading. The more he looked into it the more satisfied he was with it generally; but they might pass that Land Bill, or, if it could be possible, a perfect Land Bill that had no defect or flaw whatever, and if it were badly administered it would prove a great failure.

Mr. MOREHEAD: If they make you one of the commissioners under the Bill.

Mr. JORDAN said administration was what was wanted. He could easily conceive that members of the Opposition had proved it very easy indeed to change their opinions entirely on the question of triennial parliaments. Was it not a somewhat remarkable circumstance that every member on the Opposition side was a convert to the system? At least, so he gathered from the speech of the hon. member for Townsville, who had made a mistake in sitting upon that side of the Committee, because he was a thorough Liberal. He found that his opinions upon any great question of Australian politics generally agreed almost exactly with the opinions held by the hon. member for Townsville.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Then you had better come over here.

Mr. JORDAN: Every member on the other side was in favour of triennial parliaments. They were very anxious that the present Parliament should come to an end in the least possible time, so that they might have a chance of again sitting on the Treasury benches. Under the circumstances the Premier should stick to his Bill in its present form, and not for one moment allow anybody on either side to alter his purpose, as if it were altered it would be damaged. The present Government were initiating a new system; they were laying the foundation of the colony afresh, and would provide land for settlement, and labour for the planter—a system which would answer much better than that already in use. European labour, not Italians or Maltese—he did not believe in them. He agreed with the hon. member for Blackall that no low-class labour was desirable; he believed in labour from the north of Europe. The sugar industry would be thoroughly established by a system of that kind. As they were laying the foundation of the colony afresh, they must have time to make sure work of it; and if the Government foolishly suffered themselves to be snuffed out by the clever management of the hon. gentlemen on the other side of the Committee, or should be intimidated by the threat which had been held out by the hon. member for Port Curtis—that there would be opposition of a very determined character in connection with the measure unless the present Government yielded to their views in bringing the Parliament to an end in three years—if they should be influenced by that, it would be a bad thing for the colony. They knew what the administration of the Land Act would be in the hands of gentlemen on the other side. It would not be worth the paper it was printed upon: they knew that from past experience, both here and in the other colonies. In 1861 an Act was passed in New South Wales which allowed free selection before survey, and was to bring an immense amount of capital from Great Britain. How was that Act administered? Look at the terrible effects: 36,000,000 acres of land were alienated in that colony, and a greater portion was in the hands of banks and other money-lending institutions of the colony, and the squatters were compelled to buy the land in self-defence from dishonest speculators. That had been the result of the maladministration of what was considered to be the most liberal Land Act ever passed in Australia.

Mr. ARCHER said he did not think while he had been a member of that House he had ever heard such a speech as had been given by the junior member for South Brisbane. In the first place, he stated that the present Government had been returned by a large majority for the purpose of carrying out some principles, and he said that those principles would be overturned if in three years' time a majority opposed to them were elected and in power. Therefore, he seemed to imply that the majority of Queensland of the present day should overrule the majority of Queensland of three years hence. They must have time to carry out their measures, whether they met with the approbation of the people of Queensland or not. Supposing the people of Queensland, in three years hence, disagreed: they would not have a voice; they would be bound by a word given five years before. He did not want to be offensive, but surely the hon. gentleman must see the absurdity of his argument! If a short Parliament was good for the purpose of showing what was the opinion of the people of Queensland, why was it not as good now as it would be four years hence? If they were to have a voice in the government of the colony, they ought to have a voice in three years hence as well as in four or five years hence. Why ask five years from the present time for the present Government? The hon. member actually answered now, because the people might in three years return another Government which would not agree with the present, and thus the present Government, which at present did agree with the opinions of the people, would not have time to carry out their policy. But if the people were to have any voice in the government at all, they ought to have it with one Government as well as with another. They knew quite well what the present Government would have done had they got into power shortly after the McIlwraith Government took office. They would have done away with the mail service, for example. They knew that the present Premier wrote home to the managers of the British-India Company to tell them that when he got into power he would not look upon the agreement made by Sir

Thomas McIlwraith as binding. The letters were published, and everyone there knew that was done. Well, did anyone on that side then say that therefore the Government ought to extend the time of its sitting on purpose to secure that mail service? The hon. Premier made a great mistake. Why, he was no more game now to break that agreement than to fly from the top of the House. He knew that proposal was carried through by a statesman who saw into the future of Queensland, and what that mail service would do for it; and he would no more dare to attempt to carry out the threat he made in that letter, than to fly from the top of the House. But supposing the people of Queensland had seen that the mail service was a mistake, and that the country would be impoverished, and the whole country suffer by it, and that the price paid for it was too high: hon. members opposite would have come into power, and would have done what they threatened to do; and why should not they, if they came into power, and the whole country saw that the Government measures were mistakes —why should not they be able to take their places without waiting until they had time to carry into effect a policy which the country did not approve of? That was a case in point. The hon. member for South Brisbane thought that the Government elected should be allowed to carry out its measures, and that no one should cavil at them; and he (Mr. Archer) said that if the country cavilled at their measures, and did not want them, a new Government ought to take their places. The previous Government brought forward no measure for shortening Parliament. They were perfectly satisfied that the measures they brought in were good, in spite of the opposition they met with from the other side of the House. He had a very great respect for the present Premier, and he believed him to be the first lawyer in Brisbane; but he had made a great mistake in the present instance. He was not a statesman, and did not see as clearly as the leader of the present Opposition then did. If the people of Queensland had agreed with the present Premier, he would have at once abolished the mail service. The hon. member for South Brisbane wanted to keep the present Government in for five years, so that they should establish certain things. Supposing those things were a mistake, the next Parliament which came in would simply do away with them if they thought so. If, for example, when the present Opposition again came into power — and everyone there was certain there would be a change by-and-by, whether in three, five, or ten years he could not tell, and he probably would not be here at that time; at all events a change would come, and if, when they got into power, they chose to alter the present state of things, that would put them in the same position as the hon. gentleman at the head of the present Government took up when Sir Thomas McIlwraith was at the head of the last Government. The hon. member for South Brisbane actually argued that the present Government ought to be kept longer in power than the country agreed with them, simply to carry their own views into operation. Did ever any one hear such an absurd argument? If the people, two years from that day, agreed with hon. gentlemen opposite, they would return them and if they did not agree with them they would reject them. If the principle of the Bill was not to apply to the present Parliament, why should it apply to future parliaments? If the people of Queensland were to govern, and Parliament was to sit for three years instead of five, let it be from the time the present Parliament was elected. If the gentlemen who now sat on the Treasury benches had not the confidence of the country in three years' time, let them appeal to the country. If the country had not confidence in them they would shift their seats, but if the country had confidence in them it would make no difference at all. He could not see one argument to answer that. As to saying they should have time to develop their policy, the hon. member for South Brisbane said the policy of the present Government was a wise one; but the hon. member did not represent the wisdom of the whole colony. He (Mr. Archer) thought it silly. How was the hon. member going to prove that he was right and he (Mr. Archer) wrong? He said let the people decide. Let them have three years' parliaments. He did not like them, and he pointed out when the hon. gentleman brought in the measure, that parliaments of long duration were best. What had the short parliaments of France done for France? What had all her parliaments done for France? They began in 1793 to kill each other, and they continued cutting each other's heads off for a very long time; they had had ever so many revolutions, and continued with parliaments shorter and shorter, and had done nothing with them. He would not go through the history of Europe; but they knew perfectly well that every country of Europe, every parliament, short or shorter, as it might be, had been an utter failure as compared with the Parliament of England. They would not take the triennial system without arguing it to the bottom, nor would they permit the present Government to do as it pleased without allowing the people of the colony to express their opinion upon it. The English Parliament had in eveything been an advance on every other representative institution that ever existed in the world, and its duration was seven years. If the colony was to have triennial parliaments, the existing Parliament ought to be a triennial one, and must be subject to the same law as its successors; and it was time the Premier began to realise that what was sauce for the goose was also sauce for the gander.

