

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 29 JULY 1885

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 29 July, 1885.

Seat of the Hon. James Gibbon.—Message from the
Legislative Assembly.—Leave of Absence to Member.
—Rabbit Bill—third reading.—Members Expenses
Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

SEAT OF THE HON. JAMES GIBBON.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. T. Macdonald-Paterson), in moving—

That an address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, bringing under his notice the fact that the Honourable James Gibbon, a member of this House, is believed to have been absent from this House for two successive sessions without the permission of Her Majesty or the Governor of the colony, contrary to the provisions of the twenty-third section of the Constitution Act of 1867, and praying that His Excellency will be pleased to submit to this House for hearing and determination the question whether the seat of the said honourable member has become vacant—

said: Hon. gentlemen,—The motion which I shall move is one of some importance to this Chamber, as it concerns its practice. Hitherto, the 23rd section of the Constitution Act has been read in a particular way. I shall advert to that by-and-by; but, in the meantime, I think it highly desirable that no further doubt should exist in reference to the interpretation of that clause. It is not requisite that I should deal at any length with the subject-matter of the motion which is brought forward for the purpose of removing that doubt. There can be no question that the 23rd section may be read in two ways—that is to say, it is held by some that any member of this Council who shall, for two consecutive sessions, fail to give his attendance in this House shall thereby lose his seat; but, reading the clause as it stands in the Statute-book, we find that “if any Legislative Councillor shall, for two consecutive sessions of the Legislature of the said colony, fail to give his attendance in the said Legislature, without the permission of Her Majesty or of the Governor of the colony, his seat in such Council shall thereby become vacant.” Shortly, therefore, my contention is that leave of absence is not to be held equal to presence in the Legislative Council. That is not what is contended by some hon. members, and by others who are not in the House. There are, I believe, sufficient grounds for the motion to be found in the 24th section of the Act, which says that—

“Any question which shall arise respecting any vacancy in the Legislative Council on account of the matters aforesaid shall be referred by the Governor to the said Legislative Council to be by the said Legislative Council heard and determined.”

It is with that object that I move the motion. I think the time has come when the matter should be determined, and this is the proper method of taking notice of the subject. Under all the circumstances, I think that there are a number of members who desire that the question should be settled. It was never intended that a member of this Council should have the right to take twelve months' leave of absence, and, having obtained it, should also be able to be absent from the House two consecutive sessions besides. If any considerable number of hon. gentlemen were to avail themselves of that reading of the Constitution Act it is quite possible the result would be that there would often be no quorum to conduct the business of the country. It is easy to conceive of an hon. member being absent, according to that reading of the Act, for four consecutive years—at any rate, for three years—it would all depend when sessions began and when they ended. I think, therefore, it is desirable that

the matter should be referred to His Excellency, who will, under clause 24 of the Constitution Act, relegate the matter to this House for its decision. Before sitting down I would like to refer to the circumstances in connection with the absence of the Hon. Mr. Gibbon. Leave of absence was granted on the 23rd December, 1882, and it was announced during the session of 1883, on the 26th June of that year. Therefore, since his leave of absence, the hon. gentleman has been absent during the session—the short session—which began in June and ended in July, 1883; the session which began in November, 1883, and ended in March, 1884; and the last session. Practically, therefore, he has been absent four sessions.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : No !

