

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 23 JULY 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 23 July, 1885

Question.—Formal Motions.—The Timber Regulations.—Printing Committee's Report.—Route of the Kilkivan and Maryborough Railway.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTION.

Mr. ANNEAR asked the Colonial Treasurer—

What was the exact cost of the dredge "Platypus," including inspection and all other expenses incurred until she was handed over to the Government in Brisbane?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) replied—

The cost of the dredge "Platypus" amounts to £31,073 5s. 2d. No special account has been rendered for inspection, the cost of same having been paid in London from the general vote for such purposes.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. GRIMES—

That there be laid on the table of the House a copy of the Inspecting Surveyor's Report on the suggested route of a branch railway from Indooroopilly to Brookfield.

By the HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH—

That there be laid upon the table of this House a copy of the Log and Report of the Government Agent to the Immigration Agent of the voyage to the South Seas of the "Borough Belle," commencing in December and ending in May last,—together with any other correspondence relating to that voyage.

By Mr. ARCHER—

That there be laid on the table of the House a Return showing what amount of the £15,000 voted last year in the Estimates-in-Chief for Bridges on Main Roads and of the £100,000 on the Loan Estimates for the same purpose have been appropriated, specifying the works and sum appropriated for each.

THE TIMBER REGULATIONS.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH, in moving—

That the Timber Regulations under the Crown Lands Act of 1884 and the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 be disagreed with"—

said: Mr. Speaker,—When the Land Act of 1884 was passed, by clause 131 the right was given to the Government to make regulations imposing a license fee in respect of any timber license, and also imposing a royalty on any timber or other material cut for removal from Crown lands. Under the authority granted by that clause the Government, in the early part of the present year, issued regulations, and there was a new feature in those regulations by which royalties were imposed on different kinds of timber. These royalties were: For beech, 1s. per 100 feet; for other sorts of hardwood, 6d.

per 100 feet; for pine, 1s. per 100 feet; and for cedar, 2s. per 100 feet. I do not remember any discussion in which the advisability of putting a royalty on timber formed a prominent feature. It has always been the spirit of every Parliament in which I have sat to do as much as we possibly could to encourage the native industries of the colony. In the year 1882, I think, a Bill was introduced by the Government of which I was the head, imposing a large export duty on cedar. The aim that the Government had at that time in imposing such an export duty was twofold. First, they desired to tax the people who really were using our timber through the Customs, as the great bulk of it went out of the colony. We were desirous of charging a fair price for the timber that went out of the colony, and the duty which it was proposed to impose would have only touched the export trade. On the other hand, the duty might very well have acted as an encouraging duty to home manufacturers, because I anticipated, and would gladly have seen as the result of that measure, large manufactories established in the various parts of the colony under the protection of the export duty which it contemplated. However, the House, and especially the members led by the present Premier, harassed that Bill whilst it was going through the House to such an extent that the impost was reduced from 12s., which was what I proposed, to 2s. on cedar, the amount mentioned in the regulations that have been made under the new Land Act. There has never been any consent given by the House, nor, as I have said, has there been any discussion on the principle of imposing royalties on timber cut down on Crown lands. But when other subjects have cropped up there has been a general disposition expressed to favour and encourage all native industries. I do not know any that deserves more encouragement than the timber trade, and for this reason: that there is no man who has observed the progress of the settled districts who will not admit that this trade has been one of the most powerful factors in reducing the land to a cultivatable state. If we examine the Bundaberg and Wide Bay districts, it will be seen what an astonishing amount of good has been done in those districts, what an amount of land has been made fit for the farmer, and that has been the result of the timber trade. I remember, ten years ago, that when a man selected land he purposely excluded anything in the shape of pine scrub, because he wanted clear country. The timber country was eventually disposed of, and got into the hands of timber-getters, and now farmers are settled here, and there is no doubt that this is one of the most thriving portions of the colony. It cannot be disputed, therefore, that timber-getters have done an immense amount of good in pioneering the country. I do not know any industry which has done more in that direction. On that account alone it is difficult to understand why so heavy an imposition should have been put on timber-getters. It may be said that timber-getters got timber free. Are there no other people treated in the same way as they were? Look, for instance, at the imposition of the gold-miners' tax in Victoria. In 1853, when a riot took place on account of the imposition that gold-miners had to pay, the miners were rated at 30s. per month, which comes to £18 a year, for the prospective gold which they might dig out of the earth. That was all the miner paid, and he then had the privilege of making his own all the gold that he got. I do not think the timber-getter in this colony, when he gets timber free, is getting any more than the gold-miner out of the country, and yet at the rate put down here of 1s. per 100 feet for beech, 3d. for hardwood, and 6d. for pine, a timber-getter would be paying—that is, a timber-

getter doing an ordinary year's work—at the rate of £50 a year, while the most ever exacted from the gold-miner in the old tyrannical times was £18 a year. I say that if the Government had for a moment studied the relative positions of the gold-miner and the timber-getter in this country they would have seen that they were exacting too much from the timber-getter. There is another feature of it that ought to have struck the Government. At the very time they proposed these new regulations, imposing new taxation on the timber industry, the trade was just on the balance, almost, of whether it was going to be swallowed up—put down by the opposition they had from New Zealand and North America. A number of men may say, without thinking it out thoroughly, "Very well, if they can send us timber from New Zealand and America cheaper than we can get it from our own forests, let our own forests stand." But that is a very narrow view to take of it. I have always seen the advantage of taking the timber from our own forests, and I have already pointed out the advantage gained from the fact that if the timber-getters were doing nothing for the good of the country—that is, in the way of producing timber cheaper than we can get it from other countries—they do good for the country by rendering it fit to receive the farmer. This imposition put on the timber-getters had no doubt a very discouraging effect upon the trade, and, in fact, the Government have themselves admitted that by receding from the position they took up. The timber-getters, from the working men to the saw-mill owners, rose up in arms against it, and there was nobody connected with it that did not see the gross unfairness of it. I myself saw the gross unfairness of it, and its unfairness from the particular time at which the imposition was made—at a time when the majority of those men who had given a strong support to the Government had hopes, so far from a royalty being put upon timber, that there would be an import duty put upon foreign timber. The aspirations of the men in the districts where the trade was chiefly carried on tended to that, and though I do not know if the Government encouraged those aspirations, still, a large number of the timber-getters relied upon the Government to carry out something of the kind, and the Government never disclaimed the intention to follow the aspirations of their supporters in this respect. Now, sir, whenever the opposition of the timber-getters to those regulations was made very apparent—that was, by means of various deputations and by the thunders of the Press—the Minister for Lands receded and went away from the regulations he had made under the present Act, before that Act came into force. It was, however, not only the amount of the royalty that was enacted, but it was the method, or rather the harassments that necessarily accompanied the collection of the royalty, that caused the great opposition to the regulations. According to the regulations that were first published, the timber-getter when he had felled a certain number of trees had to go to the commissioner or some other officer and give him notice that he had that timber out in the field. Then he had to wait before he could remove that timber until some officer came out and measured it and the royalty was paid, and then he was at liberty to remove it. To men working from hand to mouth this system could never have been fair, and was looked upon by the men as even a heavier grievance than the royalty itself. These things having been represented to the Government the regulations were withdrawn. The regulations as they stand now reduce the royalty on hardwood and pine by one-half, making it on hardwood 3d., and on pine 6d.

In addition to that, the Government tried to meet the grievance of the timber having to be measured before it leaves the ground on which it has been cut, by making several new regulations by which, when the timber-getter had the timber cut on the ground, he could go to the commissioner and describe the timber he had there and receive a permit to remove it to some river or saw-mill or some emporium where it could be measured. While that timber was in transit every carrier of it must either have the permit in his pocket or he must have a copy of it, otherwise the timber he is carrying is liable to be forfeited. Those are the changes that have been made. There was another change, however, and that was not meeting the wishes of the timber-getters, and not going along with the public opinion expressed at the time, but rather contrary to it and on a different subject—that was, the renewal of special licenses. Before the special license was granted, a payment of a fee of £5 and the usual royalty on all timber was collected, but under the new regulations—those issued lately and put on the table of the House—this fee is exacted, and the renewal is absolutely debarred to the licensee, unless he shows that he has cut down as much timber as would have yielded in royalties £50 during the year he has held the license. I will deal with that first. That is a thoroughly impracticable regulation, for this reason—that £50 in royalties, at 3d. per 100 feet, represents 400,000 feet. As a matter of fact, I do not believe there are a dozen acres in the colony that contain so many thousand feet of marketable timber. The usual run of land that is let under these special licenses does not contain more than about 150,000 feet of this timber, so that under the regulations, unless a man has cut down about twice as much timber as he has in the whole of the place in one year, he is debarred from getting a renewal of the license. That must have been a grave oversight, or the regulation was manipulated by someone who knew very little about the matter. To go back to the next change that has been made. To remedy the harassing regulation which compels the timber to be left on the ground until the commissioner or his assistant comes out to measure it, we have this system of permits; that is, of course, an advance in the right direction. It is better; but still it requires a timber-getter to lose a day every time he wants timber measured, and the smaller the man's business is the more he will feel this, and the oftener he will want his timber measured. To the man with a large business it will not matter so very much; but to the small man it is a matter of very considerable moment—losing one day or perhaps more in going to the commissioner, and another day in going to the mill to see his timber measured, unless he chooses to take the Government measurement. Now, the other mitigating element in the regulations, decreasing the royalty on pine and hardwood exactly one-half, does not in my opinion meet the case; nor does the suggestion which is said to have come from the Government, that there should be a counterbalancing tax on all timber imported from other countries. To put a tax on imported timber is simply increasing the taxation of the country. According to the Treasurer there is no reason for that; and at all events there is no reason for doing so by putting the increased taxation on such an article as timber. The objection that I have to the royalty is not only that it exacts too much from the timber-getters, but also that it is not a favourable tax from the Treasurer's point of view. The best taxes are those from which the net amount received by the Treasury is the largest sum possible, but this is exactly the other way. I cannot conceive any tax that would cost more

to collect than this tax on cedar. We must have an army of sub-commissioners going through our forests, all of whom would have to be paid out of this royalty; and when we tot it up I think we should find that a very small percentage of every £100 collected actually found its way into the Treasury. Not only were the timber-getters harassed in this way at a time when the trade was at a very low ebb, but the Government in particular districts had another go at the trade. On all the lines of the colony timber has been carried at so much per ton. On the South-western, the Maryborough and Gympie, and the Bundaberg and Mount Perry lines—the three lines on which timber was mostly carried—it was the custom, although the printed regulations imposed a charge of so much per ton, to calculate so many cubic feet to the ton, and the timber was never weighed. That custom exists still on the Southern and Western line, but on the Maryborough and Gympie line and the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line weigh-bridges have been erected, and the timber is actually weighed. Now, although the Minister for Works or the Commissioner for Railways has not actually altered the rates, still he has made regulations by which they pay actually 31 per cent. more for the carriage of timber than they did before.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: There has been no increase in the rates.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I know, but I cannot penetrate the skull of the Minister for Works. I think everyone in the House understands that I said the rates were not increased, but that an alteration had been made in the regulations by which the charge was increased 31 per cent. I have not with me the calculation on which I based that statement, but I will explain it. I took from a saw-mill in operation the amount of timber they sent away for a whole week—it was not an exceptional week—and I calculated what they would have paid under the old regulation, by which a ton was supposed to be fifty cubic feet of pine or twenty-five cubic feet of hardwood. Then I put beside that the amount they did pay when the timber was weighed, and I found that the amount they would have paid under the old regulation was exactly 31 per cent. less than they actually did pay. I think I have made it plain that the Government has not only increased the royalty, but that on those two lines they have actually increased the freight 31 per cent. No alteration, however, has been made on the Southern and Western line. I hope the Minister for Works understands me now. In putting on the paper the motion standing in my name, of course I had no intention whatever of suggesting that the whole regulations should be rescinded; but I put it in this form because, when the Minister for Lands made the alteration from the regulations of March to the regulations of June, he rescinded the former, although about nine out of ten of the new regulations are the same as the old ones. I have directed the attention of the House to the most prominent objections I have against the new regulations. What I say is, that what the timber-getters were paying in license fees and for special licenses was quite sufficient, and when we consider the state of trade it was quite unjustifiable to them and unfair to the colony to impose this royalty. Not only that, but it is a wasteful tax, inasmuch as it costs so much in Government employes to collect. Those are the objections I have to it, and those objections will not be met by Ministers saying that to counterbalance it an import duty will be laid on the timber that comes from other colonies. Hon. members of course may wonder, and ask how it is that the timber-getters of this

country cannot compete with the timber-getters of North America or New Zealand. In hardwood they do; there is no hardwood imported except for some Government contracts made by the present Minister for Works. The only wood imported is pine, and in that this country cannot compete with the countries I have mentioned where there are six times as much timber to the acre as in Queensland. Another reason why we should put no impediment in the way of the timber-getters is that those men, by cutting down the timber, have opened up some of our very best agricultural lands. There is another feature to which I cannot help drawing the attention of the House, and that is the want of consideration shown by various Ministers in the positions they have taken up on certain questions. I should not be at all astonished to hear the Minister for Works say that he had come to the conclusion to alter those regulations a month or a week before I gave this notice of motion.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have nothing whatever to do with the matter.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I beg the hon. member's pardon; I mean the Minister for Lands. It was not a dignified position for the Minister to take in acting so defiantly as he did towards persons interested in the timber industry, and then to introduce a so-called reform which will have the effect of making the thing from some points of view almost worse than it was before. The tax will certainly be more unproductive than before, for we shall have to pay the same amount to collect a royalty of 2d. as a royalty of 6d. The two objectionable features of this tax are, that it has been unjustly imposed, and that it will be more unremunerative to the State than it was before. I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said: Mr. Speaker,—The conclusion to which the hon. gentleman's speech would lead is, that he considers any attempt to derive revenue from the timber trade is unjust and improper. I maintain, on the other hand, that any natural produce of the country, used by anybody in it, should pay the State something for its use; in the same way that men who depasture stock on the natural grasses of the colony have to pay for the use of those grasses in the shape of rent. I refer to natural products as distinguished from artificial products, the work of men's hands. The hon. gentleman also said that one great value the timber-getters had been to the country was, that they had opened areas for agricultural settlement. No doubt they have, but not in the way meant by the hon. gentleman, by cutting the timber out of the scrubs. The way they have extended settlement is that their earnings as timber-getters enabled them to settle down and make a start in life as agriculturists. But that was not the point to which the hon. gentleman directed the attention of the House, which was, that the mere fact of their cutting timber led to agricultural settlement. So it does indirectly, but it is the profits they make out of timber-getting that enables them to occupy the land for agriculture, and the knowledge they obtain as timber-getters that enables them to succeed as agriculturists. The hon. gentleman, when speaking of the first regulations, said it was absolutely required to measure timber at the stump. That is not true, and I will read the regulation to show that it is not. The 24th regulation of those issued on the 3rd March is as follows:—

"Within three months of any timber being cut by a holder of an ordinary license, such licensee must give notice to the commissioner, stating the number of logs, the description of timber, the brand, and the locality where it was cut. The commissioner will then specify a time when the ranger or other officer will visit the locality,

measure the timber, and brand it with the authorised brand; or if it is not practicable to send a ranger or other officer within a convenient time, the commissioner may give a printed permit, specifying the quantity and kind of timber, the locality in which it was cut, and the brand, and authorising the licensee to remove the timber to such mill, railway station, rafting-ground, or other place, as may be decided, and the ranger may measure and brand the timber at such place.