The PREMIER said he was surprised to find the hon. gentleman beginning obstruction at so early a period of the debate. He was at a loss to know what the hon. gentleman's speech amounted to. It was not what he expected from a man like the hon. member for Blackall, who had posed so often as the Mentor of the House, and the model of good manners in debate. The Bill ought to be considered entirely apart from any particular Government or any particular Parliament. If in three years, or two years, or one year, the present Government ceased to command the confidence of the people of the colony, it was quite time for them to go; and if the measures they passed were bad, the sooner they were swept off the better. Speaking of his own party as the party in power, he believed its interests would be better consulted by shortening the duration of this Parliament than by lengthening it. He had said that previously, with respect to previous Governments as well as the present, and he had no hesitation in repeating it now. It would be extremely inconvenient for the present Parliament, however, to terminate prematurely, because it would not be possible to have a redistribution of seats till 1889—five years from the present time. There was, therefore, great force in the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Macfarlane) that the present Parliament being an exceptional one, should be extended for a period. All admitted that redistribution was necessary; but they were now too far from the last census to be able to deal with it on the basis of that census, nor would they be able to deal with it until they got the returns of the census of 1886, which would be some time in 1887. As soon as a Redistribution Bill was

passed, the dissolution would necessarily follow. Were it not for that, he should feel much disposed, on further consideration of the matter, to restrict the present Parliament to three years like the others. For his own part, he believed that the shorter the Parliaments, the better it would be for the country, for the Government, and for the party. The reasoning of the hon. member for Blackall was very inconsistent. The question was one affecting the Constitution of the colony. It was not introduced to spite one Government or one party, or to favour one Government or one party, and ought to be dealt with on broad and general principles. The question before the House last week was, whether it was desirable that the duration of Parliaments in the colony should be shortened. The majority on that occasion declared that they should be shortened, and the question now before the Committee was a matter of detail, as to whether the duration of the present Parliament should be shortened, and, if so, to what extent. It must not be forgotten that that Parliament could be dissolved at any time—that was a prerogative of the Governor—it might be next year or the year after, or sooner; nobody knew what might happen. He had no desire to see the present or any other Parliament last for its full term of five years. But the matter now before them was, as he had said, one of detail, and, as he had pointed out, it would be a practical inconvenience if the Parliament was made to end before the passing of a Redistribution Bill.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said it would be the easiest thing to pass a Redistribution Bill, even though the duration of the present Parliament were restricted to three years. The present Parliament met in November, 1883, and it was quite possible to pass a Redistribution Bill, and for a new Parliament, elected on that basis, to meet by November, 1886.

The PREMIER: The census returns will not be in by that time.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said they could be expedited; and Parliament would assist by voting the necessary expenses.

The PREMIER: The census is taken every five years.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was not like a law of the Medes and Persians. They could change the census year as they could change anything else. It did not follow that the census should always be taken every five years; indeed, at the present rate of progress of the colony, it might be advisable to take it every three years. Redistribution was certainly necessary, for many of the electorates had altered considerably since the last Redistribution Bill was passed. If the present progress of the colony continued, it would be necessary to have a new Redistribution Bill every five years. The hon. gentleman must see that he could deal with that question as easily as with anything else. The House might be called together in March, and it could pass a Redistribution Bill, and get through the Estimates, before the Parliament, if the present Bill were passed, would expire by effluxion of time. There was nothing to prevent his scheme being carried out to the fullest extent if he chose. He agreed with the hon. gentleman entirely; but he disagreed with the hon. member for South Brisbane, as he considered that when a Government had lost the confidence of the country it should lose its position, and give place to another Government which had the confidence of the country; but, unless a dissolution took place, how was the opinion of the country to be arrived at? If the present Parliament existed for five years—and hon. gentlemen on the other side of the Committee lost the confidence of the country in three years—they would hold office for two years without hearing the opinion of the country, and there would be no means of arriving at that unless by a dissolution. If the Premier believed in his principles, and wished to carry them out, let the three years be applied to the present Parliament. He (Mr. Macrossan) saw no inconsistency whatever in saying that three years should apply to the present Parliament, though believing at the same time in five years' Parliaments. He was only applying the hon. gentleman's own principle, and saying that if the principle was a good one it ought to apply to the existing Parliament.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he had been glad to hear what had fallen from the Premier. He thought that all the leading members quite agreed with the principle of the Bill. There appeared to be different impressions as to what the Liberal platform at the last election was, and what hon. members had pledged themselves to. He himself, in canvassing the Fassifern electorate, distinctly stated that he was in favour of three years' parliaments, and he was elected on that understanding. He also promised that at the end of every session he would go to hear what his constituents had to say about him, and that at the end of three years he would see if they would elect him again. He thought that the feeling of any Government with regard to the three years' Parliament was similar to that some people had with regard to Heaven—namely, that it was a very desirable and happy place, but they did not want to go there just yet. He was convinced that his constituents distinctly understood that he would advocate three years' parliaments—the present Parliament to be included; and just as they expected the Liberal majority to deal with the Labour and the Land questions, so they expected the House to deal with the Triennial Parliaments question promptly. He had heard hon. members on both sides making use of the term "commit political suicide." He believed if they were to proceed on the lines they were on now there would be no political suicide, and that, when they went to the country, they would have the approval of the people for the course they had adopted. If a proposal was made to let the Bill apply to the present Parliament he should vote for it. If that amendment was lost, and an amendment limiting the duration of the present Parliament to three years from the end of the present session, he should vote for that also.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if the suggestion made by the hon. member for Fassifern were adopted, or if the Committee adopted the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Ipswich, the duration of the present Parliament would practically be for five years, or close upon it.

The PREMIER: Four years.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman had said that one of the great planks of the Liberal platform was triennial parliaments. But during the election—though he knew he was rushing into the full tide of political prosperity—he said nothing to the constituencies to the effect that he intended the present Parliament to last for five years. He led the electors to believe that he would at once put the system into force, otherwise he would not have got their votes. The fact was that he obtained votes on the understanding that the system would apply to the present Parliament. The hon. member for Fassifern had said that he was elected on the promise that he would vote for triennial parliaments. The Premier told them that the principle of quinquennial parliaments was a bad one, yet he was going to perpetuate that system. Then he had made about the coolest and most brazen assertion that had ever

been made in a Parliament, and that was that there could be no redistribution until 1889. Was the hon. gentleman going to dictate to the Committee? Was he to be the arbiter of the votes of hon. members, because he chose to say that there should be no redistribution till 1889? The hon. gentleman knew quite well that if redistribution took place he dared not then appeal to the country, with the Ipswich group representing a small fraction in the country, and being over-represented in numbers. The hon. gentleman dare not come down with a Redistribution Bill, because, as soon as he did, he would propose his own doom. The clique that had ruled the country so long would then cease to exist. He dare not do so, so long as he was supported by, or had to rely upon, that rotten crutch—the Ipswich bunch. Hon. members might laugh, but he repeated the statement, that rotten crutch—the Ipswich bunch. A rottener crutch no Ministry ever leaned upon, as more than one had found out. And yet the Premier gave them as a reason why the present Parliament should last for five years, that a Redistribution Bill could not be brought in until 1889! He maintained that a Redistribution Bill could be brought in within the next two years or even less time, upon fair and just lines. The hon. member for Bundanba represented about 480 electors or something of that sort.

Mr. FOOTE: You do not know anything about it.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He knew that the hon. gentleman was a man of considerable weight.

Mr. FOOTE: I represent far more electors than you do. You represent sheep and cattle.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He maintained that if the hon. the Premier was in earnest, from what he had said, he could make the Bill extend to the present Parliament. The hon. gentleman said he should be prepared to deal with the existing Parliament as with any future one, and he (Mr. Morehead) hoped he would carry that out. He had no doubt that the hon. gentleman himself would propose an amendment of the 1st clause so that it would tend in that direction, and if he did so he would certainly receive the support of both sides of the Committee. As he had pointed out, the suggestion of the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, although made no doubt in perfect good faith, and with the best intention, would not meet the case, because it would extend the period of the present Parliament to nearly five years—to considerably over four, at any rate.

Mr. FOOTE said he should not have risen to speak, had it not been for the impertinent remarks made by the hon. member for Balonne. That hon. member a short time ago chastised the Premier for "boiling over," but he himself seemed to have "boiled over" just now. He alluded to the "Ipswich bunch." He (Mr. Foote) was not aware that there was an Ipswich bunch. There used to be an Ipswich bunch some years ago, and they kept the party, of which Sir Arthur Palmer was the head, in power for three years, and he supposed this was the thanks the Ipswich people and those round about it were to get for having done so. The hon. gentleman said the "rotten Ipswich bunch."

Mr. MOREHEAD: I wish to correct the hon. member. I said the Ipswich bunch was a rotten crutch to lean on.

Mr. BROOKES: You said "rotten bunch."