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL : Three sessions. I contend that leave of absence should run concurrently with the two sessions referred to in the Act, and that is the point raised. I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said : Hon. gentlemen, — The motion of the Postmaster-General is one which requires the careful consideration of all members of this Council. If we carefully investigate the matter, and find distinctly that the meaning of the Constitution Act implies that the Hon. Mr. Gibbon has vacated his seat, there is no doubt that it will be our bounden duty to carry out the object of the motion. At the same time we must jealously guard the privileges of this House in every respect where there is a risk, by any decision come to, of in any way trespassing on these privileges. No doubt it may be an extreme case I am putting; but should a member obtain leave of absence for a single day of session No. 1 as I will call it, for the sake of convenience, he would be absent for the whole of that session and the whole of another, and his seat would not be declared vacant until the commencement of a third—or some time during the third—session. On the contrary, there is this case—namely, the one before the House. The Hon. Mr. Gibbon obtained leave of absence for twelve months, which expired on 23rd December, 1883; consequently the session which commenced on the 7th November, 1883, covered a portion of his leave, inasmuch as from the 7th November, 1883, to the 23rd December, his leave of absence actually was then current. That absence, therefore, was certainly not for a whole session. The session terminated on the 6th March, 1884; therefore he had not been absent during that session without leave. He had been absent part of it, but had leave for the remainder. The session of 1884 commenced on the 8th July and terminated on the 23rd December; that constituted a whole session. The records of the House do not show that he was present during that whole session, but, in accordance with the 23rd section of the Constitution Act, if he put in an appearance any time during the present session he will have complied with the conditions of the Constitution Act. We are not in a position to say—whatever we may surmise—that the hon. gentleman will not be here before the end of the session; consequently, it would be premature to ask His Excellency to bring to our notice the absence of a member who, in accordance with my reading of the Constitution Act, has not been absent during the whole time permitted. As a matter of opinion, I strongly object to hon. members taking an undue advantage of the provision made by the Act in regard to absence, as it would be possible to be absent during long periods and not attend to the duties of Parliament. I am not going to discuss any individual's absence or the question whether he

has taken unfair advantage of the privilege, but will deal with the question as a constitutional one—as one of privilege—and I shall be sorry to see anything which would tend to infringe our privileges. I cannot see that the Postmaster-General has made out a case to justify us in requesting His Excellency to bring the question of a seat being vacated before us at the present time.

The HON. G. KING said : Hon. gentlemen,—I should like to know, and to have hon. members generally informed, wherein consist* the difference between the present case and the case of the Hon. Dr. Mullen, which we adjudicated upon two years ago. I think that case was brought forward when the Hon. Mr. Morehead was Postmaster-General, and the present case appears to be similar. I shall be glad if some hon. gentleman who knows the circumstances of the case would state whether there is any difference between one and the other.

The HON. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said : Hon. gentlemen,—As far as my recollection serves me the Hon. Dr. Mullen had actually been absent, without leave, two consecutive sessions, whereas the Hon. Mr. Gibbon has not. He had leave for part of a session, at all events, and having had that leave could not have been absent without leave for that session. As far as the records of the House go, he was absent one session, and at the conclusion of this session, if he has not put in an appearance, his seat becomes vacant; but if he were to return here the last day of the session he would be as much entitled to his seat as anyone present. Under the circumstances, I agree with the Hon. Mr. Gregory that it would be better not to deal with the matter now.

The HON. P. MACPHERSON said : Hon. gentlemen,—I have no doubt whatever about the soundness of the conclusions arrived at by the Hon. Mr. Gregory. As a matter of law, in my opinion, the seat of the Hon. Mr. Gibbon is not vacant for the reasons so well and pertinently put by the Hon. Mr. Gregory. It is quite possible the hon. gentleman may make his appearance here any day. He has been flitting about since 1869, when the first record of his absence appears. I cannot congratulate him on the admirable manner in which he has performed his duties as a legislator, but that has nothing to do with the question we are dealing with, which is an abstract point of law on which the Hon. Mr. Gibbon is entitled to the benefit of any doubt that may exist. I have no doubt, as I said before, that the Hon. Mr. Gregory has the best of the argument, and I recommend the Postmaster-General to withdraw his motion.

The HON. W. D. BOX said : Hon. gentlemen,—If the address sketched forth by the Postmaster-General could be presented to the Governor I should support him, because I think it would be our duty to appeal to His Excellency; but, according to my reading of the Act, the Hon. Mr. Gibbon was absent part of one session and the whole of another, but that does not make him absent for two consecutive sessions. The case of the Hon. Mr. Mullen was very different, as can be seen from the Reports of the Session, vol. 32, from which it appears that the Hon. Mr. Mullen had been absent two whole sessions, and his seat was consequently declared vacant. There is a statement in the records of the House that the Hon. Mr. Mullen did not attend for two consecutive sessions. I trust hon. gentlemen will not press the House to address His Excellency on the subject, because I think if the Hon. Mr. Gibbon were to present himself at the bar of the House any time during the present session he would be entitled to take his seat.