"The royalty shall be paid within ten days after the timber is measured, otherwise the timber may be seized and forfeited, and sold on behalf of the Crown."

That is practically the same as the regulation that he approves of now, and which, as he says, meets his views. There is no real difference between them except that it is made clearer in the last regulation.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I did not say I approved of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. gentleman then referred to the special leases under the regulations of the Crown Lands Act of 1876. Anybody who knows anything about the special leases under that Act must know that all the best timber country in the colony was virtually placed in the hands of a few mill-owners. Timber-getters were absolutely excluded from the best timbered districts except on the mill-owners' terms, and numbers of mill-owners held on to the land for upwards of ten years without taking a single stick off it. Such action has been most detrimental in every district, and the evil is provided against under the new regulations by making the holder pay a royalty of £50 a year. A man must cut a certain quantity of timber to pay that. The amount may perhaps be considered excessive, but it seemed to me, from the information I had before me, that £50 per square mile would not be an excessive amount. There are plenty of special leases with a good deal more than 200,000 feet of timber in them, and I know some of my own knowledge, where there are more than 400,000 feet of the very best kind of hardwood—in spite of what the mill-owners may say. I do not pretend to know so much about pine timber, but I understand there are many scrubs which contain 400,000 or 500,000 feet. However, that is the amount of royalty that has to be paid by the holder of a special license during one year. As to the amount of royalty, I collected information from almost all sources—timber-getters, mill-owners, and others—as to what would probably be a fair royalty to impose upon the different kinds of timber, and there was as great a difference in the opinions expressed and in the advice given to me upon that point as it is possible to imagine. It varied from even a smaller sum than the present royalty imposed to a larger one than that at first imposed, and I still am of opinion, judging from the sales of timber the Government have made within the last three months, that the first royalties were even not excessive, except in those cases where there was great difficulty in getting at the timber. Quantities of timber have been seized and sold—timber that had been cut without a license, or in timber reserves—and in every case, not only the timber that was cut, but other timber that was standing, was sold by auction, and brought a price considerably in excess of the first royalty imposed. I am quite willing to admit that the timber industry has been suffering from great depression for the last twelve or eighteen months, but it is from causes totally different from the Timber Regulations. They commenced to have effect long before these Timber Regulations were framed, or before any change was contemplated. The chief depression is in Maryborough. There is not much in Brisbane, nor in the Northern districts. There are plenty of mills going up in the North, from

Rockhampton to Cooktown; and in Maryborough the real depression has been caused by this: at one time the whole of the Northern ports got their timber from Maryborough, but now those places are cutting their own timber or importing it from New Zealand or America, and do not take any from Maryborough at all. That is an incidence that every trade is liable to, and if Maryborough suffers in that way that is no reason why timber should be cut without the State deriving any revenue whatever from it. Comparing the royalties imposed in this colony with those charged in New South Wales, where the timber is not as good as it is here—neither their hardwood, nor their pine, nor their cedar—nor in as large quantities; taking Queensland as a whole and New South Wales as a whole, I find that in that colony they pay on special mills £10 a year, and in timber reserves every license is £6 a year for cutting and removing, and, in addition to that, they are subject to a royalty ranging from 1s. 6d. to 2d. per 100 feet, the rate upon the different kinds of timber being fixed by the Minister. In addition to that, the timber-getters have to collect their timber at a certain spot. Not only is it not measured at the stump, but they must collect it at a dépôt, and upon giving notice that they have got it there it is measured, branded by the rangers, and the royalty is then paid. There is no provision there to meet the requirements of timber-getters in regard to measurement at mills or rafting-grounds, or other arrangements which they find very convenient in carrying on their business, such as we have here. There is one dépôt, and the timber must be collected there, measured, and branded. In fact, I am of opinion that we are much more considerate to the interests of the timber-getters here than they are there, and the price is certainly no greater. Pine is included amongst first-class timbers there, and when in certain positions is liable to a royalty of 1s. 6d.; and yet it is said that New South Wales timber-getters can compete with mill-owners here in the sale of sawn and dressed timber. I do not think that is likely to be the case, because the timber is cut under a royalty, and, comparing the two colonies and the amounts charged, I consider that we have a very good chance of cutting out any timber of that kind from New South Wales at all events. I admit that New Zealand is able to supply timber at a lower rate than we can here, and that is owing to the fact that large areas of country are in the hands of persons who are willing to allow anybody to cut it at a low price, and they have much greater facilities for getting it down to their mills by water carriage than we have in Queensland. There is no doubt about that. I do not think the hon. gentleman was quite correct in the account he gave of the attempt made by his Government to impose an export duty on cedar. I have a clear recollection of the circumstances that occurred at the time, although I only speak from memory. The hon. gentleman charges the then Opposition with having so obstructed the passing of the Bill through the House that it was either abandoned or so delayed that nothing could be done with it; but, sir, the real fact of the matter is that he found outside pressure so great that the Government abandoned it—ran away from it at once.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: The hon. gentleman is misrepresenting me. I said nothing of the sort. I did not say the Bill was abandoned.

The PREMIER: But it was.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Bearing that in mind I do not think the hon. gentleman was quite fair in taunting me with having run

away from the first royalties imposed. Of course those royalties were the result of such information as I was able to collect, and were what I thought at the time a fair thing; but I found that outside opinion, as well as the opinion of my colleagues when they came to investigate the thing thoroughly, was that they were too great, and I had no right to set my individual opinion against the whole mass of those who were supposed to have practical knowledge of the working of the regulations; but it has been very carefully attempted to be instilled into the mind of the timber-getter that these royalties must result in a diminution of his profits in working. If that is so, it is contrary to anything I have ever heard before in connection with other trades. It seems to me that it is the consumer who will be most affected, and not the timber-getter, unless his profits are excessive, and then, of course, competition will bring them down. It may be that the mill-owners are getting an unfair share of the profits of timber working, and I think that is very likely to be the case. From what I can gather from the timber-getters they have been rather hardly pressed in this matter; in fact, there are too many of them in the trade; it is rather attractive, but competition has been too keen to allow the work to be profitable. I am fortified in that opinion by the fact that the price of timber at the mills has risen, during the last four or five years, about 4s. per 100 feet. Of course I am open to correction by any hon. member who knows better than I do; but I believe the increase has been about 4s. per 100 feet for the best kinds of timber, and I find that the timber-getter has, during that period, received an increase of only about 2s. in the log, so that it would appear that the profits of the mill-owner have gone far ahead of those of the timber-getter. They, of course, have induced the timber-getter to believe, and he still persistently believes, that this difference must arise from the royalty, but, I dare say, in time he will learn to take a more correct view of the position, and maintain his own right to get a fair price for the log delivered at the mill. As to the price of cedar, I do not think that anybody would be likely to assert that 2s. royalty is an unwise amount to impose, whether it is exported or used here. The destruction of timber in the northern portions of the colony has been enormous. In the northern scrubs there are millions and millions of feet of cedar lying—I will not say rotting, because cedar takes a long time and a great deal of exposure to rot—but lying unused. It is said that a great deal of it was cut down by Melbourne speculators and other people up north, but I think that the timber-getters have been as much engaged or implicated in the destruction of cedar up there as any other men in the country. It is not fair to blame them for that, because the temptations were very great. They cut away, but not being able to see their way to get the timber out of the scrub, it is lying there now, and very likely will be there for the next twenty years, I expect, for all the probabilities there are of getting reasonable access to where it is lying. I have consulted a great many timber-getters in different parts of the colony, and I find now that with the regulations which are now in force they are very well satisfied—that they will meet at all events every convenience and requirement so far as measuring and the other regulations connected with the use and holding of a special license, are concerned. There is very great satisfaction, especially with regard to special leases. They felt that they have been excluded from anything like a fair participation in the timber upon special leases. Now nothing like that can exist. The question is whether the royalty that has been paid for the holding of a

special lease for a year is excessive or not. I am not prepared to say they are wrong; but so far as I could judge at the time it was a fair and reasonable thing to fix it at £50. If that be an excessive amount, it is one that it is not impossible to arrest, and one that the Government would be bound to correct if it be shown by those who are interested in the matter that it is excessive. I think that in every other respect their interests are fairly and entirely met. Of course anything like the injudicious administration of the regulations may impose a great many difficulties; but if they be administered judiciously they will meet the requirements of the timber-getters in every case. I maintain, at all events, that the amount of the royalty, though comparatively inconsiderable, will still pay a very large return to the country, and the cost of collection will not be by any means so excessive as the hon. member for Mulgrave wishes the House to believe. The bailiffs and rangers employed upon that work have other duties to perform, in inspecting selections, and other work which they have been never thoroughly equal to. Numbers of complaints come from different districts that there are not enough rangers to make reports to, or to obtain their certificates or their deeds; so that there will be a small additional number of rangers required in some of the districts of the colony, but not such as to make any material difference in the cost of carrying out the regulations as they are now.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I may say that in regard to the Timber Regulations I give the Minister for Lands some credit for having desired to prevent the great waste of timber that has been going on for some years; but I think that the course he has adopted has not only failed to carry out the object he has in view, but has increased the difficulties which the timber-getters have to submit to. I am not going to express an opinion as to the desirability of imposing a royalty at all; but I quite agree with what has fallen from the Minister for Lands in regard to the depressed state of the timber industry at the present time. The hon. leader of the Opposition, in introducing his motion, I believe said the same thing. The depression has existed since about eight or twelve months ago; it began about that time. Previous to that it was not only in a very flourishing condition, but it gave employment to a large number of men, who, because it was in a flourishing condition, were able to make very good wages indeed. Now the Minister for Lands argues that the competition is too great—that there are too many men engaged in it. Surely that is a very poor argument. The difficulty is this: that the men who have been engaged in this trade are not prepared to go out of it at once, and take up some other occupation, simply because competition is so great. But if the competition has been too great, and too many men have been engaged in the industry, the natural result will be that in the course of time, and by degrees, some of them will give up the work, and get employment in some other way. According to the Minister for Lands, competition being too great, he claps on these Timber Regulations and throws a great many impediments in the way, so forcing a large number of these men to give up the work they are engaged in, not by taking time to bring that about by degrees, but by forcing them to go out because they cannot get employment. That is the effect of his argument. The imposition of these royalties will have a very bad effect. In support of the hon. member's own act, he refers to what has been done in New South Wales. Is it any argument that because bad regulations, which are hard upon the timber-

getters, have been imposed in New South Wales, that something, not quite so bad, should be imposed here? That is the meaning of the argument if it have any meaning at all; but the fact of the matter is that the New South Wales timber industry has not had anything like the same support that it has had here. In New South Wales the timber has been greatly wasted. A great deal of it has been cut and put to improper uses, and the result of that is that all the scrubs upon the coast, which at one time were full of cedar, have been cleared out. If any hon. member likes to read the late reports in connection with that matter in New South Wales, he will find that almost the only cedar which is growing in that colony is in places which were for years considered inaccessible—which were not touched simply because there was so much difficulty in the way of bringing the wood down. Places at the heads of the Richmond or Clarence or Tweed, where for years cedar was known to exist, were not touched on account of the difficulty of bringing it down; therefore it was allowed to remain there, but these are almost the only places in New South Wales where cedar grows to any extent, and there is almost no pine there at all. The pine which comes into competition with the pine of this colony is that which comes from New Zealand principally, and also from America and the Baltic; but the great difficulty of the timber-getters who are connected with the pine trade is in competing with that which comes from New Zealand, because there it is worked at very much less cost than it can be worked here, and it is brought here and sold at a correspondingly low rate. But is it any reason, because timber-getters in New Zealand are able to get this timber and bring it here at a comparatively low rate, that a duty should be put upon timber here to compel those who are engaged in the trade to leave timber which would otherwise be made use of in this colony? There is no object in keeping timber which is fit to cut. When it is fit to cut, the sooner it is cut the better. After a certain time the trees begin to lose their value; and there is no use in offering any objection to their being made use of at once, because the effect will be that there will be an absolute loss to the colony. I do not intend to go largely into the subject of those special licenses, because I believe under the old system the special licenses were very much abused; but I believe it is the case that many of these special licenses were taken up for the simple purpose of preventing ordinary timber-getters going on to the land and cutting timber, and there is no doubt that an abuse existed with regard to that one point. There are other matters connected with these regulations which I think ought to be specially referred to now that the opportunity is offered. I would point out before I go any further that the Minister for Lands was wrong in saying that under the first regulations which were issued there were no difficulties in the way of timber-getters removing timber before it was measured. Under the first regulations, which have since been cancelled, it was only under certain circumstances that a timber-getter could have timber removed before it was measured; but it was not optional for them to remove it before it was measured—they could only remove it when it suited the convenience of the commissioner to have it removed. The case is altogether different under the regulations now in force. Under them a man can demand permission to remove it first, and when it has been removed he gets it measured. The difference between the two sets of regulations is, that in one, the removal of timber before it has been measured is not optional, and in the other it is optional. But a good deal might be said in connection

with other provisions in these regulations. If we turn to the 6th paragraph we shall find that four different kinds of licenses may be issued. The third one is a "license to cut and split slabs, fencing stuff, or shingles." If we wish to know the meaning of that, we have to go over to paragraph 44, which states that "the holder of a license to cut and split slabs, fencing stuff, or shingles, will, subject to these regulations, be allowed to cut railway sleepers." Fancy a man who wishes to go in for the splitting of railway sleepers having to look all through these regulations, from the commencement to the 44th paragraph, before he can find that he must take out a "license to cut and split slabs, fencing stuff, or shingles." It seems absurd that such a trivial thing should have been passed over—first, in preparing the cancelled regulations, and then in revising and amending them. Now let us look at the 9th paragraph. It provides that—

"No timber shall be cut within an enclosure of less than 1,000 acres, without the special consent of the lawful occupier."