Mr. FOOTE: He did not care a snap of his fingers what the hon. member said, either inside the House or out of it. If the Ipswich members were half as rotten as he (Mr. Morehead) was—socially, politically, and otherwise—they would very soon cease to exist. The hon. gentleman had alluded to him personally as representing a very small constituency, but he represented double or treble the number of electors that the hon. gentleman did—far more than double—so that on that score he had little room to talk. He hoped the Government were not such fools as to be hoodwinked by hon. members opposite. Personally, he did not believe in the Bill. He did not go before his constituents at the last election, having been elected without opposition. He did not do as the hon. member for Balonne did—canvass one electorate and then another, and at last go to an electorate where they could hardly get a man to represent them. In that way the hon. member managed to get, or rather to crawl, into the House, and a miserable representation he had given his constituents. When the hon. member alluded to other hon. members personally he must expect to be treated in the same way. He would now allude to the hon. member as leader of the Opposition. He said that there was never a greater mistake made than in having a gentleman such as the hon. member to lead a party in that House. Any combination or party which had any respect for itself, and expected to be respected, should be represented by a member who was respected, and not choose a larrikin to represent them. They should choose a man of some weight. If they had selected a gentleman who, though not so heavy, corporeally, as the hon. member, had very much larger influence—the hon. member for Townsville—they should have had legislation and not larrikinism. As he had already said, he should advise the Government not to give way on the Bill one iota. Hon. members opposite were not in the habit of giving way when they were on the Government side of the House, and now it was their turn not to give way. Personally, he did not care whether the Bill passed or not. He hoped, however, that the Government would stick to their measure and carry it through. Hon. members opposite had threatened opposition and so on, and it was a long time since they had had any real downright opposition. It was a long time since they had sat up all night—and he did not see why they should not do so that night, if there was obstruction.

Mr. BLACK said it was a great pity that hon. gentlemen on the other side should allow their angry passions to rise. They had been told that during the last elections the constituencies generally expressed themselves in favour of triennial parliaments. No doubt some of them did, but he did not think that that question was considered of so much importance as that of redistribution; and he could not imagine anything that would disgust many electors of the colony, especially in the North, more than the statement of the hon. the Premier that no redistribution could possibly take place before 1889. That was that the present inequalities of representation were to last for five years longer—that notwithstanding the growing population in the northern districts, the present preponderating southern influence was to continue for another five years. He repeated that nothing would disgust the northern constituencies more than that statement. It would entirely outweigh any importance that would attach to triennial parliaments. He did not himself think it was considered of such very great importance as some hon. members had stated. On the second reading he had plainly stated that he was quite willing to waive any objections he had to the measure, provided it was made to apply to the present session. The preamble of the Bill said "Whereas it is expedient to shorten the duration of parliaments." If the hon. the Premier really believed it was expedient, when the Bill was brought in to shorten the duration of parliaments—and no doubt he arrived at that decision from mature consideration and

conviction—then it was expedient that provision should take place at once; and as the hon. gentleman had distinctly told them that for five years there could be no redistribution of electorates——

The PREMIER: I never said anything of the kind.

Mr. BLACK said the Premier had just told them that for five years it would be impossible to have a redistribution of electorates, and he (Mr. Black) considered the injury done to the colony by the present Parliament remaining in office five years would be incalculable. He understood the hon. the Premier interjected that he did not say so. He would be very glad to have an explanation from him of what he did say; because he understood from an hon. gentleman behind him that the Premier did say that. He (Mr. Black) took it down at the time, and he understood the Premier to point out that the census could not possibly take place till 1886, that the return could not possibly be in till 1887, that in 1888 the Redistribution Bill would be brought in, and that it could not take effect till 1889.

The PREMIER said he sometimes wondered whether the hon. member for Mackay simulated misunderstanding, as it seemed perfectly impossible for him to get up without misrepresenting what he (the Premier) had said. It seemed to be a disease with the hon. gentleman, who had not made a speech for the last fortnight without misrepresenting the contents of some plain document that he had in his hand, or misrepresenting some plain speech. He (the Premier) did not say that no redistribution could take place till 1889. He pointed out the necessity for its taking place earlier, and showed that the effect of the Parliament dissolving in 1886 would be to put off the redistribution till 1889, while, if it sat during 1887, the Redistribution Bill could be passed that year. He had said it twice that evening, and had made it as plain as he could, and he thought he could make himself comprehensible to ordinary intelligences; but the hon. gentleman got up, taking the argument he had brought forward as an objection to the proposals of the other side, and had used it as an argument in favour of those proposals. He would once more endeavour to make himself clear: not that he believed the hon. member had misunderstood him the last time. The date appointed for holding the census was the 1st of May, 1886. It would be impracticable to deal with the Redistribution Bill during that year, because the returns could not be in, and anybody who had ever anything to do with a Redistribution Bill knew that it involved many weeks of very arduous work to prepare. Supposing Parliament to be dissolved in 1886, the new Parliament would meet in 1887, and practically no new parliament meeting in 1887 would proceed to pass a Redistribution Bill, because as soon as it passed there would necessarily be a dissolution. That in effect would preclude the possibility of passing the measure during that session. Even if it passed the next session, the redistribution could not take effect for at least two years later than it would otherwise do. That was the reason, the only reason he cared to urge, why the present Parliament should not be summarily brought to an end in 1886. That reason appeared to him to be a very important one, because they were all anxious that there should be a Redistribution Bill passed at the earliest possible moment. The hon. member for Townsville had said that they might take the census next year. That was a matter of convenience. Was it desirable to take the census next year? The census at present was taken simultaneously in all the colonies every five years, and by that means they had the advantage of comparison with the other colonies. It was a wise system, and he did not think it would be advisable to give it up and take the census next year. That was the only objection he saw to making the Bill apply to the present Parliament.

Mr. HAMILTON said that one reason given by the Premier for not applying the Bill to the present Parliament was that, during the last Parliament, those who were opposed to his policy disapproved of the immediate application of the Bill. If the Premier was going to pay any attention to the opinions of his political opponents, he would not introduce this Bill at all. Another reason was that, if the Parliament terminated in three years, it would terminate in the middle of a session. That could be easily arranged by making the session commence two or three months earlier. The only additional reason he gave was that it was inadvisable to terminate Parliament before the redistribution took place, and it was undesirable that that should take place before the census was taken. The census could be obtained next year, and the Redistribution Bill based on that, so that the present Parliament could terminate at the expiration of three years from its commencement. The reasons given were an insult to the common sense of any member of the committee. The original reason given by the Premier for the introduction of the Bill was that parliaments after three years ceased to represent the people, and yet he insisted upon continuing in office two years after he considered the Parliament would cease to have the confidence of the people. If he believed the reasons he gave, then he (Mr. Hamilton) could only imagine that the Premier considered his own interests paramount to those of the State. He considered it was an attempt to lessen the tenure of office of the Opposition and increase that of the present Government. In the course of events the Opposition would come into power after the next dissolution, and the Government wished to take steps to prevent any possibility of their remaining in power longer than three years. The junior member for South Brisbane gave the real reason—that by agreeing to the amendment they would be committing suicide, as they realised the fact that after three years they would not have the confidence of the people, and that by shortening the duration of the present Parliament they would be signing their death warrants. If they believed they would have the confidence of the people at the end of three years, they would be able to increase their term of office by an additional three years.

Mr. JORDAN said there were very good reasons why the time for taking the census should not be altered. The Imperial Government signified very plainly their desire that the census should be taken at the same time that it was taken in England—once every ten years. They had had one in Queensland every five years, for redistribution purposes; otherwise it would be one in ten years. If they had it in twelve months' time from the present the periods would not coincide with the taking of the census in Great Britain, which would take place in the year 1891.

Mr. ARCHER said the Imperial Parliament lasted seven years, and if they followed the custom of the mother-country he did not see why they should shorten the duration of their parliaments. They were arguing altogether contrary to the opinions of the Imperial Parliament. If they took the opinion of the mother-country in one thing they should take it in another, and should not press the Bill. The mother-country had its census every ten years, and here it was every five; but the intermediate one could very well be changed for once.

Mr. BROOKES said he should not have risen but for the hon. member for Blackall. They had heard a great deal about the mother-country and its Parliament from him during the debate. Every well-informed person must know that the direction of opinion in the House of Commons as well as throughout the nation was in favour of triennial parliaments.

Mr. ARCHER: Why cannot they carry it then?

Mr. BROOKES said the hon. member for Blackall knew he was putting a very ridiculous question. He did not like to see a gentleman, usually well informed, so much in error as to the present state of English opinion. The present opinion of the English nation was in favour of triennial parliaments.

Mr. NORTON said there was some force in the argument advanced by the junior member for South Brisbane, that the Imperial Government expressed a wish that the census should be taken in the colonies at the same time that the census was taken in Great Britain. But there was this to be considered, that whereas they took a census every ten years in England, it was taken every five years in Queensland, and the English census being taken in 1881 it would not be taken again till 1891. The Queensland intermediate census came every five years, and although it might be inconvenient to alter it, it would not be of so much matter as if it was the census corresponding with that of Great Britain. It might just as well be taken at the end of four years, and if the triennial parliament system was of so much importance as it was made out to be, surely it would be better that the census should be taken a year earlier than that the Parliament should last more than three years. The argument about the census had only been brought on that night for the first time; they heard nothing about it when the Bill was up for its second reading. The Premier then simply urged that the Parliaments in the other colonies were triennial, and said :—

"I have now summarised the arguments used in favour of the Bill."