The HON. F. H. HART said: Hon. gentlemen,—With reference to the question asked by the Hon. Mr. King, I may point out that when the Hon. Mr. Mullen went home he went without applying for any leave whatever. The Hon. Mr. Mein, who was then Postmaster-General, stated that he was in bad health and did not apply for leave of absence. He was absent for two whole sessions, consequently his seat was declared vacant.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think if the Postmaster-General would carefully look at the question he would withdraw the motion, because to pass such a resolution would be to actually go in the face of the records of this House, which show that the Hon. Mr. Gibbon had leave of absence during the session of 1833; therefore, though the session might have lasted a period after his leave expired, he was not absent from the session in the terms of the Act. He was absent during the session of 1884; therefore, at the end of that session he had been absent one entire session without leave. Now we are in the session of 1885, the second session the hon. member has not made his appearance, but this session is current, and until the last day shall arrive without the presence of the hon. member, he will not have rendered himself liable to removal under our Constitution Act. Should he not appear during this session his seat will, no doubt, be declared vacant early in or during the succeeding session. The thing is so simple and clear, that we should appear in a ridiculous light if we asked the Governor to request us to appoint a select committee to inquire into that which we know will have to be decided in the negative.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: I do not think some hon. gentlemen quite apprehend the position I take up in this matter. Apart from the personal view I hold, I should like the House to understand that this motion is a motion of the Government of the day, and it is brought forward to determine what must be done in such cases. The contention has been that leave of absence is to be regarded as equal to presence in this House, but I do not assent to that, and furthermore, the treatment of this motion has been as if the question had been submitted to this House by the Governor, whereas it is purely formal. It is not asking the House at the present moment to determine whether the seat of the hon. member is vacant or not; on the contrary, it is complying, in the only courteous mode by which we can approach the subject, with the 24th section of the Constitution Act of 1867, which says that “any question which shall arise shall be referred by the Governor to the said Legislative Council.” That is the only mode by which we can have the matter relegated to us, and that is what I am seeking. Several hon. gentlemen are dealing with the matter as if the motion had reached the stage of having been forwarded to the Governor and sent back here, but, it is quite possible the Governor might not send it here at all; if he do, it will be time enough to enter on the question as to whether leave of absence shall be considered equal to presence, or not; but that point should not be considered at this juncture. I was glad to hear the Hon. Mr. Box say that if the motion was in order he would support the proposal to submit the case to the Governor. I think it is highly desirable that we should take action to determine what course shall be taken. I may state that a different opinion is held in several quarters to that held here by hon. gentlemen opposite, and I think it is proper that this motion should pass to-day. I must intimate that, if a division is necessary on the point, it will be taken; and if adverse, another course will, doubtless, have to be followed, which will be very inconvenient. The

course I have proposed is much to be preferred. This is the proper course to take, and undoubtedly on that ground I ask that the motion should pass. I did not for a moment anticipate that hon. gentlemen would deal with the motion as if it had been referred back to this Chamber for consideration, and I do not think the elements of leave of absence should be discussed at this moment. The question has arisen, and there is a difference of opinion, and all I ask is that it may be discussed in the proper quarter, and that is in this House at the proper time.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE said: I did not intend to add anything to what has been said by hon. members on this subject, until I heard the second speech of the Postmaster-General; but after the tone and manner of that speech I cannot let the matter go by without saying something on it. In the first place, in asking this House to bring this matter before His Excellency the Governor, I think that the Postmaster-General ought to have put himself in a position to satisfy the general body of members of this House that there was some question worthy of consideration. It seems to me, after the explanation given by the Hon. Mr. Gregory, that there can be no question whatever for discussion. The hon. Postmaster-General has certainly not shown me that there is any point which is worthy of our taking such a strong course as inviting His Excellency to take such steps as would lead to the vacation of the seat. I am unwilling to use strong language, but it seems to me that the action proposed to be taken borders on the verge of absurdity. The hon. the Postmaster-General said leave of absence does not count as if the member were present; well, if that is so, what is the object of granting leave of absence? If Her Majesty the Queen or His Excellency the Governor has the power of giving a member leave of absence, what is the advantage of it, unless he can absent himself for the time being? A member should certainly have the full benefit of his leave of absence, and I think it most unreasonable to ask this House to settle the question whether a seat has become vacant, when it is shown that the Hon. Mr. Gibbon has not been absent for two whole sessions without leave. For that reason I concur with what has been said by every hon. member except the Postmaster-General, and I agree with the conclusion that there is really no question to submit to His Excellency the Governor.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said: It appears to me that a great fuss is being made about this seat; there is a regular storm in a teapot, and I have no hesitation in saying that owing to the increased value of land in Queen street, and the general rise in corner allotments, we shall see the Hon. Mr. Gibbon back here during the present session. I can see no necessity for the motion the hon. the Postmaster-General has brought before the House. Why is it necessary to get this man out of the House?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That is not the question.