Why should not timber be cut in a paddock of 1,000 acres as well as in a paddock of 5,000 acres? Is there any tangible reason why this distinction should be made? I do not know of any. I may here say that in discussing these regulations I do not attach all the blame to the Minister for Lands for their faults and defects. The old regulations were wretchedly bad, and no Minister for Lands before seems to have had the pluck to alter them; but the hon. gentleman who has had the pluck to take the matter in hand should have taken care that no mistakes should occur in the regulations which would throw obstacles in the way of the persons most interested in their operation. I contend that there is no reason at all for the 9th paragraph in the regulations. Now, sir, let us come to the 13th regulation—"Timber cut without licenses may be seized." This provides that—

"The commissioner, or other officer duly appointed to act in that behalf, may seize any timber cut by unlicensed persons, and any cut timber lying on Crown lands or any lands mentioned in section 8 of these regulations which he has cause to believe has been cut by a person not duly authorised to cut the same."

According to that, if a man has a license and cuts timber, and then happens to go away from the district for a time on any business which may compel him so to do, the whole of the timber he has cut will be seized, and, before he knows anything about it, forfeited and sold. Fancy the case of a man engaged in cutting timber and then leaving it for a few weeks to go elsewhere on important business; during his absence the commissioner, or officer on his behalf, has a suspicion that the timber has been cut by a man without a license, and seizes it. The man is not there to prove that he has a license and that the timber was cut by him, and all that is required on the part of the officer is that a notice in writing should be posted at the office of the commissioner and at the court of petty sessions in the district; and that notice is sufficient, if the licensee is not aware of it, to bring about the forfeiture of the whole of the timber. If he does not make his claim within fourteen days the timber is sold, simply because he has been away and knows nothing of what has been done, and there is no one to explain or to prove his claim to the officer. The very least that should have been done in a case of this kind would have been to provide that a notice of somewhere about a couple of months should be given. A man is not likely to go away and leave timber on the ground with the intention of stopping away for a great length of time. Therefore, a reasonable time should, I think, be allowed

him to go away and return, and remove the timber that he has cut. The 15th paragraph of the regulations provides that—

“All timber which has been cut under any license issued by virtue of these regulations must be cut into lengths and branded by the licensee with a brand to be registered in the office of the commissioner, otherwise it will be liable to be seized, forfeited, and sold on behalf of the Crown.”

Now, let us imagine a man engaged cutting shingles or palings. How are they to be branded? I do not say that an officer would remove the upper ones which have been branded and then say the palings were not branded, and make a claim on behalf of the Government; but there are men who would remove the branded palings in such a case, and then inform the commissioner that there was no brand upon the timber. In that case, if the timber is forfeited and sold, the Minister has the power to give half of the proceeds of the sale to the informer. I do not think the Minister should have that power. If any part of the proceeds of any sale is to be given to an informer, whether he be an officer of the Government or anybody else, it should be distinctly stated, and not made optional on the part of the Minister to give half of the proceeds to one informer and not to another. Let all be treated alike. If they are to have any portion of the proceeds, let them have it by all means, but it should be the same in all cases; and I do not think a Government officer should receive any part of the proceeds, as they are paid for their work. Nor do I think that any inducement of this kind should be held out to men who are not more honest than they ought to be to take advantage of a man who really has a license, and bring a trumped-up case against him in order to get half of the proceeds that would result from the sale of the forfeited timber. I think the 19th regulation is a remnant of the inefficiency of the old regulations. It says:—

“The cutting or removal of timber of the under-mentioned sorts is strictly prohibited without special permit:—

Bunya bunya (*Araucaria Bidwillii*).
Queensland nut (*Mocadam a ternifolia*).
Currajong.

“The commissioner may also except timber required for shade or ornament from the operation of timber licenses.”

Well, the bunya bunya and the Queensland nut are both determined by their botanical names, but the currajong has no other name but “currajong.” There are two trees known by that name, as like to each other as it is possible for them to be, and it would be impossible to say which is the one which should not be cut. What is the objection to cutting the ordinary currajong? It grows in many parts of the colony, and in some cases, frequently in dry weather, it is cut down and used as fodder. Why, therefore, absolutely prohibit the cutting of it? There is no object in that regulation, and unless there is an object, and a very good one, such a regulation should not exist at all. It is easy to understand why the bunya bunya should be protected, yet there is not now the same necessity for protecting even it that there formerly was. At one time there were great numbers of blacks who congregated at the Bunya Bunya Mountains and other places and lived for months on the falling nuts from those trees. But that state of things has passed away. There are scarcely any blacks who now have recourse to the Bunya Bunya Mountains for supplies in that way, and those who are left have any quantity of other food. I do not believe at the present time there is one black living in the district in which they used to assemble for every fifty or a hundred there were at the time the old Timber Regulations were framed. Still, I do not blame the hon. gentleman for protecting the

bunya bunya tree, because there is a something special about the tree, and it would be a great pity if it were lost to the colony. But what the object is in preserving the Queensland nut I do not know. It is a tree that grows in the scrub, and the nut, I believe, has never been used by the blacks. In fact, at the time it was discovered that the nuts were eatable, the blacks did not know of the use of the tree, and yet, for some reason or other best known to the Minister for Lands, the preservation of the tree still exists. We now come to the 20th regulation, which provides that—

“No person, whether licensed or not, is permitted, under any circumstances, to cut down trees of the under-mentioned sorts of a less size than that specified in each case:—

Cedar trees (*Cedrela Toona*) of a circumference less than seven feet six inches at six feet from the ground;

Kauri pine trees (*Damara robusta*) of a diameter less than two feet at five feet from the ground;

Hoop pine trees (*Aracaria Cunninghamii*) of a diameter less than one foot nine inches at five feet from the ground.”

Now, why should cedar not be cut at less than six feet from the ground when other trees can be cut down five feet from the ground? Why did not the hon. member make the height from the ground at which all trees can be cut the same? The object, I should think, is to make the regulations as simple as possible, so that they may be understood by the timber-getters; but these appear to have been made in such a complicated manner that difficulties are sure to arise. We now come to the royalties themselves. In the first place there is for beech 1s. per 100 feet. I happened to be talking to the Colonial Botanist the other day about some woods he was collecting for the exhibition which is going to take place at home shortly, and in the course of conversation Mr. Bailey informed me that in some districts he had been to he had cut some beech for samples which was an entirely different tree to the beech in other districts. Now, how on earth are timber-getters to distinguish between the two different kinds of beech? There surely ought to be some way of fixing what trees are really intended to be cut down, because in one district a timber-getter may be licensed to cut down beech and be charged a royalty of 1s. per hundred, and in another district he can cut down another beech which will be treated as hardwood. I do object most strongly to the fact that no definition has been made of what hardwood is. I am certain that if samples were placed before different commissioners in different districts there would invariably be a difference of opinion between them, and I think unless some really good definition is given a great amount of confusion will take place. I do not think it is necessary to say much about the duty on cedar. At the time the export duty was proposed I very strongly supported it, but that is quite a different thing to the ordinary royalty. The effect of that export duty would have been to insist upon all the cedar which went from here to the other colonies being cut up here instead of being sent away in the log. That, of course, would have led to the establishment of a large number of mills and the employment of a great number of men. But, as matters stand now, the whole of the timber which is used by timber-dealers in the other colonies is cut in the bush, dragged to the rafting places and shipped, and the only employment that is found for men in connection with the cedar trade is the mere cutting of it, dragging it down, and putting it on board ship. That is where the advantage of the export duty would come in. It would not have prevented the utilising of timbers which are produced in the colony, but it would have given employment to ten men where one is

employed now. I can only say that I regret now, as much as I did at the time, that the Government of the day did not insist upon that 12s. export duty on timber in the log being carried out. I think great hardships are likely to arise in reference to the regulations dealing with the removal of timber, because it is provided that no man can remove timber in the log without having a special permit. I do not think the Minister for Lands really understood what the effect of those licenses and the regulations connected with them would be. We have a provision here that every man engaged in fencing may, with a license No. 3, go to work and cut whatever timber he requires for fencing or for splitting, and he may remove it as he chooses. Take the case of a man engaged in putting up a house such as we often see in the bush. Men so engaged generally take a small contract for three or four months. At any rate, by the conditions of the contract a number of slabs are required for the building, and, further, round posts are required for all the corners; but no man can get these round posts, according to these regulations, without having a license for log timber. So that no man can cut the timber for an ordinary building in the bush without having two licenses. He must have one license to cut the slabs and another to enable him to cut the round posts he requires, which are really timber in the log. He must also get permission to draw them, and pay the royalty on them. Of course, I know the hon. member never intended that that should be so. The intention, no doubt, was that small contracts like that should be done in the ordinary way, without interference, but what I have stated is the effect of the regulations as they are now, and it is a very great hardship to men engaged in this work that such interference should be allowed. For the most part they are men who have not much means and take small contracts to find them in employment for three or four months during the time they are not obliged to be constantly at work on their selections. It is desirable that everything should be done to encourage these men, and that every facility should be given to enable them to take up such work. The same objection applies in the case of men taking up contracts for building bridges and culverts for divisional boards, and other little trumpery jobs of that kind. Then I say the regulations are insufficient, inasmuch as they overlook the position in which such men as these may be placed, being drawn up as they are. Coming to the special timber licenses, I find, according to the 31st clause, that when an application is made for one of these licenses the application is made to the commissioner, who has to send it on to the Minister with his report, for approval; but according to the 32nd regulation, although the commissioner has not the power to grant a license he has the power to prevent a man from getting one. Why should all these licenses have to be sent on to the Minister with the recommendation of the commissioner, so that he may decide whether they should be granted or not? The 32nd regulation says:—

“The commissioner may amend the description of boundaries contained in the application, or the area to be comprised in the license, and may exclude any land which it may appear expedient to withhold from license.”

I do not see why the commissioner should not be empowered to deal with all these licenses. Why is it necessary that special licenses should be sent down to the Minister? Surely a commissioner with ordinary intelligence might be entrusted with a matter of that kind! The 33rd regulation provides that although a special license may be given, anyone who is authorised by the

Minister may enter upon that land and remove timber required for public purposes. Surely a man who has a special license is entitled to all the timber on his land so long as the license lasts, yet according to the 33rd regulation timber required for public works may be removed by any person duly authorised by the Minister. There is no reference made as to whether the timber so taken is to be paid for or not, or whether any concession is to be made to the holder of the special license in such cases. Surely a case like that is likely to give rise to much dissatisfaction, and the provisions in such cases should be more definitely laid down. So far as the royalty to be paid by holders of special licenses is concerned, I think it desirable that some regulation of the kind should be introduced. I am not prepared to say that it should be necessary for the timber-getter to pay £50 a year if he wishes to get his license for the next year, because I know that a very great deal of land would be taken up under special license, on which there is no possibility of the licensee getting the amount of timber necessary to pay that £50; though I believe there is some country, as the Minister for Lands says, where that amount of timber might be got. Now, as to the fees to be charged for the different licenses, I do not think there is anything right in them. I complained over and over again, in this House and in the Lands Office, that the fees charged under the old regulations were grossly inequitable, and I have the same complaint to make with regard to these. There is certainly a little improvement made, but there is still an inequality in the charges, although not to the same extent as before. License No. 3—a license to cut slabs, fencing stuff, or shingles—is to be £3, and it is to be paid quarterly; but the licenses to cut firewood or strip wattle-bark for sale, or to burn charcoal, are each to cost £2. The difference between the two is, that the man who wants to get slabs, or fencing stuff, or shingles, whichever it may be, goes into the forest and cuts the very best timber he can find, leaving the refuse scattered over the ground—a nuisance to everybody, besides destroying so much of the grass; whilst the other man is charged £2 for actually coming to the rescue of the Government and clearing off all the rubbish left by the first man, at the same time leaving the land more valuable. I say that the man who uses fallen timber for firewood or for charcoal should not be charged more than 5s. or 10s. a year. There may not be so many men engaged in that work, but the Government in arranging matters of this kind ought to have taken these details into consideration, and made the fees for the licenses as equitable as possible by charging something like a fair price, comparatively, for the different licenses granted. I have pointed out that the holder of a splitting license must, in the first place, get a permit before he can take the stuff off the ground, and then he must pay a royalty as well on the round stuff. If he does not do that, and anyone makes a complaint against him, he must lose his license. There is no option about it; the mere fact of the complaint being made is enough to deprive him of his license. I am quite sure that matter has been overlooked by the Minister; no one would think for a moment of such a regulation being permitted to remain in force. It is not that people generally will lay complaints that would cause a man to lose his license, but any man having a spite against another might lay a complaint, and the license would be forfeited forthwith. I think the leader of the Opposition, in the remarks he made, referred to the chief objections against the regulations. In my opinion, they are bad in so far as they propose to levy a royalty at a time when

it is to the detriment of the industry and the injury of those engaged in it. If a royalty is to be imposed, a time should be chosen when the industry has been restored to something like the prosperity with which it was conducted some two or three years ago. One excuse for levying a royalty on timber-cutting on Crown lands is that, in many cases, selectors have been able to sell to the timber-getters the timber on their lands at highly profitable rates. But it must be remembered that nearly all the land within a reasonable distance of the mills has already been taken up, and of course the timber-getters can afford to pay a higher price for the timber on such lands, because the expense of carriage is so much less. The Crown lands are usually situated at a far greater distance from the mill, and the timber-getters are put to all the extra expense of removal. To put in force these regulations would be an injury to the industry, and cause a great number of men to be turned out of employment when there was not the slightest reason for it. I object to the imposition of royalty on that account now, and I object to the regulations as a whole, because I believe they have been adopted without that consideration which they ought to have received. As far as the smaller timber-getters are concerned, it means the absolute ruin of their business. I think the industry should be encouraged in every possible way. I give the Minister for Lands credit for having attempted to prevent waste, but I believe that in that attempt, and in the attempt to derive revenue from the timber of the colony, he has gone a great deal too far. I do not agree with him when he says that all the natural products of the country should be made to return a revenue to the State. If that is to be so, why not charge more on the most valuable of our country's products—I mean gold? Every possible inducement is offered to the people engaged in gold-mining to get the most they can out of the land, and I say that every possible inducement should be given to people engaged in the useful industry of turning our timber to profitable account, so long as all reasonable means are taken to prevent waste. For my own part, without wishing to condemn the Minister for Lands too strongly, I think he has acted too impulsively and without a sufficient knowledge of the subjects with which he dealt. I disagree with the Timber Regulations on those grounds. They are not so bad as those which were first issued and afterwards withdrawn; but I do not think that in their present form it is desirable they should be allowed to remain in force.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has given us a very long speech, but I do not know that we are very much wiser for it. I listened attentively to what he was saying, but in a good many cases I could not make out what he really meant. I could not make out what the results of his arguments, in a good many of the matters to which he was referring, would really be. I know something of timber-getting in this colony; I have been a good many years engaged in that industry, and I know something about the timber-getters in our district. I must say that the first regulations issued caused a good deal of commotion and opposition, and if they had not been altered—if we had those regulations before us to-night—I should have felt justified in voting for the hon. member for Mulgrave's motion. But we have new regulations, and I think most of the timber-getters are satisfied that they are workable and just, provided an import duty is imposed on timber brought into the colony. I think that

is only a proper thing for this colony to do; we know that the other colonies charge an import duty, and we have to pay it on timber we send away.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Why should we tax timber?