Ir was pretty evident from that that this last argument never occurred to him before. If it had been mentioned on the second reading of the Bill it would have been listened to with more respect, but under the circumstances he did not think they could be expected to do so. The Premier also said :—

"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."

Did not it look as if that was the real reason for not applying the triennial principle to the present Parliament? The Colonial Treasurer used the same argument.

Mr. BROOKES asked if it was it in order for the hon. gentleman to read from a debate of the same session? It was certainly very tiresome, and he thought it was also out of order.

Mr. NORTON said if the hon. gentleman liked to press his point of order he should be happy to sit down. This was what the Colonial Treasurer said about it :—

"I contend that a Parliament, like a human being, has no right to jeopardise its own existence."

That was honest and plain speaking, and when the Colonial Treasurer did speak out he spoke honestly—

"We have no right to curtail our existence, and, even if this reform were applied to the present Parliament, it might interfere with the 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."

That was what they were told by the Colonial Treasurer on the second reading of the Bill; but hon. gentlemen now saw that their arguments against committing suicide would not wash, and they were obliged to fish up some new objections to urge against the proposals from the Opposition side. What the Opposition said, was, that if triennial parliaments were to become the law of the land and it was right they should, it must be equally right that they should become law at once. Hon. gentlemen opposite were bringing up a lot of afterthoughts. The hon. member for South Brisbane said they should not allow themselves to be snuffed out by accepting the suggestion of the Opposition. What could that mean? How could they be snuffed out at the end of a Parliament of three years any more than at the end of a Parliament of five years if they continued to represent the country? Why, they would be stronger than ever. They were told, he believed honestly and candidly, on the second reading, why the Government proposed to pass the Bill, and why they proposed it should not apply to the present Parliament. One thing he was quite sure of—that if the question of the census had been taken into consideration at all, they would have been told about it when it was proposed that the Bill should be read a second time.

Mr. ARCHER said his veneration for their forefathers was such that he could not allow misrepresentations to be cast upon the Parliament of England. The junior hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Brookes) stated that it was admitted that the people of England were in favour of triennial parliaments. He denied that *in toto*. He thought it was the Premier who said that in Lord Chatham's time the idea was held that the duration of the Parliament in England should be triennial. That was, he thought, 111 years ago—about 1773. The idea had never been acted upon yet, and if the English people wanted triennial Parliaments 111 years ago they would have had them 100 years ago. But they did not want it, and they had never agitated for it. If Mr. Bright, for example, had got up and agitated for triennial parliaments ten years ago, it would have been carried before now. He denied that there was any agitation for triennial parliaments. But they were not arguing about that now. What they were arguing now was, that if triennial Parliaments were good for Queensland the sooner they were brought in the better. Hon. members opposite said triennial Parliaments were good for Queensland, but were not good so long as they were in power. The Opposition said if triennial Parliaments were good for Queensland, they were as good while the present Government were in power, as when they were not in power. How hon. members opposite could attempt to get out of that argument astounded him. He could not understand how they could sit and argue that the Parliament by which they got a majority should last for five years, and try to cut down any subsequent one to three years, on the argument that a three years' Parliament was best. If they said three years' parliaments were bad and they intended to stick to five years' parliaments, which were good, as long as possible, they could understand them. They could understand them if they took that view, and said they were bowing to an inevitable necessity. But to say, "Five years' Parliaments are bad, and therefore we shall stick to them as long as we can," was too absurd for argument. The leader of the Government would either have to accept a three years' Parliament or withdraw the Bill. It was absurd to say there could be any argument in the contention that the present Government should have five years and anybody else three. The sooner the first clause of the

Bill was altered the sooner it would become law, and the sooner the wishes of hon. gentlemen opposite would come into force.

Mr. JORDAN said that he had never said in that Committee or anywhere else that he was personally in favour of triennial parliaments. He thought on the subject as the hon. member for Townsville did. He did not care about the Bill himself, but he would vote for it on party considerations. He remembered what happened when the Elections Act was brought forward. Hon. gentlemen opposite persuaded the Government that having carried the 5th clause of that Bill they had carried the Bill, and they persuaded them to cut out certain parts of it. What were the fruits they gathered by their concessions? They were immediately charged with inconsistency, weakness, and vacillation. They were told that they introduced Bills and the Opposition did what they liked with them. That would be the result if the Bill before them was amended; and he advised the Government to stick to the Bill as it was.

Mr. STEVENSON said a proof had just been afforded them of what had often been said—that the Premier had some very docile followers. The hon. member (Mr. Jordan) had just told them distinctly that he thought on that question one way, and was going to vote on it in another. The hon. member also said he had been returned to support quinquennial parliaments.

M. JORDAN said he never stated that he had been returned with an understanding one way or the other. He had never mentioned the matter to his constitutents, and, personally, he had always been in favour of quinquennial parliaments. The hon. member's statement was incorrect.

Mr. STEVENSON said that was the impression the hon. member's speech left on his mind, and that that was the reason why he should support the present Bill, giving a duration of five years to the existing Parliament, and three years to all that should come after it—the hon. member being returned on that understanding. As the hon. member had now explained himself, he had better go back again to his constituents before he voted on the Bill at all. The hon. member also said that, with the exception of the hon. member for Townsville, hon. members of the Opposition were all in favour of triennial parliaments. Not a single member on that side had ever said anything of the sort. Not one of them was in favour of triennial parliaments; but, seeing that on the second reading a majority of the House was in favour of that system, they were of opinion that it should apply to the present as well as to future parliaments. The Premier had given them to understand that in matters of detail he was not bound to stick to the Bill as it stood, but was prepared to effect a compromise, and let the Bill apply to the present Parliament. But since the angry speech of the hon. member (Mr. Foote), the hon. gentleman had adopted a different tone, thus showing that the hon. member and the Ipswich bunch had a good deal of influence over the Premier. The hon. member for North Brisbane had also told them they were going to have their own way. Personally, he did not care whether the Bill applied to the present Parliament or not, but as a matter of principle he strongly objected to the Bill in any shape or form.

Mr. NELSON said that he also was altogether opposed to the Bill. When the English Government gave the colony a Constitution and a five years' Parliament, they gave it as the result of the gravest consideration, and struck what they considered to be a very good measure. That system had been in operation since 1859, and he did not think it had worked badly. The Premier had brought forward no argument in support of the Bill; he had simply quoted precedents from other countries, and applied them to Queensland. The hon. gentleman's main argument in its favour was that the colony had had two long Parliaments. So it had; and it had also had six short ones, the preponderance showing that under the present system parliaments were of short duration. The allusions that had been made to English history were very unfortunate for the Government; and it seemed a very strong argument against the measure that the Parliament which passed the Septennial Act was a triennial parliament, and they made it apply to their own Parliament. If they were going to follow precedent there was one ready-made for them. The reason for that change of system was plainly stated in the preamble to the Septennial Act. The hon. member (Mr. Brookes) said that the feeling in the old country was in favour of short parliaments. So it was, according to election speeches; but as soon as members got into the House they seemed to change their opinions; they did not bring in any Bill nor agitate the House, although there was a good deal of agitation outside. The fact of the matter was that it depended on whatever party was in opposition. It was the Whigs who brought in the Septennial Bill. For a long time the Tories did not care about it, and did not attend for a whole session. As soon, however, as the political pendulum swung to the other side, the Whigs altered their views, and brought forward a resolution in favour of annual parliaments. That was the same party that passed the Septennial Act. Macaulay contended that seven years was too long, and said that a wise Minister would always dissolve Parliament a year before the legal term; and that, as his inclination was in favour of five years as the legal term, there would be a dissolution every four years. He (Mr. Nelson) quite agreed with those views. The last two Governments in this colony had unwisely kept on beyond the four years; but it did not follow that the present Government would be unwise too. If the Premier was wise, he would, according to Macaulay and other authorities, advise the dissolution with the present tenure, before the five years had expired. The hon. gentleman had shown that other Governments acted unwisely, and did neither themselves nor the country any good. The present Government ought to take warning from that, and advise the Governor to dissolve at the end of four years. Taking all things into consideration, he thought the present term of five years was the best. If they went into the merits and demerits of long and short parliaments, there was a good deal to be said on both sides. It must be admitted that it was very important to have members in accord with their constituents. Then there were many young men coming of age every year, and it was important that they should be able to exercise their birthright as soon as possible. Against that there were a large number of new chums, who could qualify themselves to vote in six months; and it was better that they should wait and become acquainted with the colony, and be able to judge what politics here were before they exercised those votes. He did not think that the passing of the Bill would improve matters. He said that not because he was a Conservative. If he could see that they would be any improvement he would go in for short parliaments. It was true that short parliaments gave people an opportunity of correcting mistakes. No Parliament had ever made a greater mistake than the present one did at the start; and if the Bill provided that the House was to be dissolved at the

end of the present session, he would vote for it with the greatest pleasure. According to the hon. member for South Brisbane, they were never to have another Government like the present; and they must have five years to mature their Land Bill. The hon. member would give the present administration five years, though no other administration was worthy of it. The fact that on the other side of the Committee the word "suicide" had been frequently used convinced him (Mr. Nelson) that hon. members there were rather suspicious as to whether they had the confidence of the people of the country, otherwise they would not say that a dissolution would be committing political suicide. He hoped the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Bowen would be adopted.