The HON. J. TAYLOR: It is the question—it is the question I intend to discuss. I believe the Government want to send another of their class into the House. I for one shall oppose this motion, and I think it is brought forward with very bad taste on the part of the Government.

The HON. W. FORREST said: It was not my intention to speak after the Postmaster-General had replied, nor was I aware that that was the custom; for my part I should have said nothing, but that the hon. gentleman opened up fresh ground and introduced matter which he did not refer to in his opening speech. I will not go into the points which have been discussed

by hon. members already, but I would draw attention to the extraordinary wording of the resolution, which runs as follows:—

“That an address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, bringing under his notice the fact that the Honorable James Gibbon, a member of this House, is believed to have been absent from this House for two successive sessions without the permission of Her Majesty or of the Governor of the colony.”

I would point out to this House that this is not a fact; it is a fiction, to start with, and yet we are asked to present an address to His Excellency to convey information which we know is not true. What are the facts? The records of the House show them plainly enough, and do not require any legal or other explanation. If hon. members would turn up the records of the House they would find that on the 23rd September, 1885, His Excellency the Governor gave twelve months' leave of absence to the Hon. Mr. Gibbon. During that time there was a short session and there was the beginning of another session which the leave covered, and I say the hon. gentleman was not absent two sessions, but only one clear session. I quite agree with the Hon. Mr. Gregory that if Mr. Gibbon comes back he is entitled to take his seat. So far as the Hon. Mr. Gibbon is concerned, I should cheerfully vote that his seat be vacant. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. “Corner Allotment.” I have never seen him that I know of, but after the scandalous manner in which he has evaded his duties he is deserving of no consideration. I am not considering him—I am considering our Constitution and considering myself; for we do not know whose turn it may be next. I am simply going to oppose this motion because I consider it an infringement of our rights and privileges. A member who is absent two whole sessions certainly forfeits his seat; but the Hon. Mr. Gibbon has not been away two whole sessions, and the question, therefore, is not ready to be brought before the House.

The HON. W. GRAHAM said: Like my friend Mr. Forrest, I did not intend speaking on this subject until I heard the speech in reply from the Postmaster-General. There are a few words in that speech that I would like to refer to. The Postmaster-General has referred to some mysterious course which would be pursued if the House refused to agree to the motion. Now, I would like to ask the hon. gentleman what he meant by that? I should be very glad to get some explanation. He described it as a course which would be a great inconvenience, and I should like very much to know what the inconvenience will be. I hope the step intended to be taken will not appal us altogether; but, as the hon. gentleman made a threat, I think he ought to have a further right to reply in order that he may shadow forth what this enormous inconvenience is that is going to happen.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Dealing with what fell from the Hon. Mr. Thynne as to the intility of this measure, I will give a case in point in regard to the desirability of a member of this House getting leave of absence. Suppose three sessions took place during twelve months: it is quite possible that an hon. gentleman who desired to visit any other part of the world, and who would be away twelve months, might miss two sessions, which possibly would take place within five months. Well, he would in all probability ask for leave of absence for the full period he intended to be away; that leave of absence might cover any number of sessions within twelve months. With regard to what fell from the Hon. Mr. Forrest, I think that his remarks as to the wording of the motion do not apply; but as there seems to be disparity of opinion be-