Mr. MELLOR: The other colonies tax us, and it is only fair that we should do the same thing. We know very well that the introduction of timber from New Zealand and America has been to a great extent the cause of the depression of the industry in this colony. I am convinced that if there is a duty put on imported timber most of the timber-getters will be satisfied with the present regulations. The hon. leader of the Opposition, in objecting to the 34th clause of the regulations, stated that 400,000 feet of timber would have to be removed by the holder of a special license in a year in order that it might be renewed; but we know very well that special licenses are not obtained for hardwood, but for pine, of which only 200,000 feet would be needed. In the event of a special license being granted it may take a party of men perhaps three or four months to make roads to it; and if they do not comply with the regulations, at the end of twelve months they may lose the benefit of that labour. The amount of royalty should be cut down fully one-half at all events. It is a very good lease that will carry 400,000 feet. Timber is not so large now as it used to be in the kauri scrubs near the coast. Of course there is some kauri still, but most of the kauri scrubs have been selected, and are now held as private property. I argue that it is an unjust tax to put on timber in the Wide Bay and Bundaberg districts, that it should be carried by rail by weight instead of by measure. That should certainly never have been decided, and no doubt when the case is represented to the Minister for Works he will, seeing that it is a purely departmental matter, take care that it is corrected. I heard an hon. member say not long since that wherever the timber-getters went they left destruction and dearth behind them. I know something about these men, and I say that the timber-getters throughout the colony have been a most industrious and useful class, and have opened up to settlement the districts they worked in. Although his main object has been to cut timber he has had to make roads, and settlers have always followed him. Many of these men in looking for timber have found land they deemed it desirable to settle upon, and after making a little money they have done so and become good settlers. I say the timber-getters have been a boon to this colony. With reference to cedar, we know that it is becoming a scarce commodity. There may be many cedar forests in the colony yet undiscovered, but as far as we know a great deal of our remaining cedar is now lying felled in the scrubs. I do not think it would hurt the cedar-getters very much to work under the new regulations, because they have the timber already fallen; but it is scarcely fair that those who have to fetch the timber from such long distances should have to pay 2s. per 100 feet, because they are thereby heavily handicapped against those whose timber is already felled, and which they need not remove until they think proper. Cedar is a timber which will lie for many years without being injured by the exposure. I should like to see an additional export duty put on cedar. The present export duty is 2s. per 100 feet, but it would not be an unfair tax to add a little more to it when it is sent outside the colony. That export trade has been and is being carried on to a very large extent, and the other colonies must have this timber. Many timber merchants in the other colonies have large gangs of men engaged here for the purpose of taking our timber away. They have their headquarters

in Melbourne, and take away one of the most useful and valuable products of Queensland. It would be no injustice to tax them a little more. I must confess I should like to have seen something in the regulations about forest conservancy, but there is not a word about it. Committees have sat on this subject, and a good deal of talk has been spent upon it; but up to the present time nothing else has been done. An hon. member has certainly called for returns on the subject, but something more is wanted, and it would be a great benefit to the colony if the Government would issue some regulations respecting the conservation of our forests. I shall not detain the House longer. If the regulations had not been amended I should have felt compelled to vote for the motion; but in their amended form, and with the prospect before us of an import duty being put upon sawn timber coming into the colony, I think they will prove acceptable to the large and valuable class of men to whom they apply.

Mr. STEVENS said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for Wide Bay says he is of opinion that timber-getters will be satisfied with these regulations if an import duty is put upon sawn timber. That may be the feeling in the hon. member's district, but it certainly is not the feeling among the men in the South. The sole effect of these regulations is to make the getting of timber as difficult as possible. After the timber-getter has felled his timber and conveyed it to some central place to have it inspected and measured, he is to pay a royalty. The entire body of the regulations is objectionable, and in some instances they almost amount to a harsh tyranny. The time allowed by the regulations for removing timber—twelve months—though it may appear a very long one to outsiders, is in point of fact far too short. Under the old regulations removal frequently meant conveying the timber to some creek or watercourse, where it would be floated down to the ordinary rafting-ground. Under the present regulations, "removal" means conveying the timber from the stump to some central point, such as a mill or rafting-ground. Now, during the last three years there has not been—in the southern portion of the colony, at all events—anything like sufficient rain to flood even a small portion of the creeks running down from the ranges; so that if the timber-getter conveyed his logs to a creek with the idea that they would be floated down in the usual way, and he was disappointed by the season, he would lose his logs by effluxion of time. That in itself would be a great injustice. In some cases logs are conveyed to creeks to be floated down where they could not be carried any further by teams. The teams could not follow the course of the creek nor take the logs across the ranges; and I know that in some cases over £100—in one instance I know of my own knowledge that it cost £150 to open a road from the rafting-ground to where the logs were lying; but still, sir, if the time allowed elapsed before the road could be made the timber-getter would lose his logs. During the last three years it has been a matter of impossibility for timber-getters to remove anything like the amount of timber they have cut, not because it is in inaccessible places, but because there has been no food for their teams in the ranges. If this has been the case in the past, why should it not occur in the future? But these regulations make no provision whatever to meet cases of this sort. Another objection I have is that the ranger or person authorised by the Government to see that the regulations are carried out receives half the amount derived from seized timber. I think that tends naturally to make a ranger very tyrannical in his dealings with

timber-getters. It is almost certain, before he has been a ranger very long, to make him have recourse to all sorts of measures to harass and annoy those men, and take every trivial advantage he can to obtain half the money to be derived from the seizure of their logs. In connection with this matter there is one clause of the Crown Lands Act which I am sure, if hon. members take the trouble to consider for a moment, they will see is very tyrannical and unjust. A man who commits a breach of the Act, or of the regulations, is punished in three ways for his one offence—his timber is seized, he is to be fined a sum not less than £5, and he is to lose his license for the year. I think, sir, the seizing of the timber would be quite sufficient punishment for a breach of the regulations, or, at any rate, a fine of £5; but to seize his timber, fine him £5, and deprive him of his means of living for twelve months, is out of all reason. The 2nd section of the regulations provides that applications for licenses to cut timber on Crown lands must be made to the commissioner, and the latter part says:—

"On receipt of an application the commissioner will exercise his discretion as to granting or withholding the license applied for, according to the circumstances of the case."

I think that places a very large amount of discretion in the hands of any ordinary man. I do not suppose that a commissioner is less liable to be influenced by personal feelings than anyone else, and it is possible—in fact, highly probable—that if a commissioner had been annoyed very much by a person applying for a license he would give him a bad character, and say that he was totally unfit to hold a license. At any rate he has that discretion, and I do not think such power should be placed in his hands. Clause 13 is rather a stringent one. It provides:—

"The commissioner or other officer duly appointed to act in that behalf may seize any timber cut by unlicensed persons, and any cut timber lying on Crown lands or any of the lands mentioned in section 8 of these regulations which he has cause to believe has been cut by a person not duly authorised to cut the same."

Well, sir, we all know that there is a great deal of jealousy in this trade. Sometimes timber-getters annoy each other in every possible way; and if one man has a dislike to another he may inform the ranger or commissioner that certain logs have not been cut in accordance with the regulations, and that officer may thereupon seize the timber. In such a case as that it might put the owner to a great deal of trouble and annoyance to prove that the timber was his own; and if, by any chance, he should not hear within fourteen days that it had been seized, it would be forfeited. That certainly is very hard. With regard to the royalty, I must say at once that I am totally opposed to it. I do not see why this royalty should be imposed at all. I do not consider that any sufficient reason has been given why it should be imposed. If it is for the purpose of increasing the revenue, the admission of the Minister for Lands, that a greater number of rangers will be required, would prove that that object will be defeated, because the salaries required to be paid to those rangers will absorb all the revenue, or more than all the revenue, derived from the royalty. If this part of the regulations is simply meant to get something more out of the timber-getters, instead of having it as royalty, why not make them pay a higher license fee? It would be much fairer, because they would know exactly in what position they were placed, and it would do away with a great deal of inconvenience and irritation. The latter part of the 24th clause deals with the measurement of timber. Now, it is very well known, or, at any rate, those who have had a little practical experience can easily imagine,

that the measurement of the Crown lands ranger and the measurement made at the mill will be two very different things. The ranger will measure every inch of timber that he can possibly claim to measure, and when the logs are brought to the mill the probability is that the timber-getter will be paid for perhaps a fourth or a fifth less timber than he has had to pay royalty upon.

Mr. BAILEY: That is one of the great points.

Mr. STEVENS: Then, with reference to the measurement of the timber at the rafting-ground. We will take the case of a man who is licensed to cut timber on Crown lands, and who also has a right to cut timber on his own freehold. Many of these timber-getters have freehold selections, and how is the ranger to know which timber has been cut on the freehold land, and which has been cut on Crown lands? It is very easy for a timber-getter to evade the Act in that way. He may say, "All this timber is from my freehold," and how is the ranger to know whether such is the case or not? The temptation is too great to evade the Act, for the man will think that he is only doing the same as others have done. We all know that people who are thoroughly honest in every other respect think no harm whatever of defrauding the revenue in various ways, and I do not suppose timber-getters are any better than anyone else, nor are they any worse either. Then, there is another point to be considered, and that is the number of rangers that will be required to inspect the timber in large districts. The Logan district, for instance, extends from the Logan to the Tweed River, and there are several places which would necessarily be depôts for timber. It would, therefore, take eight or ten pretty smart rangers to travel about, and be in all those places when required, in order to prevent men losing a great deal of time. The wages required to pay these rangers to travel over a district and carry out their work properly will consume more than twice the amount of money derived from this source. Reference has been made to the gold-miner. It was stated that he had not to pay a royalty, and it just struck me as possible that an argument might be raised against that. It may be said that the gold-miner has no certainty whatever. He sinks with the expectation only of finding gold; whilst, on the other hand, the timber-getter has a certainty of finding trees. There is this answer to that: that the timber-getter, although he may fell his trees, may never derive one single penny profit out of them, for, as I have shown before, the timber may be on the ground for months and months without the slightest chance of his getting it away. In the first place the timber-getter has often to spend weeks in finding a really good tree, or small patch of trees, that are fit to cut. He climbs mountains at the risk of his life, and he fells a tree with the chance, then, of finding a road by which he can remove it from the scrub to the raft. Sometimes, after he has felled these trees, he finds there is no practicable way of getting them out whatever. It would not do for him to spend months in looking for a road first. First he has to find the trees, and then trust to finding a road afterwards; so that in some cases there is no more certainty for the timber-getter deriving any benefit from his timber than there is of a gold-miner obtaining the gold he sinks for. It has been said that, although the timber-getter opens up the country, he frequently secures the best land he can find for himself; but these men are continually opening up the country. I can say without fear of contradiction that if it had not been for the timber-getter the Logan district

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would now have been as much a wilderness as it was thirty or forty years ago. Some of the oldest residents there, and some of the wealthiest of them—men who have derived benefit from these explorations of the timber-getter—have told me over and over again that it was by following the tracks of the timber-getters that the richest land on the Logan has been found. That is continually going on at present. In one of the timber reserves, of some 40,000 acres, there has been found land of a richness of quality which was never suspected. That was found by the timber-getters, and when it is thrown open for selection the Minister for Lands will have to repeat what I say—that if it had not been for these men that land would have remained for many years unselected. I think I have touched upon the chief points in connection with these regulations. I know that, whatever may be the feeling in the district which the hon. member for Wide Bay represents, the feeling in the Logan is quite different. Of course it is to the advantage of the timber-getters that a duty should be imposed upon timber coming into the country; but it certainly will not relieve them of the hardships that these regulations will cause. The Minister for Lands proved just now that the timber-getter, although there may be a benefit derived from the higher price of timber, will not benefit as much as the miller. He stated that the price of timber had risen 4s. per 100 feet at the mill, and that he believed the timber-getter only got about 2s. I believe the timber-getters get even less. There is a direct tax upon the timber-getter; it is not a tax upon the consumer at all. The theory is—and it is generally admitted—that any tax imposed upon anything falls upon the consumer; but in this case it does not do anything of the sort. The practical effect is that it falls upon the timber-getter. Many hon. members can bear me out when I say the timber-getter has not the slightest chance of recovering anything like the tax imposed upon him, as the miller has. In some cases there are contracts to deliver a certain quantity of timber, and the royalty will have to be paid upon that, and the timber-getter will not be able to recover it; so it will interfere directly in that way. I put in a claim now especially for the timber-getter—he is the man who will suffer. There have been various ways suggested by which this royalty or tax can be placed upon the timber, so that it will fall upon the community; but I am not going to bring them forward now. I simply state that it is my firm belief that it is an unjust and excessive tax, and that it falls upon a class of men totally unfit to bear it.