Mr. ALAND said the debate was becoming wearisome, but still they had learned something. At an early period, if he mistook not, the Premier signified a kind of willingness to listen to some sort of compromise on the Bill; but he (Mr. Aland) thought the tactics of hon. gentlemen opposite were such as to make the leader of the Government and his supporters stubborn, and cause them to say that they would stick to the Bill as it stood. For his own part he should like to see a compromise, but his idea of a compromise and that of hon. gentlemen opposite was certainly very different. Their compromise seemed to be—"Do what we tell you; accept the amendment we offer:" but that was not his idea of a compromise. He thought the proposal of the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, that the Bill should take effect from the time it passed, or the end of the present session, was a better solution of the question than any other that had been suggested, and he should support that in preference to the Bill as it stood; but he would not, for the reasons given by the hon. the Premier, support the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Bowen. The hon. member for Northern Downs, in speaking on the question, referred to the Constitution Act, under which the Parliament now sat, as having been given to them by the Imperial Parliament, but if he (Mr. Aland) was right, that Constitution was a legacy from New South Wales when they received the gift of Separation from the Imperial Parliament. But they must remember that since that Constitution Act was passed, New South Wales had seen fit to alter it in the direction they now sought to alter it in this colony. The parliaments of all the colonies, except Tasmania and Queensland, were triennial, and no one had yet attempted to prove or had ventured to say for one moment that the parliaments of those colonies had deteriorated in the least degree through having been made triennial. He believed that the Parliament of Queensland would be improved by being made triennial in its sittings, instead of remaining as it was at present.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, a greater man than any one in that House—Sir George Cornewall Lewis—had said that compromise was impossible where principle was at stake, and principle was at stake in the matter they were now discussing—the principle had been adopted by the majority of that House, and that, hon. members on that side were trying to enforce. The majority of the House had decided that the triennial system was the proper and fitting way in which the Legislative Assembly of the colony should be constituted; but strangely enough when they attempted to apply that principle to the present Parliament—the principle enunciated by the present Government, brought forward in their political programme—they objected to it, and absolutely suggested a compromise. He held that a compromise was impossible in a case of that sort. It must be five years or three; there was no middle term of four years. There was no reason why the Committee should be forced to accept what the Government was pleased to call a compromise. He contended that it was a matter upon which there could be no compromise whatever. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Toowoomba, what was there in them? The hon. member told them that no one had proved that triennial parliaments in Tasmania and New South Wales——

Mr. ALAND: I did not say Tasmania.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Had deteriorated the Legislatures of those colonies. But it was for him to prove, which he could not possibly do, that the effect of triennial parliaments had been to raise the status and character and ability of the representatives in those colonies. The hon. gentleman altogether failed to do that. In fact he could not. He (Mr. Morehead) had known the Parliament of New South Wales ever since he was a boy—which he was sorry to say was a good many years ago—and he maintained that the present Legislative Assembly of that colony was no more to be compared with what it was twenty-five years ago, than day was to be compared with night. But that was beside the question. What they had now to consider was, whether the Government were prepared to carry out the promise that they and their followers made on the hustings—whether they were prepared to give the present Parliament the same duration as future parliaments. Surely the Government must have very little confidence in their past or their future actions, if they were afraid to appeal to the country two years hence, when they hoped to come back with a majority. They asked hon. members to consent to give a longer duration to the present Parliament than any future one, simply to enable them to keep in office for two years longer than any future Government could do. It was all very well for the Premier to say that if the Government were defeated they would appeal to the country. Did he think, that with the Payment of Members Bill at his back, which he hoped to pass, but which he would not pass without every effort being made on that side of the House to prevent it—with that egg in the basket to offer to his followers, did he suppose that members on the Opposition side would consent to give him a duration which he refused to other parliaments? Was he consistent for one moment? Was he in earnest? Did he believe in triennial parliaments? He (Mr. Morehead) did not believe he did. He believed in five years' power for himself, and only three or less for others who came after him. At any rate, hon. members on that side would fight for five years; and the hon. member, if he succeeded in passing five for the present Parliament, would have the credit of being the most inconsistent politician who had ever appeared within the walls of that chamber.

The PREMIER said the hon. member confessed he did not believe in three years' parliaments, and yet, as a matter of principle, he felt bound to insist upon them. He spoke as if he had not ceased to be the boy he said he was so many years ago. The hon. gentleman had intimated his intention of preventing the majority from having their way—that was his idea of meeting the Government's measure. He hoped the hon. member did not intend to inaugurate tactics of that kind. He (the Premier) would raise no objection to the application of the principle to the present Parliament, if it

were not for the extreme inconvenience that would arise from delaying the redistribution. There was no question of principle, except that they thought three years the proper duration of parliaments; but if they adopted that principle now they would cause the country very serious inconvenience. The hon. member did not seem to be able to understand that argument. A large majority of the House thought this three years' system desirable; a large majority of the country thought so too; but it would give rise to very considerable inconvenience to the country, if it applied to the present Parliament; and surely to men of ordinary common sense that would be a good reason for putting off its operation. The hon. gentleman called it a question of principle, and quoted George Cornewall Lewis. But the proper mode of applying a rule which was, after all, a purely arbitrary one was a matter of convenience, not principle. The hon. gentleman knew very well that what he wanted to do was to prevent triennial parliaments from being adopted.

Mr. MOREHEAD: No.

The PREMIER: Well, he was pretending to be fighting for it, but really he was determined to prevent it passing. Of course, the hon. member knew he could not compel the Parliament to shorten its own life. The hon. gentleman spoke as if the Government were desirous of prolonging their existence beyond three years; but what had the duration of Parliament to do with the length of existence of a Government? It was by no means certain that the present Government would be in power two years hence. He hoped the majority of members on both sides of the House had too much common sense to allow themselves to be led away by party feeling. Had anyone attempted to give an answer to the argument he had used as to the extreme inconvenience of putting off redistribution for three years? The hon. member for Port Curtis had asked why he did not use the argument last week. At that time he said that when the matter was previously before the House it was the general consensus of opinion that it ought not to apply to the existing Parliament. On further consideration, he (the Premier) should prefer that this Bill should apply to the present Parliament; but, at the same time, he had pointed out the extreme inconvenience which would be caused to the whole community by doing so. What answer had been made to that?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Dissolve Parliament this session.

The PREMIER said some hon. member had spoken of the expression of "suicide" that had been used. No such expression had been used with regard to the Government; the expression had reference to the Parliament. He believed the most suicidal thing any Government ever did in this country was to continue in power too long in the same Parliament. A large majority of the Committee—he believed, nearly every member of it—fully saw the force of the argument he had used; and he hoped they would compel the Bill to be accepted by the small minority.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Compel them!

The PREMIER: Yes, by exercising that moral pressure which he trusted could be exercised on every hon. member in the Committee. He did not speak of brute force. The hon. member had been speaking of brute force during the evening.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I never used the term "brute force."

The PREMIER said he did not say the hon. member used those words. The hon. member put up ninepins to knock them down again. He said the hon. member spoke of brute force without using the words.

Mr. MOREHEAD: How can you speak of brute force without using the words?

The PREMIER said that the hon. member had better go back to the school he had spoken of so pathetically. He was prepared to accept the amendment of the hon. member for Bowen with a proviso that the present Parliament should continue a sufficient length of time to pass the Redistribution Bill. Whether it was fixed at three years from the end of the present session, or four years from the first meeting, made practically very little difference.

Mr. NORTON said that if the matter of the duration of Parliament was not a matter of principle, he did not know what the principle of the Bill was. The Bill must have a principle, and if that was not the principle of the Bill he did not know what was. A lawyer might know, but he would defy any layman to know. The Premier would not expect them to waive their principles and make a compromise. A man who compromised his principles compromised his honour. The Premier had advocated a three years' Parliament and had carried that principle. The Opposition admitted that they were beaten; but what they said was that, as they were beaten on the principle, let it be applied at once; and not give them their principle for the present Parliament only when the hon. member was in power, and apply the other party's principle to the next Parliament. If they made a compromise at all, he thought it had better be that when the present Government were in office they should have a five years' Parliament, and that when they were out it should only run for three years.

The PREMIER: I should prefer it the other way.