tween us it is no use pursuing the subject. Dealing with what fell from the Hon. Mr. Graham, I can only say that the words I believe myself to have made use of were that this was the courteous and proper course to take—the most convenient course—and it would be doubtless a matter of consideration as to what other course should be taken to bring the point to a decision if the House declined to adopt the motion. The matter cannot be allowed to lie; we must take some means to determine whether leave of absence shall count as if a member were present; and I say distinctly that it is most inconvenient to this House and to every member of it not to have that matter definitely decided. Some hon. gentlemen have lost sight of this circumstance, and all I ask is that the formal proceedings shall be commenced, and that the question may be submitted to this House for further consideration. That is the way to arrive at a decision, and whatever the decision is it will be placed on the records of the House and I shall be perfectly satisfied with it. I hope hon. members will let the motion go, because this appears to me the most constitutional way of arriving at a decision; and a decision when arrived at would be of the utmost value to this Chamber.

The PRESIDENT: Before putting the question I may say, as there appears to be some doubt on the part of hon. members as to their right of speaking after the member in charge of the motion has replied, that there is really no rule against it, and it is only a matter of convenience that there should be no speaking after he has replied, unless he imports into the matter some new subject. There is no rule to prevent anyone who has not spoken, speaking after the member has replied.

Question put, and the House divided:—

CONTENTS, 5.

The Postmaster-General, the Hons. W. H. Wilson, W. Pettigrew, F. H. Holberton, and J. Swan.

NON-CONTENTS, 15.

The Hons. A. H. Wilson, A. J. Thynne, J. Taylor, W. Graham, F. T. Gregory, A. C. Gregory, W. Forrest, T. L. Murray-Prior, J. C. Smyth, W. G. Power, G. King, F. H. Hart, W. D. Box, E. B. Forrest, and A. Raff.

Question resolved in the negative.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, for warding Appropriation Bill No. 1, 1885-6.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time, ordered to be printed, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO MEMBER.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: I beg to move that leave of absence be granted to the Hon. W. H. Walsh for the remainder of the session.

The PRESIDENT: You must give notice.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: I understood that it was not usual to require notice.

The PRESIDENT: Give notice for to-morrow.

RABBIT BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

MEMBERS EXPENSES BILL—SECOND READING.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—In moving the second reading of this Bill I do not propose to go over much

ground in relation to the general question. The subject-matter of the Bill has been debated on numerous previous occasions in this House, and every member is fully aware that it is a subject in which the various constituencies of the colony have taken a deep and active interest for many years. Indeed, I find within my own recollection that the matter was in active discussion as early as 1863-4-5; and since the Bill passed the other House recently I have given a little attention to the matter with a view to making a synopsis of the different proceedings which have taken place in the other Chamber in relation to this question, and how such a Bill has been treated by this House on former occasions. As early as 1860, when the present Chief Justice, Sir Charles Lilley, was a candidate for Fortitude Valley, he strongly advocated what was then termed payment of members, and he was the successful candidate. Subsequent to his entering the Assembly, on numerous occasions he took every opportunity as a leading colonist, high in the political world, to advocate the principle that members of the Assembly should receive some compensation for attending to their legislative duties as well as expenses incidental to their remaining in Brisbane from time to time. The first occasion on which Sir Charles Lilley had an opportunity of practically putting his views before Parliament was in 1872, when by a series of resolutions the principle was affirmed in a House of 32 by a division of 16 to 11. The following year, 1873, Mr. Graham, then representing Clermont, a supporter of the Government, and afterwards a member of the Government, introduced a series of resolutions on the same subject, which were affirmed. They were practically to the effect that £150 should be the amount of expenses paid, exclusive of 1s. 6d. mileage and the passage money between any portion of the colony and Brisbane. On that occasion the resolutions were carried by 3 to 2. Subsequently a Bill was brought in founded on the resolutions, and was passed by the Assembly but not by the Council. On that occasion, as showing the kind of support the payment of expenses received, I would respectfully allude to the fact that the late Sir Joshua Peter Bell, Sir Arthur Palmer, and others voted for resolution (a), which confined the payment of expenses to £150 per annum, excluding mileage and passage money. There were three resolutions, (a), (b), and (c). In 1874, following the general election of 1873, a new Government was formed, of which Mr. Macalister was Premier. He likewise brought in a Bill founded on the resolutions affirmed by previous Parliaments on the same subject; and the introduction of this Bill should be regarded as of higher value because it was practically the outcome of a test question during the elections of 1873. In April, 1874, the second reading of a Bill similar to that now before the House was carried by a majority of 29 to 7. I would also observe that in 1873 the following gentlemen voted for Mr. Graham's resolutions:—Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Moreton, Macrossan, Malbon Thompson, Buzacott, De Satgé, Fitzgerald, and Ivory. That Bill did not pass this House. In 1875 the then Colonial Secretary (Mr. Macalister) brought in a Bill to provide members with compensation for their services in attending Parliament and travelling expenses, and the second reading was passed without division, thus showing the ripeness of the question and the unanimity of that Chamber on the subject. That Bill was again rejected by the Council. In September, 1876, the Bill again passed the Assembly without division, and was again rejected by the Council. Last year a Members Expenses Bill, similar in all respects to this, was passed