Mr. SMYTH said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad that the leader of the Opposition has brought this matter before the House. We have certain regulations before the House, and we have also the experience of a number of persons here who have been engaged in the industry for a considerable time. The hon. member for Wide Bay, who spoke before the hon. member for Logan, has had more experience, I suppose, of the timber industry than any other man in the House, and he can speak with authority. There is no man in the House who will suffer more by that royalty than I shall; but I think it is a very good thing as it is now, provided the regulations are amended in several ways. The royalty money, in my opinion, should be used, not for the purpose of increasing the revenue, but for the purpose of planting out the young timber which is now being destroyed in the scrubs. In the scrubs in the Wide Bay district there are some thousands of pine and bunya trees, and any amount of young cedar, going to destruction, as it is growing too thickly in some places and wants transplanting. If men used

to the work were sent there to utilise the money raised by the royalty in planting out the young trees, the timber-getter would receive a benefit from it in future years, near Brisbane especially. I object to the royalty on a good many grounds. In the first place, it affects the mills near the coast—not so much the mills inland. The timber that is coming from the other colonies, from the United States, British North America, and New Zealand affects the coast mills and not the inland mills; so that if any measure be brought forward to protect the timber industry by means of a tax upon timber coming in the coast mills will soon reap the benefit. This colony charges less for the timber coming into it than all the other timber-producing colonies we know of. The timber shipped from New Zealand and British North America is shipped at 8s. 6d. per 100 feet, and in this colony we charge an *ad valorem* of 5 per cent., which means about 5d. per 100 feet. New Zealand is the colony which sends the largest quantity of timber here. There is no need for a protection tax for timber, and yet they charge 4s. per 100 feet upon dressed timber and 2s. upon rough timber coming into New Zealand. Why should we allow their timber to come in and compete with ours, and prohibit our timber from going there? We should tax them upon the same principle that they tax us, and we should tax New South Wales in the same way. They charge us 1s. for rough timber and 2s. for dressed timber, and why should we not bring New South Wales to her bearings; why should we stand by? In the Wide Bay districts there are mills idle, and there will very soon be others, on account of the quantity of timber coming into the colony—not on account of the royalty. Before the royalty laws were framed the mills were standing idle, because the yards were filled with foreign timber. That was the cause, and not the royalty at all. Let a tax be put on that timber which is coming into the country, and the mills now standing idle will soon be at work, and the Government will receive a considerable revenue from licenses and royalties under these regulations. I wish now to say a word or two about the import duty on timber in some of the southern colonies. In South Australia the charge on rough or planed boards is 1s. 6d. per 100 feet, and on skirting, moulding, etc., 1s. 6d. per 100 lineal feet. In Victoria there is an *ad valorem* duty of 25 per cent. on “woodware.” The Victorian people, however, come into this colony and take our timber away, paying only 2s. per 100 feet. That is all the benefit we receive from them. Yet they charge 25 per cent. on “woodware.” Then why should we not do with them that which they do with us? Another point worthy of attention which has been touched upon during the debate is the manner in which timber-getters throw the logs they have felled into creeks or rivers. This was referred to by the member for Logan. It is very unfortunate, I think, that timber-getters should put their timber there. I know it is frequently done on the Mary River. At the present time there are hundreds of logs lying in that river not worth one penny per 100 feet, because it is blue and unfit for any purpose whatever. It is well known that pine becomes blue if left in water for any length of time after it has been felled. But timber-getters continue to do this kind of thing, and they can afford to lose 200 or 300 logs occasionally. I object to any timber being thrown into any river or creek above tidal water in the manner it has been up to the present time. It is for the benefit of the timber industry and the whole colony that the destruction of timber I have referred to should be prevented. Another matter that has been spoken about is the appointment of rangers. In

my opinion we should have active strapping young men for that position. We do not want a lot of sneaks going all round the country to see whether they can find anyone against whom they can inform. The clause in the regulations dealing with this subject should, I think, be abolished. I notice that an analogy has been drawn between the position of miners and timber-getters. Well, I will compare the two cases. A timber-getter goes into a forest, he fells his trees and crosscuts them, and he knows within a trifle what those trees are worth. But it is different with the miner. He pays an annual rent of so much per acre for the land on which he works; he sinks a deep shaft and he may strike a reef or he may not, and if he strikes one he does not know what is in it. The timber-getter, however, has a sure and certain knowledge with regard to the value of his work.

Mr. STEVENS: No!

Mr. SMYTH: The member for Logan says “No.” Well, perhaps it is not so certain with regard to the logs the timber-getter throws into the river in the way described by the hon. gentleman.

Mr. STEVENS said: I must explain to the hon. gentleman what I said on the subject. I cannot allow what I stated to be misrepresented, even in a joke—it is rather too serious a matter for that. I said that after the timber-getter felled his trees possibly he might not find a road open to take them away, or he might not have feed for his teams, and the logs would remain on the ground until the time had expired which was allowed by the Act for the removal of the timber. I did not mean anything I said in connection with mining to be construed into a reflection on the miners, and I do not think the hon. gentleman ought to try to score a point against the timber-getter in defending the miner.

Mr. SMYTH: This is not the place to defend the timber-getter. I look upon that class of men as among the hardest worked people in the colony. I know from my own knowledge that the timber-getters work very hard, and that in many cases the teams of horses and bullocks are not owned by them, as they are all mortgaged. Some comparison has been drawn between the price of timber now and what it was a few years ago, and the difference was stated, I believe, to be about 4s. But the price of logs then was 3s. or 4s. per 100 feet, whereas now it is 7s. or 7s. 6d., and much of the timber has to be drawn from long distances. I know an instance where timber is drawn by teams over a distance of 26 miles, so that it is the difference in the price of log-timber that has enhanced the value of sawn timber. There is one clause that has been unfavourably commented upon by certain hon. members. That is clause 37, which provides that “no special license will be renewed unless the holder has paid during the preceding year a sum of not less than £50 as royalty in respect of timber cut in the area specified in the license.” Under this clause, supposing a person having a couple of teams had one of these special licenses, and we had a very dry season such as we have experienced lately, and that he could not work his bullocks in order that he might cut and remove timber to the extent required to pay this royalty of £50, then his license would not be renewed. And such a case might happen. At the present time many mills are almost stopped on account of the proprietors not being able to get their timber drawn, owing to the inability of the timber-getters to work their bullocks because of the drought. I think it is a rather stringent provision that the amount specified should be paid within twelve months, because it might happen that, either on account of extreme

wet or dry weather, a licensee would not be able to comply with the conditions. I certainly am of opinion that the amount might be reduced to £20. There is another thing that has been referred to, and that is the license fee that carriers have to pay. Every man drawing timber has to pay a license to the Government. Now, when the divisional boards were formed it was generally expected that they would receive the license fees. The Government charged for the license originally in order that the carriers might contribute something to the maintenance of the roads, which were then kept in repair by the central authority; and when the divisional boards took over those roads it was only fair that they should have any license fees paid by the carriers. The Premier made some kind of promise last session, when talking about amendments in connection with the Divisional Boards Act, that the boards should have those fees, but I found a short time ago before I left Gympie that carriers were still paying the Government for their licenses. If this question goes to a vote I shall not vote against the royalty being done away with, because I think from what has been said by the Minister for Lands and his colleagues that the Government will see their way to apply the money derived from that source in a way that will be for the benefit of the timber-getters, and also to put a tax on timber coming into the colony. By these means the mills now standing idle in the colony will be enabled to continue working, and the result will be an increase in the revenue received by the Treasury from the timber trade.

Mr. SHERIDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—Coming from a timber district, as I do, and being a representative of a town where timber-getting is really the chief industry, I think it my duty to say a few words on this subject. I may say, sir, that so far as the first set of regulations were concerned, had they been brought forward in the form in which I saw them I certainly would have deemed it my duty to my constituents and to the country to vote against them, but they have been very much modified, as shown by the regulations which are now before the House; and when the people get accustomed to these regulations—which I grant are very difficult to frame and introduce—they will be found to work very well. Still, they admit of improvement, and I have no doubt that that improvement will take place when it is seen how the regulations work and where amendment is necessary. I hold in my pocket a telegram which I have just now received, in which some rather impracticable portions of the regulations are referred to, and that telegram I shall deem it my duty to place in the hands of the Minister for Lands, as being the fittest person to deal with the subject. In the discussion on this matter during the evening, some very important circumstances which surround it were touched upon, and the first was the duty on cedar. I remember when it was proposed to fix the duty at 12s. it was received with a great deal of pleasure in Maryborough, because it was looked upon as the means of establishing various industries there; that instead of sending away this valuable commodity it would be cut up, and sash and door factories and other industries connected with it would be established, and therefore it would be of very great use to the community. I was sorry at the time it was reduced from 12s. to 2s., and I would be very glad indeed if it was increased to 12s. again, as it is a valuable timber and is very likely to be run out—as we shall in time exhaust the quantity and have to go to places where it is very difficult to obtain it. I should, therefore, be very glad that so much protection should be given to the country as to have the duty of 12s. per 100 feet put on again. Another matter of great importance has been

slightly touched upon, and that is forest conservancy. I have no doubt, from what I have seen myself, that a vast quantity of valuable timber in this country has been wasted—has been cut down and left to rot at the stump. Instead, however, of this being a great facility, or in fact any facility at all, to the farmer, I hold it has been a great impediment to him. The leaving of these stumps and branches and the falling of a few pine or cedar trees in the scrubs and leaving the debris around, and the consequent growth of brushwood and underwood which takes place in these scrubs where partial clearings have been made, instead of being a benefit has been a hindrance to the farmer, and I am sure any practical farmer in this House hearing me speak in this way will agree with me. At the same time, I know the timber-getter has been of great use as a pioneer, and he has discovered many valuable scrubs which by-and-by will turn out exceedingly useful for agricultural farms. I hope the Government will see their way clear to appoint a commissioner of woods and forests in this colony. No more useful appointment than that could be made. Such an officer could take charge of all these Timber Regulations and of the Crown lands rangers and see that our valuable timber was protected. A great deal could be done by planting out and thinning out the multitude of small pine and cedar trees that grow in the scrubs. I have seen them growing as thick as a field of wheat or barley in some of the scrubs. I am sure, if suitable persons were appointed to thin them out and let the best grow, they would be conserving very valuable timber indeed. With regard to a few words that fell from the hon. member for Logan, who spoke of men having climbed great mountains at the risk of their lives, and there discovered a few pine trees and cut them down, and were not able to find any road to take them out; all I can say is that the men who did so must have been possessed of very little wisdom, inasmuch as they should see first that they had a road to get the timber out before they destroyed valuable trees. As it is very likely these regulations will pass in their integrity, I do hope that the Colonial Treasurer will see his way clear to put an import duty on timber which may be imported from the other colonies. I see no reason whatever why New Zealand should charge a very high import duty on timber, and why timber from New Zealand imported here should only have a very moderate *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. placed upon it. I have been in New Zealand, and have seen the grand forests there, and I know that there is no difficulty in getting the timber to water, and for that reason the timber-getters there can afford to undersell those engaged in the industry in this colony to a great extent; and we know that every day increases the difficulty of getting timber out of the scrubs here. I have little more to say on the subject. The matter has been pretty well threshed out, and there are probably a good many other members who wish to speak upon the subject, and who may perhaps bring it before the House in a better form than I have done. I hope the Colonial Treasurer, as I said, will see his way towards putting on this import duty, so that matters may be equalised; and that, if a royalty is charged, an equivalent import duty may be placed upon timber coming into this colony, and thus the matter will be balanced in a fair and equitable manner.

Mr. PALMER said: Perhaps it may be thought that I have no hand in this debate, seeing that there is no timber industry in the district which I represent. I dissent from that opinion, however, because I think that anything

that comes before this House is a subject in which I should interest myself; and further, the district which I represent is likely to become a very large consumer of timber, and for that reason alone I may be allowed to take an interest in this subject. The place I represent will certainly be one of the most extensive ports for shipping timber to the other parts of Queensland. I have listened to the arguments used on the other side of the House with regard to the import duty on timber. I hold in my hand a petition, to which are attached 852 signatures, which was presented to this House by certain persons representing that industry. The reasons they give why this tax should be imposed are various. The 3rd paragraph states that it should be imposed because other colonies impose a tax on the importation of timber. They except Victoria and South Australia, because they are sparsely timbered countries and wish to encourage the import of timber. I may say that there are few who know Queensland better than I do, and I think I am safe in saying that Queensland may also be reckoned, with South Australia and Victoria, as a sparsely timbered country, taking into consideration the immense extent of the colony and the great amount of open downs and large plains. The timbered part consists merely of a belt of country along the eastern coast. That must also be the opinion of the Minister for Works, who issued a regulation to the effect that no sleepers obtained in the neighbourhood were to be used on the Cooktown railway. Thousands were taken from Maryborough to carry out the line from Cooktown, where, if they had looked about the country, they might have found a great deal of timber that would have been useful for that purpose. So it is very evident that the Railway Department had an idea there was very little timber in the northern part of the colony. The arguments used by the hon. member for Gympie seemed to be very confused. He began by extolling the advantages possessed by New Zealand for shipping timber, mentioning the size of the timber and the facility for getting it to the ports. He then enumerated our disadvantages—the scattered timber and the difficulty of getting it to port; and then he wished to equalise the relations between the two colonies by means of an import tax. That is an argument used, regardless of the immense numbers of working men desirous of building cottages on the hundreds of allotments which have been sold during the last few years, and quite regardless of other districts in the North, the district which I represent in particular. If this industry, which some hon. members admit is a failing industry, cannot be carried on without a protective duty, it will never be carried on with one. The imposition of an import duty will never provide for the growth of a young generation of trees—it will only encourage timber-getters to go farther out for their timber. The colony, as a whole, is very much against the imposition of a tax on the timber trade, and the Minister for Lands was not far out when he said that the cause of the failure of the industry in Maryborough was owing to the fact that the Northern parts, on which the success of the Maryborough trade depended, had been closed to its timber, and that the industry itself was overdone. I think the member for Gympie showed a great deal of foresight when he suggested that a royalty should be given for planting trees for future use. The necessity for taking some decisive steps for conserving this industry has been impressed upon me several times; and the debate which has taken place in connection with these regulations shows the importance of the subject. In a letter I received from the Conservator of Forests in

Adelaide, he mentions the Woods and Forests Act brought in for the purpose of conserving the forests there, and says in the course of his letter:—

“There are two causes which have contributed in no small degree to the popularity of the department, and these are:—1st. We give trees away gratuitously every year (about 200,000 plants at a cost of £300) to farmers, &c.; and 2nd, our revenue just about meets our expenditure. For instance, since its organisation the department has expended £46,723 10s. 4d. (in eight years), and received as revenue £44,716 18s. 4d.; thus showing that it has only cost £2,006 12s., while the value of its permanent improvements I estimate at £100,000.”

So that even as a speculation it would pay the department to take the matter up in earnest. I have read the regulations through; but whether it is owing to want of intelligence, or what it is, I am not able to understand them. No one seems to object to the imposition of a royalty—it is more the manner than the matter that is the cause of the trouble. The better plan would be to charge so much per log instead of by measurement, as there seem to be differences in the calculations of seller and buyer. If that plan were adopted there would be no inducement to the timber-getter to go too close to the size stated in the regulations, and the youngest timber would be spared for the welfare of the trade. The difference between measurement and weight is enormous. At Bundaberg, Maryborough, and some of the Northern ports, the charge for freight has been altered from measurement to weight without any notice to the timber-getters, who would otherwise have taken care to have their timber drier before delivery. That regulation, however, is not imposed in Gympie, Brisbane, or Ipswich. The same argument could be used with regard to the freight of bullocks carried by train being charged according to weight instead of number. I have not approached this subject ignorantly, Mr. Speaker, but have conversed with several persons of experience in the timber trade. One of the reasons against the present regulations—and a very plausible one—is the charge of £5 per mile for a renewal, and the fact that a royalty of £50 must have been paid the preceding year; whereas there is no definite area on which it has to be spent. A person in a small way may not be able to spend £50 on it; while such an expenditure would hardly be felt by a man doing a large trade. I have been astonished at the amount of money spent on bridges and roads in the scrubs, to get at the timber in blocks at a distance from public roads; and I believe that if the Minister for Lands will reduce the £50 royalty, in respect of the timber cut in the areas specified, he will relieve those who hold timber licenses to a very great extent. I should have liked the regulations to be put in a more comprehensive way; they are certainly very mixed. Hon. members might have got an idea of meeting this difficulty from the report of the Lands Department, if it had been before us. The report for 1883 contained extracts from the reports of all the land commissioners in the timber districts, which threw a very interesting light on the condition of this industry. As to the proposed tax on timber, I very much object to any duty being imposed, for the simple reason that it is only putting off the evil day for this very large industry. If the industry cannot exist without that, it is only a matter of time before it would require further taxes to prop it up. The Lands Department should exert itself to provide for the wants of the trade in future years, instead of hampering it now by regulations which I am sure are very harassing to those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. These are the men who suffer, and I fear the regulations will interfere with their calling in a very great degree.