Mr. NORTON said it was perfect rot talking about the census interfering. The hon. Premier had summarised all the arguments that might be used with effect, and it was not until he was shown the absurdity of his position that he found that he must have some stronger ones. As to the question of suicide, he did not want to bring that up. The Premier introduced it, and he and his colleagues were the first who advocated the non-committal of suicide; therefore they could not expect it to be passed over in silence. For his own part, he thought it would be absurd to make any compromise at all; he would prefer to sit up all night over it; but he would rather that the Premier would adjourn the debate until to-morrow. The leader of the Opposition took up a perfectly rational ground, and had not given way one inch. He had admitted the defeat of his side with reference to the duration of parliaments; but, having admitted that, he said the principle ought to apply to the present Parliament. The Premier himself said that he believed in the Parliament being triennial, but spoke of the necessity of having a census before the Redistribution Bill. The hon. member for Townsville suggested that the census might be held a year earlier, which would not make a great difference.

Mr. BLACK said they had had another reason given why the present Parliament should be quinquennial, and future ones triennial: it was in order that the present Government should be able to bring their Redistribution Bill into effect at the end of their term of office. He had stated earlier in the evening that, at the last election, the opinion of the country was far more exercised in relation to the redistribution of seats than it was as to the duration of parliaments. When the country found there could not be a

redistribution until 1888 or 1889, there would be a great feeling of indignation and disgust throughout the whole of the constituencies which were at present unrepresented. The Government proposed to bring down a measure during the present session to give additional members to certain districts. He could give a very good guess as to which those districts were. But why should the claims of those constituencies be attended to when others were not to be taken into consideration? The basis of the present Electoral Act was a very fair basis, and he doubted very much whether a census would materially alter the proportion of members to which the different electorates were entitled. A Redistribution Bill would give more satisfaction to the electors, and could be taken on the basis of the present electoral rolls, and, after that was done, should any inequality be discovered when the census was taken in 1886, an Additional Members Bill could be brought down to rectify it. If the principle of triennial parliaments was a good one, the sooner it was brought into effect the better. Hon. members on the Government side also proposed to bring in a measure which was tantamount to the payment of members, and that principle would come into effect at once. Why was that principle not deferred until next Parliament, too? It was such inconsistencies as those which made him suspect the actions of the present Government. If one measure was to take effect from the present time, why should not the other? Until he was convinced that the Government were sincere he should certainly oppose the Bill. The Government in power now took advantage of their supporters to have their existence continued for the full term of five years, especially when they were to have payment of members during the present session to assist them to carry it out.

The PREMIER said that, after the speech they had just heard, he began to think he really ought to give the hon. gentleman credit for not being capable of understanding the arguments from the Government side of the Committee. He would not say he had again misrepresented those arguments, but he had represented them to be the opposite to what they were. Possibly, he might give the hon. member credit for not knowing any better. The hon. member said the colony would be extremely disappointed when they found that, by the present Government insisting that the present Parliament should last for five years, a redistribution would not take place until 1879. After all the explanations from the Government side the hon. member insisted on that statement, when he knew—if he were capable of knowing anything—that the argument was this: That if the present Parliament did not last for more than three years, a redistribution until 1889 would be impossible. It was hon. gentlemen opposite who, by insisting that the present Parliament should not last more than three years, would, if they were to have their own way, prevent a redistribution until 1889. He was fighting to make sure that if possible there should be a redistribution before 1889; and that was the reasen why he would not accept the amendment. He was trying to arrange so that they would have a redistribution in 1887—the earliest possible time; and hon. gentlemen opposite, by their action, were doing all they could to prevent a redistribution before 1889.

Mr. BLACK said he was still not convinced, and he was not crushed either. He would take the hon. gentleman's own figures. He said they would probably have a redistribution in 1887. But what did that mean? It meant that possibly the Government might bring in a Redistribution Bill in 1887; and he repeated what he said before, that it would be impossible for hon. members to meet under the new Redistribution Bill in 1888, and they would not actually have a redistribution until 1889. He did not retract a single word he had said during that afternoon on that subject. The hon. Premier must not suppose that because he occupied his present position that he (Mr. Black) was easily put out. If the hon. gentleman were sincere in his intentions to give the country the fair and proper representation to which it was entitled he would have brought his Redistribution Bill in now. Now was the time to bring it in upon the present electoral rolls of the colony, and he could rectify it afterwards by bringing in an Additional Members Bill.

Mr. MIDGLEY said that whilst he regretted very much the position which the Opposition were taking upon the matter, at a former stage of the debate he had expressed his determination to vote with the smaller number if it came to a division, but he did not know whether the Government would accept a compromise. He had done his level best to bring about a compromise, and he certainly thought the compromise offered and the overtures made to meet—so far as it appeared to be advisable to meet—the Opposition ought to be considered and gracefully accepted by the Opposition. He should certainly not now vote against the Government, as they had expressed their willingness to meet, so far as might be advisable, the wishes of members on both sides of the Committee.

Mr. STEVENSON said he had no doubt the hon. member had done all he could to bring about a compromise, and to treat the matter fairly. He knew the hon. member was in favour of the principle of the Bill being applied to the present Parliament, and he held that if the principle was good it should not be departed from. They ought not to give in one single bit in the matter. The arguments of hon. members opposite had shown that the principle was a good one; and the Opposition said that if the principle was good it should be carried out at once. Up to the present moment he did not think there was much disposition to obstruct any further than to argue the subject thoroughly. He thought the Premier ought to be satisfied with what had been done, and move the Chairman out of the chair. They had spent the night well, and a good deal of light had been thrown on the subject; and in order that the Premier might have an opportunity of talking the matter over with his colleagues and supporters, he would give him an opportunity of moving the Chairman out of the chair, and if the hon. gentleman did not do so he (Mr. Stevenson) would be prepared to do so himself.

Mr. GRIMES said he was surprised at the audacity of the hon. member, who, after stonewalling the Bill for the last three hours, now, at 11 o'clock, suggested that the Chairman be moved out of the chair. He hoped the Premier would do nothing of the kind. He (Mr. Grimes) was prepared to sit until Saturday night before he would give way to a minority of four individuals.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. member (Mr. Grimes) evidently did not understand the matter. He (Mr. Archer) had never stonewalled any measure, but the question now before them was a constitutional question—namely, whether a certain law should apply to all parliaments alike. In support of that principle he was prepared to sit not only till Saturday night, but as much longer as the rules of the House would allow. He said that because not a single reason had been given why the Bill should not so apply. It had been shown that there was no reason why a Redistribution Bill should not be brought in as

soon as ever the Premier chose to draw it up, and he could carry it through with the greatest ease; and it could be based on the number of electors in the existing electorates. If the proposed law was a good one, it was applicable to the present Parliament as well as to future ones, and until they got over that he did not think there was any good to be done.

The PREMIER said that no Government would ever venture to bring in a Redistribution Bill based on the numbers on the electoral rolls. A Government dealing with the question of representation had to get statistics on the question of population.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if circumstances warranted a Redistribution Bill, they also warranted the taking of a census. It had never been urged that they were bound to wait for a certain fixed period before a fresh census could be taken. If the necessity had arisen, let the work be done at once. The House would be only too willing to vote money for the census, and there were plenty of men to be found to collect it. If that log was the only obstacle it could easily be moved out of the way.

Mr. HAMILTON said that nine or ten months ago the Premier strongly advocated the necessity of bringing in a Redistribution Bill, but since he had got into office his opinion on that matter seemed to have changed. At that time the hon. gentleman did not think it necessary that a census should be taken before a Redistribution Bill was brought in. As to the remark of the hon. member (Mr. Grimes), he did not care how late the Committee sat. Having missed his train, it would be far more comfortable to stay all night in the warm chamber, than to go hunting about for a bed.