in the Assembly by a majority of 29 to 8. The Bill now before the House was carried through the Assembly by a majority of 22 to 13. That is to be accounted for by the fact that the second reading came on at a much earlier hour than was anticipated by the members of that Chamber. As showing the opinion of the Assembly on the subject, I may mention that when the Bill came into committee, the principal clause, which refers to payment, was carried on division by a majority of 25 to 7, and that in a thin House. I trust hon. members will note the facts I have narrated. I think they bear strongly on the question, as it affects the colony as a whole; and it is with some pleasure that I can refer to other countries in the world where payment of members exists. No one can deny that some of the best-governed countries are countries where payment of members subsists. Canada, *e.g.*, pays its members, I think—speaking from memory—8 or 10 dollars per day, and the total sum does not exceed during one session 1,000 dollars. If a member be absent the same sum per diem is deducted for his absence. With respect to Queensland, I think I have a pretty considerable knowledge of it, and what the burden is to members of the Legislative Assembly travelling to and from their constituencies, and the numerous expenses incurred while in Brisbane and away from the scene of their labours; and I have no doubt it is highly desirable in this enormous territory to recompense members for their actual cash outlay in connection with the performance of their duties as members of the Legislative Assembly. I believe that the result of payment of expenses will be an enormous advantage in this way: that it will bring out candidates for constituencies who are at present unable to bear the expense of residence in Brisbane during the session. It is always desirable to have local representation, if possible, in the Assembly, and there are many first-class men who are debarred by the heavy expense attaching to their presence in Brisbane from becoming members of the Assembly. With reference to what may be termed payment of members, I am stoutly opposed to allowing a salary of £400, £500, or £600 a year, irrespective of attendance in Parliament. If our colony had the same facilities as Victoria, where members of Parliament can get to the capital by railways from almost every direction, we should be in a different position. Our territory is very different, however, and I think, in view of the pregnant fact that the constituencies have for a large number of years affirmed their wish to have their members compensated for their outlay, it is highly desirable that this Chamber should give the matter their best attention. That is what I seek, and I hope in the discussion on the subject regard will be had to the many difficulties that are attached to the bringing about of faithful and true representation of the different districts of the colony. This Bill does not give facilities to those who may wish to make a trade of politics getting into the House, because it does not propose to give a yearly salary to be paid by means of a cheque every month or every quarter. The sum is limited, and measured by the daily attendance in Parliament. If it be a long session, and most of the sessions for some years past have been long, the total amount received will not be large, but it will be sufficient to prevent many good and true men being placed at a disadvantage in attending to the business of their country. I hope therefore that hon. gentlemen will give the matter their best consideration, and that it will be discussed purely on its merits, and having due regard to the past, and how their