Mr. BAILEY said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the hon. member for Burke has expressed the opinion of three-fourths of the members of this House—that these regulations are certainly to some extent faulty, but are not so bad that we should be called upon to rescind them altogether. That is really the motion before the House—nothing more or less than a vote of censure on the Government. We were also told by an hon. member on that side of the House that regulations are necessary, and that, as far as he knows, many of these regulations are good enough. An hon. member, I noticed, spoke about the hardship likely to arise from the measurement of timber by the Crown officers. I may tell the hon. member that the timber-getters themselves, to a great extent, excused the first regulations because they would have their timber measured by a Government, and therefore independent, official. It has been a grievance among them for years that they thought, rightly or wrongly, that they were cheated in the measurement of their timber; and they hailed with delight the prospect of having an independent official to give them the measurements. That was the main feature in the regulations that saved them; because, of course, no body of men like to submit themselves to a new tax unless they have a *quid pro quo*; and this was the *quid pro quo*. The hon. member for Maryborough and also the hon. member for Burke made some remarks about the conservation of forests, and at the same time the hon. member for Burke mentioned the fact that a number of railway sleepers were sent from the Wide Bay district up north. I may say that I cannot imagine a system more destructive to the forests than the system we have had of getting railway sleepers. The finest and straightest young trees are cut down—trees that will give just two or four railway sleepers—the trees that would give fine timber in a few years. If the Government wish to conserve the forests, here is an opportunity for them to begin. They have been the greatest sinners in this respect. Now, sir, about this regulation business. I hope the time will come when this House will declare that no Minister and no Government shall have the power to make regulations imposing taxes on the people without the consent of Parliament. I certainly take a very broad view of that question. I strongly object to any man or body of men, except Parliament, levying a tax on any other man or body of men. I hope the day will come when the Parliament will assert its authority and prevent any such regulations being made.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—Most of the hon. members on the other side have contended that the chief objection to these regulations was that the mill-owners and not the timber-getters were taxed, and that the difficulty could be readily arranged by imposing import duties. Now, in neither of these opinions do I think they are correct. The hon. member for Wide Bay (Mr. Mellor) stated that most of the timber-getters were satisfied that the regulations were just. Now, I can bear out the statement of the hon. member for Logan that that is not the case. I was in his constituency the other day, and if the members of the Ministry were in the locality where the timber-getters wish them, their bitterest enemies could not wish them in a warmer place. These regulations are so bristling with absurdities that it is difficult to know where to begin to criticise them. I shall refer to one clause—clause 37. The objection urged by the Premier against that clause has not been fairly met by the Ministers.

Mr. MELLOR: Urged by the Premier?

Mr. HAMILTON: I mean the gentleman who should be the Premier. The clause says—

“No special license will be renewed unless the holder has paid during the preceding year a sum of not less than £50 as royalty.”

The leader of the Opposition showed that in order to pay that royalty the licensee would have to cut 400,000 feet of hardwood. The hon. member asserted that in no 640-acre block in the colony—and, of course, no lease could contain more than 640 acres—does there exist that amount of hardwood. Then, the Minister for Lands stated that the assertion of the leader of the Opposition was not correct—that there were very many 640-acre blocks containing more than 400,000 feet of pine. The leader of the Opposition spoke of hardwood. The opinion of experts is that you will hardly find a place in the colony where, in a 640-acre block, you will get 200,000 feet of hardwood. According to this clause a man has to cut just double the amount of hardwood that can possibly exist on any block to obtain a renewal of the license for that block. This clause is oppressive to the poor man. Very frequently a selector takes up a timber selection alongside his agricultural selection, and when there is no work to do on the farmstead he ekes out a livelihood by taking timber off the other selection, under a timber license. He will probably be unable to take off more than 60,000 or 70,000 feet a year, and if he is prevented by want of capital from employing men he is unable to take off the amount required by the regulation, and at the end of the year he will have to forfeit his license. On that ground, I certainly think a regulation of this kind is oppressive. Under the former regulations the royalty proposed was 1s. per 100 feet on pine, and 6d. on hardwood. It was subsequently reduced to 6d. on pine and 3d. on hardwood; but while that was done by one department, it was practically reimposed by another department by charging carriage of timber by rail by weight instead of by measurement. The new method I consider to be unfair. At one time timber may be taken with the sap, or it may have been lying on the ground for a length of time, and the weight in each case would be different. Again, if logs of timber lie exposed to a shower of rain they will increase in weight by 10, 20, or 25 per cent. That is an unfair way of taxing the owners of timber. The leader of the Opposition, in referring to this subject, endeavoured to adapt his argument to the capacity of the Minister for Lands, who appeared not to understand him, by showing some tables. He lost those tables; but since that time I have had a consultation with a member of Parliament who has an interest in timber, and from what he told me I have made some calculations with respect to the comparative charges on timber that came to one mill at Maryborough.

The Hon. B. B. MORETON: Whose mill?

Mr. HAMILTON: Messrs. Wilson and Company. During three days of the week ending July 10th, forty-two logs of pine were taken to that mill, weighing 32 tons under the old system and 46 tons under the new system, making a difference of 14 tons. During the same three days, thirty logs of hardwood were taken to the mill, weighing 57 tons under the old system and 71 tons under the new system, a difference of 14 tons. A mixed lot of thirteen logs of pine and hardwood, which would have weighed 17 tons 18 cwt. under the old system, weighed 21 tons 17 cwt. under the new system—or a difference of 3 tons 19 cwt. The total difference in the whole of these lots amounted to nearly 31 tons 16 cwt., which, at the rate of 2d. per mile per ton for thirty miles—the average distance the logs have to be carried by rail—

amounts to about £8. I will now give you the cost of carriage under the new system of one truck of pine taken from this mill. Under the new system it would have been £4 4s. 8d.; under the old system it was £2 19s. 2d. The cost of carriage under the new system of a truck of hardwood is £3 8s. 9d.; under the old system it would have been £3 2s. 6d. The average difference between the two systems is about 16s. a ton; and as the number of trucks every week is about sixty-four, it means a difference of £19 4s., or, in other words, that additional taxation is imposed on the timber-getters there to the amount of £1,000 a year. I heard the Minister for Lands say this afternoon that that tax fell on the mill-owner and not on the timber-getter, but he makes a mistake in saying so, for I am informed that the mill-owners pay the timber-getters when the timber is delivered at the mill. The hon. member for Burke reflected upon the Government for not having used the timbers of the North for railway sleepers in the Cook district. It is only fair for me to say that I cannot blame the Chief Engineer for failing to use the bloodwood in the vicinity of Cooktown for the first section of the railway, because it is considered that particular timber when grown in the south of Queensland will not stand exposure, and is not therefore a reliable wood for sleepers. It would have been rather risky to have made that experiment only to find out that it was not suitable for the purpose. But further north, in the Cook district, the bloodwood timber will be eminently suitable for sleepers. The Chief Engineer is now, I believe, making an experiment with it, and he has some 5,000 sleepers down in the first section. No doubt he will be able shortly to ascertain whether it will answer his purpose or not. If so, the Minister will no doubt take the matter into consideration, and order it to be used, for of course it will reduce the cost of the railway considerably. The hon. member for Gympie, in referring to the desirability of placing an import duty on timber, spoke, as he or any other mill-owner would, in his own interests.

Mr. SMYTH: We do not send any timber away.

Mr. HAMILTON: For some years past timber has been getting higher and higher in price, and this outside competition is the only thing that protects the public. But for that outside competition, the timber merchants might combine to make prices higher still. But so long as we have these cargoes of timber coming in from New Zealand and North America that cannot be done. The man who suffers under the regulations here is the timber-getter. He has now to pay for carriage, he has to pay the royalty, and of course the mill-owners get all they can out of him. I think that the Government should not harass this industry in its present depressed state, not only by absurd regulations, but by placing an embargo upon the use of Queensland timber in public works. I believe it is a fact that they are doing so. I have heard, not directly but indirectly, from Mr. Petrie, who is fulfilling some contract for the Government—erecting some building—that he is not allowed to use anything but Oregon pine, although he says that we have timbers in the colony equal if not better than Oregon pine for such purposes; and we all know that there is no greater authority on timber than Mr. Petrie. Then, again, they are using tallow-wood when we have such fine woods as ironbark and spotted gum in the colony, which are equally suitable for the purpose. Indeed, it is the opinion of some people that the only difference between spotted gum and tallow-wood is in the name—that it is called spotted gum in Queensland and tallow-wood in New South Wales.

Mr. ANNEAR said: Mr. Speaker,—I was very glad to hear the other day that the Government had withdrawn the first regulations issued after the passing of the Land Act; and I thoroughly agree with the speech the hon. the leader of the Opposition made at Bundaberg, in which he stated that not half-a-dozen members of this House ever thought when the Land Bill was going through that any regulations of that kind would be introduced. Therefore I am very glad to see that the Government have withdrawn them, and I thoroughly agree with the new regulations that have been introduced. The importation of timber into this colony has arisen from various causes, sir, and from none more than from the action of those who have been engaged in the industry—the sawmillers of Queensland—who have been making large fortunes; in fact, who may be called the wealthy people of this colony in the same way as the great county people in England are generally considered wealthy. But they were not satisfied, sir, and perhaps it will appear very hard for me to say it, but I cannot help saying that the sawmillers of the constituency I represent have been very grasping indeed. What is the case, sir? Not very long ago seven or eight gentlemen met in the Royal Hotel, Maryborough, and said, "We are the rulers of the position; we have the thing in our own hands, and we intend to put such a price on timber as we think fit; and everyone shall pay it, not only in Maryborough, but throughout the colony"; and they issued regulations to that effect. And, sir, they were not satisfied with having them in writing, but they got them printed in large print, and had them stuck upon the wall, saying, "This is what you shall pay us for timber." What has been the result, Mr. Speaker? The hon. member for Rockhampton, Mr. Ferguson, will bear me out when I state that a large public meeting was held in that town, at which they decided to send a gentleman down to New Zealand for timber. Another large meeting was held in Townsville, when it was decided to send a gentleman to America. Hence, Mr. Speaker, has come about the large importations of timber into this colony. I maintain, sir, that it was the want of business capacity and foresight on the part of those people that has caused timber to be brought here from New Zealand and America. The people of Rockhampton were not going to be taxed for the benefit of half-a-dozen or eight people in Maryborough. I maintain this, Mr. Speaker—that in the town of Maryborough the men who work at the sawmills work the longest hours and receive the smallest wages of any men employed in any industry in this colony. Therefore, I say I have no sympathy with those gentlemen who held that meeting in the Royal Hotel, Maryborough, and said, "We are masters of the situation." What has been the result, sir? Speaking for myself, I can say that we had to send out of Maryborough to get timber to do work in Maryborough, because the sawmillers in Sydney would sell cheaper at that time than they would in Maryborough. Now, sir, two wrongs do not make a right, and I hope those gentlemen have seen the folly of what they did at that time, because I was in Rockhampton a few weeks ago, and there you may see vessels coming from New Zealand loaded with timber. If you look at the *Queenslander* every week, or at the *Courier*, or other newspapers, you will see that ships are coming from America to Townsville, and also to Rockhampton, with timber. That has been the result, sir, of their action. There is some talk about an import duty, but I do not believe in taxing the people of this colony for the sake of about twenty people who own sawmills.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ANNEAR : I do not, sir ; and if my seat should rest upon my giving a vote whether there shall be an import duty or not my vote shall be given that there shall not be such a tax upon the majority—a large majority—of the people of this colony, in order to benefit about a dozen people who wish to impose, and did impose, a tax that was unjust at the time it was imposed. Now, Mr. Speaker, I come to the hon. the Minister for Works. That hon. gentleman said this evening that he did not know that such an impost existed as the hon. the leader of the Opposition has referred to. Well, the hon. member for Gympie was the first to bring it under my notice ; but I have observed this, sir—that it takes a long time for any injustice that may exist in Maryborough to reach Brisbane—a very long time indeed. If it had been the case of a weighbridge in Ipswich or Toowoomba, we should have heard such a cry and have seen so many people round the Minister's office that it would not be a letter, but a telegram, sir, would be sent immediately to revert to the old charge. I maintain, sir, that it has been a great injustice to the sawmillers of Maryborough that they should have to pay so much more than is paid by the sawmillers of Ipswich and other places, and I hope the hon. gentleman will see his way to do justice to Maryborough, because at present it reaches there very slowly indeed. I was very glad to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Wide Bay (Mr. Bailey) in reference to sleepers. The Government, sir, have been the means of destroying more good timber in this colony than any private individual has ever done. The specification for sleepers at the present time requires that they shall be 7 feet long, 8 by 4½, clear of sap, half-round, or you can cut them square if you like. One hundred of such sleepers on the average weigh about ten tons, or about two hundredweight to each sleeper. I have heard it stated, and I believe it is true, that the Chief Engineer of the Southern Division has recommended that sawn sleepers shall be used in the duplication of the line from Ipswich to Brisbane. If such is the case, the sleepers will be 7 feet long, 8 by 4½ inches clear, and squared. One hundred of these will weigh seven tons, therefore you will have a better article and, save three tons in weight. I do not think there is any need for me to say any more, sir, but as my hon. colleague has spoken, and representing, as we do, a great timber constituency, I thought it was necessary that I should not give a silent vote on this matter. I entirely agree with the hon. the Minister for Lands that the timber of this colony is an asset of the people, and that there should be a duty levied upon it. I do not see why people who cut timber should not pay for doing so, in the same way as the miner has to pay a license for mining for gold or tin or any other minerals. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I shall support the regulations as they at present exist.