Mr. CHUBB said he was sorry that wiser counsels had not prevailed with the Premier. He (Mr. Chubb) was not disposed to pursue a course of obstruction, but he would point out that the Premier himself had admitted that the system of triennial parliaments should apply to the present Parliament; and he had also said that the obstacle in the way of so applying it was the census of 1886, which would interfere with the Redistribution Bill. The contention of the Opposition was that that obstacle could be avoided by taking the census a year earlier, and that could be effected by passing a one-clause Act or by voting a sum of money for the purpose. He trusted the Premier would see his way to adopt that view, otherwise he would be guilty of a great act of inconsistency. Every supporter of the Government believed he was returned to serve in Parliament for five years. Since they had got into power they had introduced a Bill which did not apply to the present Parliament. The hon. member for South Brisbane said that although it was a plank of the Liberal programme, and members had pledged themselves to triennial parliaments, yet the electors were of opinion that the present Government should remain in office five years, and that the present Parliament would last that time. In saying that, the hon. member had furnished one of the best reasons why they should not support the present Bill. But they had done so; they had carried the second reading, but did not propose to apply it to the present Parliament because of some insuperable obstacle, which really did not exist. He hoped hon. members would see their way to avoid the difficulty, and that the course suggested by the hon. member for Northern Downs would be adopted.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that the whole gist of the speech made by the hon. member for Bowen was that a very small minority of that Committee should dictate to a large majority as to in what form the Bill should pass. A large majority having expressed an opinion in favour of the second reading, a small minority had no right to hold out in the manner they were doing against the compromise which had been reasonably offered by the Premier. It seemed to him that hon. gentlemen opposite persisted in ignoring the objections that had been made by the Premier to the Bill applying, as it stood, to the present Parliament. The Premier had pointed out that if the Bill were to apply strictly in that way, that Parliament would expire in 1886, at which time the returns under the census would not be complete. Hon. gentlemen said that the date of the census could be altered. But it should be remembered that it was desired to collect statistics throughout the British Empire at a certain date, and it was very important that the time should not be altered. Some of the other colonies also had adopted a quinquennial system of census; and it was very desirable that they should approve of that division of the period under which Imperial enumeration took place. Therefore, he thought it would be exceedingly inconvenient for the date to be altered, especially to suit a fanciful idea as to the application of the principles of the Bill. He must say that he preferred to support the Bill as it now stood, believing that every hon. member had a right to enter an individual protest against the tenure of the present parliament being altered. Every present member was elected for five years, and at no time was it admitted that that tenure might be interfered with. The compromise suggested by the Premier was that the Bill should apply to the present Parliament, but date from the time the alteration was made, or the end of the present session. If that were adopted it would not interfere with any arrangement as to the quinquennial census. He really could not see why hon. gentlemen persisted in their opposition to that compromise. If they were a large minority, they might have some ground for holding out; but their present course was unwise and injudicious. If they continued to insist on their opposition, they would subvert all constitutional and parliamentary practice. He hoped hon. members would see that discretion was the better part of valour, and would be content with the Premier's compromise.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that it did not follow that, because they were small in numbers, they were not great in heart. Neither he nor other hon. members on the Opposition side were to be caught by the honied words that had fallen from the Colonial Treasurer. The hon. gentleman altogether ignored the fact that they were trying to carry into effect a measure that had passed its second reading by the votes of himself and his friends. In regard to the duties of a minority, he (Mr. Morehead) would refer the hon. gentleman to his elderly friend the Minister for Works. He (Mr. Morehead) remembered, when there were only thirty-two members in the House, how that hon. gentleman headed a deputation to the then Governor, the Marquis of Normanby, and gave fourteen or fifteen reasons why the majority should not be believed in. The answer of the Marquis was too much for the hon. gentleman, and nearly turned his hair gray. The present Opposition were just as determined as was the hon. gentleman then. But they said they were only too willing to assist the Government in passing the measure in its entirety as it passed the second reading. It was all very well for the hon. the Colonial Treasurer to ask them to withdraw their opposition because there were only few of them; but that would be merging the Opposition into the Government majority, and they would do nothing of the sort. They were there to carry out what

they believed to be their duty. They might be right or they might be wrong, but they held that they were right and that they were upholding the principle that would be approved by the electorates of the colony if the Government were willing to submit the question to the test. They were perfectly determined that they should not be crushed out by the weight of numbers on the other side; and, as far as the compromise suggested by the Premier was concerned, he must say that it was certainly an anomaly, as far as he knew, in parliamentary practice in the colony for a Premier to suggest a compromise on his own Bill; and the Opposition would not accept that compromise. They were quite prepared to go on even to the bitter end. They did not wish to cause discomfort to the elderly gentlemen on the other side, but still they were determined that the principle adopted by the House should be embodied in the Bill and made applicable to the present Parliament. If there was anything right or just in the principle, it was right and just that it should apply to the present Parliament. If the Opposition were wrong, they were in the same boat with hon. members opposite, because they would all have to appeal to their constituents. If they were in a better position than the other side in appealing to their constituents, it would be different; but, as was well known, a Government with a strong party was always in the better position in that respect, and, therefore, they could not be called selfish in what they asked. They had nothing to gain and everything to lose, because their chances of return would be very much inferior to those on the other side. Therefore, the policy they were pursuing was a purely unselfish one. They wanted the Committee not to stultify itself, but to carry out the will of the majority of the House; and they certainly did object to the Government making the Bill a stalking-horse to walk into power for five years and say that those who came after them should only have three years. It was clear that the Premier himself felt that he was doing wrong when he offered a compromise. Either the principle was right, or it was wrong; there could be no compromise. But when the hon. gentlemen thought he was likely to lose a certain section of his own side by not accepting the proposition moved by them, and which he thought would have been accepted by the Opposition, he jumped at it. The hon. gentleman did everything on the lines of expediency. He appeared to be no statesman at all. He had accepted a compromise which no leader of a party but himself would have accepted. The Opposition were determined to stick to the principle of triennial parliaments, and to see it embodied in the Bill as applicable to the present as well as to future Parliaments.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said the principal argument of the hon. gentleman in his last speech confuted itself. He put his party in the humble position of going before their constituents with less chances of being elected at the next election than they would be if supporters of the Bill, and he claimed for himself and party the same treatment as members on the Government side; but he forgot to mention that the compromise mentioned by the Premier meant four years' parliamentary existence still; and that the same thing applied to his side of the Committee as to the Government side. He (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) did not object to it very much, but he regretted that any compromise had been offered. If they gave an inch to the Opposition, they were always ready to take—not an ell, but half-a-dozen ells. They were rarely met with that intelligent spirit of the principle of compromise that should characterise the intelligence that he presumed existed on the other side.

Mr. NORTON said he was rather glad to hear the speech of the hon. the Colonial Treasurer, which he supposed was one of the results of the hon. gentleman having heard the "Oiled Feather." The hon. gentleman said that he did not think that the Government had any right to give way on the subject—that they should insist upon the present Parliament continuing for five years, because they had been elected by their constituents with the understanding that it would be a Parliament of that duration. But that argument cut two ways; and he hoped that when the question of the payment of members came on the hon. gentleman would be consistent, and apply the same argument to that measure. At any rate, when that Bill came on he would remind the hon. member that the members of the present Assembly were elected as members whose expenses were not to be reimbursed. He knew that the hon. gentleman wished to be consistent, and was sure that when he was reminded of the argument he had used with respect to the Bill under discussion he would give way at once on the Payment of Members Bill. Hon. members on the other side, when accusing them of adopting a system of party warfare, seemed to forget the position they themselves were in. Two of the members supporting the Government had expressed themselves as adherents of the principle of quinquennial parliaments, and another believed that the principle of triennial parliaments should be adopted with regard to the present Parliament. Two of them voted for a Bill the principle of which they did not believe in, and the other did not vote at all. He did not know that there was much more to be said, at any rate so far as he was concerned; but if they were going on, he thought the best plan would be to move that the Chairman leave the chair. He was not disposed to do that; he would rather it were done by the other side. He did not think the Government were prepared to keep them there all night, as there was nothing to be gained by it. If they adjourned then, they might be in a better temper next day—not that he could say they were in a bad temper at present, but they were not in the frame of mind in which they were likely to come to an agreement. He would suggest to the hon. the Premier that, as it was the first time they had had any real conflict of opinion, it would be well to adjourn till next day.

Mr. PALMER said they had had to submit to the principle of triennial parliaments, and it should come into operation from the time the present Parliament first sat. Personally he was very sorry that the triennial parliaments had been decided upon, because he considered that the Queensland Parliament had compared very favourably under the quinquennial system with any other in Australia. If the majority thought the new system should be applied, let them apply it to themselves. The Government wanted a five years' term so that the Land Bill, which was to lay the foundation of the prosperity of the country, should have a fair trial; but if they were as substantial as they thought they were, it would give them a longer lease of power if they were to go to the country at the end of three years than at the end of five. He did not see why redistribution of the electorates should not take place at once or during the next session. The increase of population was in the North; and a great many were crying out for redistribution. Though he knew that the triennial parliaments would impose a very heavy tax on ordinary members, he should support the party to which he belonged, and he did not think they should agree to any compromise.

Mr. FERGUSON said he opposed the Bill on the second reading, and had heard nothing since to alter his opinion of it. If it passed as it stood, it would simply lengthen the duration of a bad parliament and shorten the duration of a good one. They had to take it in conjunction with the Bill for payment of members, which they would have in a day or two before them; and if that were adopted by the House there would be no parliament shorter than three years. It would give a power to any Government in office to remain in office throughout the whole duration of Parliament. There would be a large proportion of members who would support any Government, and who would be kept from deserting it by the fear of a dissolution and loss of their £200 a year. With reference to the other colonies which had triennial parliaments, he did not think they were very good examples to follow. He believed the Queensland Parliament was equal, if not superior, to any other Australian Parliament. New South Wales was no example to follow, and Victoria was worse, in the matter of parliaments. If the present Bill were passed it would be an evil to the colony. The present duration was far better than a reduced period, therefore he intended to oppose the Bill in every shape and form. The stand which had been taken by the leader of the Opposition had pleased him more than anything; and if he was prepared to stick to it, he would support him to the very end.