Mr. BLACK said : Mr. Speaker,—I prefer to confine my remarks to a subject with which I am thoroughly conversant, and I am quite prepared to admit that in approaching the subject of the Timber Regulations I am speaking upon a subject the information about which I have gathered chiefly from the remarks that have fallen from members on both sides of the House. I am not otherwise specially versed in the timber business of this colony. I know, as hon. members no doubt also know, that it is one of the great producing interests of the country ; it is an industry that, I think, any Government having the welfare of the country at heart should do all that they possibly can to protect and to conserve. There is no doubt that if we allow our producing industries to go to decay we shall very soon degenerate in the position which this

colony should hold amongst the other colonies. I think that if the House anticipated when the Land Bill was passed last session that the Government were going to make use of the power given to them of imposing timber regulations that would be of an objectionable character, it would very likely have taken some steps to prevent it. I certainly heard, during a visit I have recently made to some of the most important timber districts of the North, that these Timber Regulations were such as would have a very oppressive effect upon those who are chiefly engaged in the business of timber-getting, and I am sure I am somewhat astonished to find the very different opinions held by hon. members upon the other side of the House, who are supposed to be very intimately acquainted with the interests of that business. We have the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, and we have the hon. member for Wide Bay, Mr. Mellor—two gentlemen than whom I do not suppose there are many in this House who are more conversant with this question. As far as I can gather from the speeches which fell from them, they are opposed to these regulations unless accompanied by what I may call a protective duty—an import duty. Again, we have the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, who has just sat down, who is also supposed to understand this question thoroughly. He most emphatically announced his intention of opposing anything approaching protection that may be proposed by the Government in connection with this question. I think myself, Mr. Speaker, that when the Government found the necessity of imposing these Timber Regulations they might have given the House to understand what they really expected to derive from them. I assume that they will impose these Timber Regulations for revenue purposes. The House has had no information whatever from the Minister for Lands, in whose department I believe this comes, or from the Treasurer, whose department will benefit by any increase of revenue that may be derived from this impost. The House has had no information whatever as to whether the revenue to be derived from these somewhat oppressive regulations will be of any benefit whatever, and I think that is a matter upon which the House should have some information. If it can be shown that the revenue is so small that the cost of collection will almost absorb the whole of it, we had better dispense with these regulations, and allow trade to go on under the freetrade principles that it has hitherto. I have every reason to believe that when the division is taken upon this question the support that the leader of the Opposition will get will probably be confined entirely to this side of the House, whereas the hon. gentlemen who have most undoubtedly expressed the most opposite opinions will be found all voting against the cancelling of these regulations ; and I think it is a great pity, Mr. Speaker, although I may be saying what may not be justified by facts, that after we have heard such different opinions expressed upon the subject, we shall find that it will be decided by merely a party vote. I am prepared to admit that I think, in an important question of this sort affecting one of the great producing industries of the colony, there is a great deal to be said in favour of what the hon. member for Gympie and also the hon. member for Wide Bay have said, as regards a certain protective duty. I know that the opinions that I hold upon this subject may be somewhat different from those held by many hon. members in this House ; but I am decidedly of opinion that it might be necessary in a young and growing colony such as we have here that protective duties for the encouragement

of our manufactures should be occasionally imposed. And although I have always announced myself in the main a freetrader, still I do believe there are exceptions; and above all things I would, as far as practicable, in order to get our manufactures established, insist upon what I may call "fair trade." I do not believe in protection to such an extent as will affect the majority of the inhabitants of the colony; but I believe that the majority of the inhabitants of the colony would be quite prepared to pay a small addition in the shape of taxation for the purpose of seeing manufactures established for the rising generation, that otherwise could not be expected to be established. So far, Mr. Speaker, if it can be shown that by putting on a small protective duty to encourage the establishment of manufactures in connection with our saw-mills it will have a beneficial effect, I believe that the Government would be perfectly justified, and would get the support of every member of this House and a very large proportion of the colony, if they were to take the bold step of declaring once for all whether they wish to see the manufacturing industries of the colony firmly established or not. I think it is a great pity that the action of the Government since they have come into office has had an undoubtedly discouraging effect upon our manufacturing industries. It appears to me that they are to a very great extent just drifting with the times. If bad times come on they will undoubtedly blame Providence for it, whereas I think that a powerful Government, as they most certainly are, should chalk out a bolder course of their own, and point out how the industries of the colony are likely to be fostered, instead of waiting to see if the elements will assist them in order that they may take credit for any turn in the tide. We have certainly got this to contemplate since the Government came into office, and I think it is a great pity that they did not do something in order to remedy the distrust with which our producing industries are surrounded. The pastoral industry of the colony is undoubtedly in a depressed state, and the depressed state of the timber industry is undoubtedly simultaneous with the depressed state of the agricultural industry. As long as the agricultural industry of the colony was prospering, so long the timber trade thrived; and we no sooner see the former depressed than the same thing is apparent in the latter. I hope the leader of the Opposition will bring this matter to a division. I shall support the motion of the hon. gentleman, because I believe the Government are failing in a duty which they ought to perform. It is undoubtedly their duty to decide once for all whether they will indorse the views of the members for Gympie and Wide Bay, and whether, in order to protect this industry, which is one of the best producing industries in the colony, they will impose a reasonable duty on the importation of foreign timber.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—For a thorough-going oppositionist commend me to the hon. member for Mackay, and for a thorough-going party man also commend me to the hon. member for Mackay. I do not think, sir, that that hon. gentleman has ever been known to give a vote against the party with which he is associated since he has had a seat in this House. So that I think it does not—or perhaps it does—come with very good grace from that hon. member that he should tell us to-night that when the vote is taken on this motion it will certainly be a party vote. I have very little doubt myself but that it will be a party vote, that no matter what expression of opinion there has been from members on this side of the House they will be found voting the right

way; that they will vote with the leader of their party, and not pass a vote of censure on the Government at the dictum of the leader of the Opposition. For myself, like the hon. member for Mackay, I have listened very attentively to this debate, and I must say with him, I know very little about the question. Like him, too, I have not learned very much from listening to the discussion. The members on this side of the House do not object to the regulations. They say, "Oh, keep the regulations but give us an import duty; we are perfectly satisfied with the regulations, only give us an import duty on timber." Well, I think we might as well do without the import duty and do away with the regulations. I really cannot see myself why we should go and impose regulations that need an import duty to counteract their influence. That is the way I look at it. In reference to this important matter of import duties, I hold pretty much the same opinions as those expressed by the hon. member for Mackay. I do think that in a young colony like this the industries of the country need fostering. How far I am disposed to go in this matter I can hardly say just now. But what I want to point out is this: that if the timber-getters, or rather, the sawmillers, as they have been called by some hon. members, are to be protected to the extent of 1s. 6d. or 2s. per 100 feet, other industries have a right to be protected also. We have a very large quantity of woodwork imported into the colony. Nearly all the timbers used for the manufacture of carriages and buggies is admitted into the country at a very low rate—I think they come in at 5 per cent. That is not at all a sufficient duty for articles of that kind to pay. Then, again, take the matter of machinery. Agricultural machinery and many other kinds of machinery are admitted into this colony duty free. Now I think, if the Treasurer is to take this matter of an import duty on timber into consideration, he should also take into his most serious consideration the question whether the time has not arrived when most articles of machinery which can really be made in the colony now should not be protected likewise. I have lately had some conversation with foundry people upon this subject, and I know that they do not themselves desire anything in the shape of a duty which might be termed a "protective" duty. They would be satisfied—perfectly satisfied—if machinery had an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. on it, but they think, and I think with them, and I believe most hon. members of this House will also think with them, that it is very rough upon them that articles which they can manufacture here, and manufacture well, should be brought in from the old country and foreign countries without paying any duty at all. I have just a word to say about the question of freight upon log timber to the mills on the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway. Exception has been taken by the mill-owners to recent action of the Railway Department on the matter, and I think they have some justice on their side; but I am informed that, as yet, no complaint has really been made by them to the Railway Department upon the subject. I understood the Minister for Works to say that across the table just now. If that is the case I do not think a grievance of that sort should have been ventilated in the House before the department has had time to look into the matter and ascertain whether it can be adjusted. Let us see, further, how this matter has come about. As I understand it, accounts for the freight of timber were rendered to these sawmill proprietors every month, and at the end of the month there were often disputes between the sawmill people and the railway authorities as to the measurement; the railway authorities then very naturally said,

"Instead of measuring the timber we will weigh it, and will charge you 2d. per ton per mile." They have weighed it since then and the result has been that the sawmill proprietors have had to pay more for the carriage of their timber than they did before; for this reason, that fifty cubic feet of pine were sent down as weighing a ton, but it turns out that fifty cubic feet really weigh more than a ton. Twenty-five cubic feet of hardwood were estimated to weigh a ton, but in this case also it turns out that the measurement really weighs more than a ton, so that hitherto the sawmill-owners have been getting an advantage in that respect, and if they had only been conscientious in the measurement of their timber the matter would have remained the same up to the present time. But as disputes constantly arose as to the measurements, the department very naturally said they would weigh the timber, and now the mill-owners are suffering the consequence. I would, however, advise the department to see if they cannot alter the rate to what it was before.

Mr. SALKELD said: I should like to say a few words on this matter, because I have had some little experience in it. It is very amusing to hear the different opinions expressed by hon. members, and it is very easy to find fault with the Timber Regulations, but I have not heard any hon. member suggest what should be substituted for them. In what way are we to deal with the timber on Crown lands now that we have passed a Land Act which involves the principle of leasing, unless we have regulations? We know what became of the timber under the old Act—the selector got the land and his first thought was to use up the timber; but under the new Act large areas of land with valuable timber thereon will very likely be leased, and no fee-simple will be granted. What are we to do with the timber? Are we going to allow the first comer to cut it down? Of course timber regulations are absolutely necessary. Some hon. members seemed to make a great deal of the fact that this House, when it passed the Land Act, never contemplated royalties being imposed. Well, speaking for myself, that was one of the first things that crossed my mind, and I mentioned the matter to the Minister for Lands several times, but I was not prepared to recommend a scheme for his consideration. When the first regulations came out a great outcry was raised by one class of the community—the sawmill proprietors—against them. At that time I belonged to that class, and I was asked to join in public meetings and deputations to influence the Government to modify or do away with the royalty. In considering the matter I could not see that I could join them, because I could not gainsay the fact that the State was entitled to some consideration for the timber on Crown lands, and I could not see that the royalty was too high in face of the fact that numbers of timber-getters paid for timber which was cut from private lands, and had to pay a great deal more than the Government demanded. I could not urge the Government to do away with the royalty, but they have since reduced it by one-half. Perhaps it may be wise not to be too severe on the timber-getters, and I think the regulations should not be unnecessarily harassing, but everyone must see that the regulations have been framed with great care with regard to that point. They provide that a person shall get a license to cut timber, and the license has been reduced to a nominal fee. When a certain quantity has been cut, a permit to remove it has to be obtained to take the timber to a railway station, a rafting-ground, or a sawmill. The timber is taken to any of these three places, and the man who actually gets it has not to pay away a penny by way of royalty.

A good deal of the timber I know is purchased at different railway stations, and I cannot see what fairer method can be adopted than the one which has been proposed. If it can be shown by actual experience that the regulations are harsh, of course they will be altered, as they are not like the laws of the Medes and Persians, and any grievance can be attended to. Some hon. gentlemen who have spoken compared the timber-getters with gold-miners; and they could not see any difference between them. I can see a very material difference. The gold-miner has to search for his gold in various localities; he has to spend large sums of money in prospecting, and if he does happen to drop on a reef it may not be a payable one. That is not the timber-getter's experience; the timber is all on the surface, and he has no difficulty in finding it. In listening to the hon. member for Logan, the idea struck me that that hon. member thought the timber-getter came from the clouds, and dropped on the top of a very high mountain, where he felled a few pine-trees, and after having felled them he found there was no road fit to get them out; but I think that in nine cases out of ten the timber-getters know exactly what sort of roads they have to deal with, for they gain an excellent knowledge of the country and roads when searching for the timber. I could myself find numbers of places where there is any amount of timber, but the difficulty is in finding a road through which it can be dragged out. I was surprised to hear the hon. member for Maryborough come out in such an outspoken manner, seeing that he comes from the headquarters of these timber-getters, who are most anxious to see an import duty imposed. I will say nothing now about an import duty, because the question is not before the House; but I would express an opinion that that is a matter which will require very grave consideration indeed. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Annear) criticised the sawmill proprietors in Maryborough very severely, and I think he was not a bit too hard on them. I believe that the fact of a large amount of foreign timber being imported into Queensland has been brought about by the great sawmill proprietors at Maryborough and other parts of the colony. The hon. member spoke about a league being formed in Maryborough, and I can add my experience that in Brisbane a compact has been entered into by the sawmill proprietors to increase the price of timber, and they have bound themselves not to sell it at one fraction less than the price they have decided upon. I say that that is an unjust and unwise thing to do. I can state that I have it, on what I believe to be the very best authority, that the sawmill proprietors adhere to their agreement, so far as the public generally are concerned, but when a contractor buys his timber the transaction is closed, and then what happens? One sawmill proprietor made a present of the shingles for a house that was being built; and in another case, after a man had paid his account, he got a refund of £20. That shows that it was a compact for an improper purpose, and to raise the price of timber above a fair price. Action of that kind, like all other forced measures of the kind, brings its own retribution. No men who band together to make larger profits than are fair and reasonable—though I would not blame them for making large profits in the open markets; when they combine to sell at a higher price than they can well afford to sell at they will be found to be underselling one another and evading their own regulations. The Government have to remember that there are other people in the colony besides sawmill proprietors. There are large numbers of people who get their living in

the building trade, and a large number depending upon those men, and their prosperity depends upon the prosperity of the building trade. It is quite a mistake to suppose that everything must bow down to the timber industry, though there is no doubt that it is a very important industry and the Government ought to be very careful not to give it any unnecessary knocks. It may be said that the sawmillers in Queensland cannot compete with the outside millers. I do not believe that for a moment. I believe that instead of acting upon some of the suggestions made to-night there are other directions in which the sawmill proprietors and the Government ought to take action. I believe the Queensland sawmillers will have to go in for improved appliances, not only for cutting the timber but for getting it to market. We are not sufficiently advanced with the people of New Zealand and America in this direction. The Government have also something to do in this matter. At the present time, strange as it may appear, in this the nineteenth century, we have engineers, assistant engineers, commissioners and deputy commissioners, and we have exactly the same appliances for loading the logs on the railway trucks now as Noah had when he built the ark. This is a matter for very serious consideration by the Railway Department, and I throw it out as a hint. They require to look at matters from a business point of view. That is the department which comes most in contact with the commercial public. They are dependent upon good management in the Railway Department, and it behoves the department not to be behind the times. I approve of the Timber Regulations, and I do not see any reason for disagreeing with them. I think the attempt to bring about a vote of censure upon the Government in this matter was not wise at all, and it would have been far better to criticise the regulations than to attempt to censure the Government.

Mr. JORDAN said: The hon. member has referred to Noah's ark, and I think that in the building of the ark there must have been some such appliances as existed at the time the pyramids of Egypt were built, and the other vast structures of Egypt, of which we know nothing now. I have no doubt the sawmill-owners of Ipswich may be very much before the sawmill-owners of Brisbane in these matters, and can cut their timber with superior appliances and sell it at a cheaper rate than in Brisbane. I think the hon. member for Ipswich made a rather severe attack upon the sawmill-owners in Brisbane, who, he says, laid their heads together to defraud the people by charging an exorbitant price for timber. I believe there was a kind of compact or arrangement come to, of which I know nothing personally, but it was made because the sawmill proprietors found that the trade was overdone, both in Brisbane and in other parts of Queensland, and they were really cutting their own throats by underselling each other; and it was only when they found that they could not exist any longer that they agreed to sell at a fair price. I believe that is the true statement of the case, rather than the one which has been so graphically described by the hon. member for Ipswich. I do not think it just for the hon. member to make the remarks he did, because perhaps the mill-owners about Ipswich did not agree to fall in with the agreement come to by the mill-owners of Brisbane, and I may say that the same remark applies to what has fallen from the hon. member for Maryborough. Though I am a freetrader in principle, I do not think that all the natural productions in a new country like this should be taxed as the Minister for Lands seems to think. I agree to a large extent with what the hon. member for Mackay

has said in his own clever way—in "fair trade"—and that we should encourage native industries. I maintain that the grand industry of the colony has been assisted in this way. We know that the production of wool in this colony—by which the foundation of the colony was laid, and which is the foundation of the wealth of the colony, and is still the greatest industry in this and other colonies—was fostered in this way. When those engaged in it were allowed to have the grass for next to nothing they got their land at 9s. 1d. per square mile, or about three-fourths of a farthing per acre; and in that way the pioneers of that great industry were assisted in these colonies. The timber industry is a very important industry. We have vast quantities of land, with a very large supply of timber, here—much greater than is the case in many of the other colonies—but with this disadvantage, that we have but imperfect means of communication. I think that there should be a desire manifested on the part of the Government to foster this industry; that they should not be prepared to levy a tax upon this industry while they are allowing timber to come in from New Zealand with a mere nominal import duty. Pine in New Zealand can be put on board the vessel at 7s. 6d. per 100 feet; the freight costs about 4s. 6d. per 100 feet; so that it can be landed here at 12s. per 100 feet. It costs us here 7s. 6d. for pine in the log, and the waste amounts to 40 per cent.—that is 3s. more—making 10s. 6d., and it costs from 4s. to 5s. to cut it up and handle it and get it delivered from the mill. It will thus cost altogether only 14s. 6d. per 100 feet; and it is impossible for us to compete with the lumbermen of New Zealand unless there is some kind of protective duty put upon imported timber. Now, as the Government are legislating upon this subject, it should be a question whether they shall take such steps as will allow of the continued existence of the great timber trade in this colony, or whether they shall take no further steps than have been already taken—that is, to put a royalty upon our own timber and allow timber from other places to come in at a nominal duty. The *ad valorem* duty on imported timber is 5 per cent. The cost put on board is 7s. 6d. per 100 feet, and 5 per cent. on that is 4½d.; yet the amended regulations place a duty of 6d. per 100 feet on our own pine and 2s. per 100 feet on cedar. That is not treating the industry fairly; it is not fostering a native industry. I have heard it stated that the timber industry gives employment to a greater number of white men than any other industry in the colony, and I believe the statement is correct. The great number of persons employed are not merely timber-getters, but also men employed in the sawmills; and they do not receive lower wages than any other class of workmen. That statement is incorrect. They receive remunerative wages; they are very well paid, as I could prove very easily. As to special licenses, there is no doubt that persons holding special licenses have abused in times past the privileges conferred by those licenses, and the Minister for Lands wished to avoid that state of things in future. But he has gone too far, and has not acted with the wisdom he would have shown had he taken into his counsel men familiar with the trade. However, in the new regulations some of the most objectionable features of the regulations of the 3rd March are done away with; and the sawmill-owners generally are conditionally prepared to accept them. I think that no royalty should have been imposed at all, while New Zealand timber only pays a duty of 4½d. per 100 feet. Instead of that, there should be such an import duty as would equalise the cost of timber to the sawmill-owner before he sells. New Zealand timber can be bought here for 12s. per 100 feet, and 2s. 6d. per 100 feet would be a fair duty, bringing

the cost up to 14s. 6d. per 100 feet. That would put both on an equal footing. And the importing trade would allow a duty of 2s. 6d., because the profits are large. If the timber-getters here have to pay a royalty while New Zealand timber can be sold here for 12s. per 100 feet, our mills will have to shut up, and then the New Zealand mill-owners will have a monopoly; then the consumer here will have to pay through the nose for his timber. With regard to the leases, which are to be annual, I have heard a suggestion which I think is practicable, and which I think the Minister for Lands would accept. There is a great number of timber reserves in the colony—I am glad to find that the hon. member for Burke has called for a return in connection with these reserves—and on them the timber is locked up. The timber is perishing because it matures and stands till it gradually decays, and no room is left for the growth of young timber; but if it were systematically cut on arriving at maturity, room would be made for the growth of young timber, and the result would be a great benefit to that part of the public estate. Why should not these timber reserves be leased for say five years? The leases should be properly advertised and put up at auction. I have been told by a gentleman who knows probably more than anybody in the colony on this subject, that if the leases were put up at auction they would fetch—five years' leases—from £50 to £250, so that the Government might derive a large income in that way, to the great advantage of timber-getters, sawmill proprietors, and the community at large. Though I am quite prepared to accept these amended regulations, I do think they are rather hard on the timber-getters. It has been said by some hon. members that the royalty will fall on the timber-getters, and that the sawmill-owners are such grasping, unfair men that they will not only mismeasure timber but take every possible advantage they can of the timber-getters. One hon. member has actually gone so far as to say that the timber-getters were prepared to accept even the regulations of last March, severe as they were, because they would have given them a chance of getting their timber fairly and honestly measured, instead of being imposed upon by those rogues of sawmill-owners. According to some people, these sawmill-owners must be as bad as the landlords we heard so much about last night. I may mention the Hon. Mr. Pettigrew—I will mention no one's name, but I will ask where are the sawmill proprietors who are making large fortunes? I heard it stated to-day by the largest sawmill proprietor in the colony that there is not a greater average profit than 1s. 6d. per 100 feet made by the sawmill-owners in the colony.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: A pretty good profit, too.

MR. JORDAN: There are no doubt some men with wonderful brains whose mills contain such elaborate appliances that large profits are made, but the profits generally made are not by any means large. An expenditure of something like £15,000 is required to turn out 10,000 feet of timber per day, and that only represents a profit of £1,000 or £1,200; so that it is absurd to suppose that the sawmill-owners are making such enormous fortunes. I think it unjust that any royalty should have been imposed without putting a fair import duty on New Zealand timber. Now, just a word or two on behalf of the timber-getter. I sympathise with the timber-getter. He does not drop from the clouds, as one hon. member has said: it is just the other way—he has to climb the mountains, as the hon. member for Logan says. He is a great pioneer; he makes roads, and finds out country

suitable for farming; and I can bear out fully the obligation under which we are in the Logan district to the timber-getters, who have found out most beautiful land among the hills that would never have been discovered but for them. The timber-getters make our best roads which the surveyors may well follow should we ever have survey before selection all over the colony—as I sincerely hope we shall. They find out the best roads, instead of making them at right angles and perpetrating the miserable mistakes made in former days in this respect. The timber-getter's is a very hard and dangerous occupation; and I think the regulations are somewhat too hard upon those men. He must have his permit in his pocket; if he should leave it in his cash-box or a drawer at home, and the inspector should come round and find him without it, his timber may be seized. I therefore think there should be a proviso to the effect that if it could be shown that he possesses a license the fine should be remitted. Now, there are several other little points. The hon. leader of the Opposition pointed out that the holder of a special license holding a square mile on an annual lease would have to pay in royalties as much as £50 before his license would be renewed. These special licenses are generally issued for pine, and that amount in royalties would show that the holder of the license had cut 200,000 feet of pine. I think that wants amending. There are a few other amendments which, if they are made, will, I think, cause these regulations to be acceptable to those interested in this industry.

MR. BEATTIE said: Mr. Speaker,—It certainly pleases me to hear the hon. member for South Brisbane holding forth on the subject of protection. I have often heard him, years ago, holding forth as the champion of freetrade, and now we have had him giving us a lecture on the desirability of imposing an import duty on timber. Well, circumstances alter cases, and it has been whispered to me that the hon. member is interested in a sawmill. He told us that the profit of the sawmill proprietor is only 1s. 6d. per 100 feet. I think if he made that clear of working expenses he ought soon to make a fortune.

MR. JORDAN: There is rent and management to come out of that.

MR. BEATTIE: I am quite ready to agree with the hon. member and this House if they think a slight duty should be placed on imported timber, but it opens up a wide question. Is it not necessary to impose a duty on other things to encourage native industry? Is it not the fact that by the introduction of Chinamen we have almost entirely destroyed one of the largest industries we had in the colony for the consumption of our valuable timber? The Chinamen have driven almost every carpenter and cabinet-maker out of the business all over the colony. When the late Government were of opinion that it was necessary to put an export duty on cedar from the North, I very warmly supported that idea, believing it would have this effect—that instead of valuable timber going to the other colonies and being made up into windows, sashes, and doors, and then coming back here manufactured, we should encourage the manufacture of those things in our own colony; but, as the hon. member for Toowoomba said, it opens up a very wide question. If we put an import duty on dressed timber there are other things will require dealing with, and the Ministry will have to make an alteration in their tariff. I have no doubt it would be to the advantage of the colony if they would take that matter into their serious consideration. We encouraged the agriculturist by allowing certain classes of machinery to come in free; and at the

same time, I believe, nearly the whole of the sawmill plant came in free. The sawmill proprietors did not show their interest in local manufacture by buying machinery made in the colony. When the hon. member so warmly supported a duty on imported timber he should at the same time have told the House that he was agreeable to encourage native industries by placing a protective duty on something that would fairly stand it.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said : Mr. Speaker,—I should like to say a few words in reply. The object of making the stipulation that the regulations should be placed on the table fourteen days after the meeting of Parliament was that hon. members might express their opinion—whether they agreed or disagreed with them. That has been done in this case. I disagreed with the resolutions, and therefore I brought this motion before the House ; and I am fully satisfied with the way in which the regulations have been almost unanimously disagreed with by the hon. members who have spoken. Many hon. members who said they were going to vote against the motion have furnished arguments against the regulations almost as strongly and as enthusiastically as I have done myself. The hon. member for Gympie, the hon. member for South Brisbane, the hon. member for Wide Bay (Mr. Mellor), they all thoroughly understand the business, and they have more strongly condemned the regulations than I did myself. The hon. member for Wide Bay said, “I believe that the regulations will do well enough, but my constituents want an import duty on timber to balance it.” That very suggestion shows the injustice of the royalty on colonial timber. These people, by suggesting an import duty, show that they have the same opinion as I have—namely, that a wrong has been done to the colonial trade. If the import duty is equal to the royalty, then the timber-getters are in the same position as they were before, but we, the colonists, are paying a tax on timber. Supposing the import duty is higher, we have a protective duty on timber—that is, the timber-getters, instead of being mulcted in a royalty, will find they are actually protected. That is the way these regulations have been approved by the other side of the House. They suggest a remedy, which goes to the root of the matter, and shows how well founded my objections were when I proclaimed that a wrong was done to the timber-getters of the colony by imposing this royalty. I have nothing more to say, as the Minister for Lands, who answered me, never addressed himself to my arguments at all.

Question put.

The House divided :—

AYES, 12.

The Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Chubb, Palmer, Govett, Archer, Black, Norton, Stevens, Ferguson, Jessop, Macrossan, and Hamilton.

NOES, 28.

Messrs. Miles, Griffith, Dickson, Rutledge, Sheridan, Fraser, Dutton, Aland, Annear, Beattie, Mellor, Salkeld, Higson, Wakefield, Wallace, Buckland, Bailey, White, Foxton, Foote, Smyth, Jordan, Moreton, Isambert, Brookes, Horwitz, Macfarlane, and Grimes.

Question resolved in the negative.

PRINTING COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Mr. FRASER, on behalf of Mr. Speaker, as chairman, brought up the first report of the Printing Committee, and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

ROUTE OF THE KILKIVAN AND MARYBOROUGH RAILWAY.

Mr. BAILEY, in moving—

That the papers and correspondence in connection with the route of the Kilkivan to Maryborough Railway, laid upon the table of the House on the 22nd instant, be printed—

said : Mr. Speaker,—In moving this resolution I have very few words to say, as the papers were placed on the table the other day by the Minister. My experience has taught me that it is unwise to meddle with railway routes. One cannot help being prejudiced, and it is better to trust to officers of the department—competent men who are not prejudiced in favour of any one route over another. In this matter of the Kilkivan Railway I induced the Government, seven or eight years ago, to make a survey. My idea was to open up what I thought was a great mineral field, and also to open up the Burnett district. I never attempted to indicate the route to the Government, but since that time other people have chosen to do so. After the route had been fixed upon by the Government officer, certain people went so far as to accuse that Government officer of even corruption and bribery. When I first saw the accusations in the Press I took no notice of them ; they were beneath contempt. But when I found that the discussion was continued in the *Brisbane Courier*—although the charges were not repeated the same insinuations were made—I thought it necessary for the sake of the gentleman concerned in the matter that every paper in connection with it should be published. That is my reason for moving the motion now. I have read through the papers, and I must say I can find no excuse for the attack that has been made upon one of our best railway surveyors, and a man for whom I have the very highest respect. I wish the papers to be printed in order that there should not rest the shadow of a doubt upon the reputation of a gentleman of, I believe, the strictest integrity.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said : In accordance with notice given at an earlier hour, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn till Tuesday next. On that day it is proposed to take first, the second reading of the Charitable Institutions Management Bill, then to proceed with the Land Bill, and the Marsupials Destruction Continuation Bill in committee. I think it will facilitate business if I take this opportunity of saying that when the Land Bill is in committee my hon. friend, the Minister for Lands, will propose this amendment in the 2nd clause, with reference to a matter that was so much debated yesterday. In section 2, line 12, omit the words, “or any other district which may be recommended by the board to be added to the list of districts therein specified,” and insert, “which did not, at the commencement of the principal Act, form part of a run, and which had, before the commencement of that Act, been open to selection under the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876.” I believe this amendment will meet the views of most hon. members, as expressed yesterday. It will be circulated in the morning.

Mr. PALMER : If I am not out of order, I would like to ask the hon. the Premier a question without notice. I would like to know if the report of the surveyor who surveyed the telegraph line from Cape York to Laura is yet forward?

The PREMIER : Has it been ordered to be printed?

Mr. PALMER: We have not seen it yet, and tenders for the first section of the line have been called for.

The PREMIER: I cannot answer the hon. gentleman without making inquiry. There is a report on the subject, but I have not seen it myself.

Question put and passed, and the House adjourned at twelve minutes past 9 o'clock until Tuesday next.