Mr. STEVENSON said he was prepared to stick to him too. He should like to compliment the Colonial Treasurer upon the speech he made. That hon. gentleman accused members of the Opposition of fighting for a fanciful idea. If they were doing so, then the whole Bill was a fanciful idea; he was inclined to think it was. There was no necessity for it. The Premier happened to bring the matter up at election time, and therefore considered himself bound to bring it before Parliament; he did not think the Premier was one bit sincere. The leader of the Opposition had said he would accept the Bill if it applied to the present Parliament. One or two hon. members on the other side had admitted that they did not believe in the Bill; and the hon. junior member for South Brisbane distinctly stated that he did not; but added that he would vote for it. They had also had a lecture from the Premier on the position of minorities; but the hon. gentleman and the Colonial Treasurer, and their followers, when on the Opposition side, opposed measures brought forward by the late Government, and had the audacity to say that the late Government, very soon after they came into power, did not represent the electors of the colony. The present Opposition said nothing like that. Although minorities could not rule, they could take a determined stand in support of a principle, and could oppose a measure in every possible way the power of the committee allowed, to show their sincerity. He would move that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there was no possibility of coming to a division on the question; and it would be much better if the Premier would take the advice tendered to him, and move the Chairman out of the chair. No good could be done by sitting there any longer.

The PREMIER said he preferred to have the matter disposed of at once.

Mr. FOOTE said he saw no necessity for adjourning; they might as well settle the question at once.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was sure advice from the hon. member for Bundanba upon such a subject was no doubt very valuable, because he spent so much of his time in the House himself. He ought to be competent to give an opinion. Nevertheless he hoped the Chairman would preserve the traditions of the chair, and leave it whenever he desired to do so.

Mr. STEVENS said he thought the compromise offered by the Premier was a very fair one. His contention on the second reading was that the Bill should come into effect at the end of the present session. The compromise amounted to the same thing; and the Parliament would last four years from the beginning of the present Parliament. With regard to leaving the matter over for another day, if hon. members proposed to keep their position through thick and thin, the same thing would occur any other night as well as that night. He hoped they would bring it to an end that night.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member for Logan was like the donkey between the two bundles of hay. He wanted to make friends of both parties. Or he was like the old man and his ass; he tried to please both parties and would end by pleasing nobody. The hon. member had pursued that course now for some time. He did not know that the hon. gentleman had any right, or had achieved any position in that House, which entitled him to dictate to either side as to what course of action they should take; and he certainly would not allow the hon. member to dictate to him.

Mr. STEVENS said it did not matter to him one straw whether the hon. member took his advice or left it alone. When he wanted the hon. member's advice he should ask him for it. As to the elegant simile which the hon. member introduced, he assumed that the old man sat on his (Mr. Stevens') left hand, and where the ass sat was very easily seen.

The PREMIER said the Opposition, by their obstruction, were now insisting that the present Parliament should last for five years; that was the argument they set before them now. He was sure their object was a very intelligent one; the hon. member was determined that the present Parliament at any rate should last for not less than five years. The Government would perhaps have reason to be grateful to the hon. member before they were done.

Mr. BLACK said the Premier misstated the case. The Opposition had been defeated on the second reading of the Bill, and they accepted the defeat. They now held out for triennial Parliaments, but said the change should take place during the present session. It was all very well for the hon. Premier to try to convey the impression through *Hansard* that they were now trying to keep up the five years' Parliament. They were doing nothing of the sort. They were defeated on the second reading, and to be consistent they insisted that it should apply to the present parliament.

Mr. HAMILTON said the speech made by the Premier just now very clearly indicated the presence of the moral twist with which he was credited by the member for Townsville. The hon. member knew quite well that their obstruction was simply because the hon. member would not consent to reduce the duration of the present Parliament to three years.

The PREMIER said he had already pointed out that he did not desire that that Parliament should last for five years, and he had said it so often before that it was idle to say it again.

Mr. HAMILTON said he could only judge a man by his actions, and if the hon. member was desirous that Parliament should only

last for three years, he would vote for the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Bowen.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. Premier came down with an important Bill to amend the Constitution Act. He first proposed that Parliament should last three years; then he said it should last four years; and in his own case he said it should last five years. The hon. member's Bill was a sort of patchwork. The Opposition simply contended that the principle of triennial parliaments, having been carried, should be applied to the present Parliament. That was a reasonable position to take up.

Mr. ARCHER said the Colonial Treasurer, when he lectured them just now, saying that a minority had no right to oppose a majority, had forgotten the tactics of his own party during the last Parliament, when the late Government were met in every direction by stonewalling.

The PREMIER: How often? Name two occasions.

Mr. ARCHER said he would name the loan and the mail service. But they were now fighting on a constitutional question of the highest importance—namely, that a proposed change in the Constitution should apply to the present Parliament as well as to its successors; and they were justified in their Opposition to the Premier's proposal that it should not.

The PREMIER said that members, especially comparatively new members, could now see the manner in which the Opposition proposed to conduct the business of the session. The great question of principle, for maintaining which they were prepared to do he knew not what, was whether the longest period during which the present Parliament could sit should be November, 1886, or November, 1887. He was glad to know what hon. members of the Opposition really considered a great question of principle, for which all the forms of the Committee might be used. But if they continued those tactics they might cease to exist even as a minority. Surely, they had sufficient sense to give way when the proper time came. Obstruction, like insurrection, was only justifiable when it was successful. He hoped that before many weeks were over wiser counsels would prevail in that camp. They seemed to resort to obstruction on the smallest possible inducement, but parliamentary government could not be carried on in that way for ever. By obstruction they could prevent the Bill from becoming law; but he was determined not to prevent the present Parliament from dealing with redistribution; let that be distinctly understood. As there was very heavy work for the remainder of the week, he did not intend to remain there all night, punishing his friends for the gratification of hon. gentlemen opposite.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the Premier had just said he was determined that the present Parliament should do the work of redistribution.

The PREMIER: I said I would do nothing to prevent the present Parliament from dealing with it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he distinctly heard the hon. gentleman say that that House should do the work of redistribution. The Opposition did not wish to prevent him; what they wanted was to hurry on the work of redistribution—to have the census taken at once, so that the constituencies might be properly represented. There had been no obstruction, and their opposition had been raised with the view of making the physician cure himself—if the physic was good let the present Parliament take it—that and nothing more; and they intended to stick to it as far as they could. Would the Premier accept the withdrawal of the motion and supersede it by one of his own?

The PREMIER: It is the usual obstructive motion.

Mr. HAMILTON said the members of the Opposition were perfectly willing to listen to any good reasons that were submitted in favour of the contention that it was desirable that the Bill should not apply to the present Parliament, but they had not heard one good or tangible reason.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he was convinced that the longer the debate lasted, the more would the Opposition have to regret it. Bad temper and bad generalship would have bad results. He (Mr. Midgley) said at the beginning of the debate that he would have accepted a date from the return of the writs; but he quite understood that the Government might have reasons for somewhat modifying such a suggestion. He hoped now that the Premier would not give way, because, while there had been a disposition to meet the Opposition in regard to the proposed alteration, it had not been met in that spirit it ought to have been met in.

Mr. STEVENSON said the only difference of opinion between the hon. member for Fassifern and the Opposition was that, while he believed in the view they took, he was not prepared to stick to it. It was no good hon. members opposite saying they believed in certain principles, if they took no means to have them carried out. He did not think the hon. member need say that any bad temper had been displayed; because, with the exception of rather an angry speech from the hon. member for Bundanba, there had been very good temper throughout.

Mr. HAMILTON said he thought the hon. member for Fassifern was mistaken, in saying that hon. members had lost their temper; they were all in a most seraphic frame of mind.

Mr. STEVENSON said that, as he understood the Premier wished to move the Chairman out of the chair, he (Mr. Stevenson) would, with the permission of the Committee, withdraw his motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

The PREMIER said he did not wish to destroy the whole week's work for the sake of an angry night's debate; and, therefore, following the example of many others who had occupied the position he occupied, he moved that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again. But hon. members must understand that it was the majority that was to rule in that House and not the minority.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And the hon. gentleman must also understand that a minority has its rights as well as a majority.

Question put and passed, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again at a later hour of the day.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment of the House, said the order of business at a later hour of the day would be the Native Labourers Protection Bill, in committee; Bills of Exchange Bill, second reading; Insanity Bill, in committee; and then the Triennial Parliaments Bill, in committee.

The House adjourned at twenty-four minutes to 1 o'clock.