decision would affect what appears, without a shadow of doubt, to be the unanimous wish of the different constituencies in this land. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—What the hon. the Postmaster-General has said was, I think, put before the House in a very lame manner; and I join issue with him in the first place as to the wishes of the members representing their constituencies in another place. The hon. gentleman said that in 1872 there was a majority of 16 to 11 in favour of the resolutions. That was not such a large majority. In the next year there was a majority of 3 to 2, but that after all was not so large a majority either. No doubt it afterwards obtained more favour in the sight of the representatives of the people, for there was on another occasion a majority of 29 to 7. The hon. gentleman gave the names of several members who voted on that occasion, showing that they agreed with the principle; but I look upon what the hon. gentleman said as most against the Bill, and showing that the opinions of the people and members have altered when we find such a gentleman as Sir T. McIlwraith, who is said to have advocated payment of members, after great experience going against it. Several other gentlemen whom the Postmaster-General mentioned have come to the same conclusion. The last division in another place was 22 to 13 in 1885. How very different must have been the opinion of the members there when that division was recorded! The hon. gentleman has given a very lame excuse for the absence of several members, but I must say that it shows great want of tact, to say the least, not to have had all their forces present on an occasion which they considered of such importance. The hon. gentleman also says he has found during his travels that the whole of the community are in favor of payment of members. I join issue with him there.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: This is a Members Expenses Bill.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR: The Members Expenses Bill is indeed payment of members; it is nothing else; and to take up the hon. gentleman's words, which I was very pleased to hear, when he said he would not advocate payment of members but only members' expenses, I say that this Bill is the payment of members, and that if this Bill is passed the thin end of the wedge will be so driven in that members will soon be paid the same as they are in Victoria, and receive their money quarterly or monthly by vouchers—a system to which the hon. gentleman and, I believe, the Premier, are very much opposed. After all, it is only a matter of opinion and fact, and until we know that the country is in favour of payment of members, the constituencies must be appealed to on the question. No doubt the Postmaster-General will say the constituencies were appealed to during the last election, but I totally deny it. Perhaps a body of men calling themselves a Liberal Association went on a certain ticket—no land-grant railways, no coolies, and payment of members; but the two former completely threw the latter into insignificance, for many who were opposed to land-grant railways were opposed to payment of members also. And I tell you candidly, hon. gentlemen, that I was opposed to land-grant railways, and I am also opposed to payment of members and always have been. I think the Council acted wisely in throwing out this Bill on former occasions, and I believe that before long there will be very few in the colony who will advocate payment of members. Experience will teach people, as it has taught men

high in the political world, to change their opinion. When there is a general expression of opinion from the people that they wish for payment of members, then I think it will be time enough for this Council to judge whether it will be right to oppose the determined will of the people. Under those circumstances matters might be different. I think I have answered the Postmaster-General so far. If we turn to the 4th clause of the Bill we find that it says:—

"Nothing in this Act shall be construed to make the office of member of the Legislative Assembly an office of profit, or otherwise to affect the capacity of any member to sit and vote in Parliament."

The very fact of this clause being inserted proves to my mind that the hon. gentleman who framed this Bill had very grave doubts whether any member receiving payment would not forfeit his seat, and I have no hesitation in saying that if the Bill passed without that clause, or without amending the Constitution Act, any member who received payment would lose his seat. We have, on several occasions, found such Bills passed in another place, but, if I remember rightly, those Bills always dealt with a future session, whereas the present Bill does not deal with a future session, but with the present session, and not only that, but it is actually retrospective. I also question whether by the Constitution Act any members being pecuniarily interested in the matter have any right to vote. With that question however, we have little to do in this Chamber, but I bring it forward to show how the Bill has come before us, and in regard to the question of interest I will quote from "May":—

"In 1796 a general resolution was proposed in the Lords, 'That no peers shall vote who are interested in a question,' but it was not adopted. It is presumed, however, that such a resolution was deemed unnecessary; and that it was held that the personal honour of a peer will prevent him from forwarding his own pecuniary interest by his votes in Parliament."

Therefore they have nothing in their Constitution in regard to the interest of a peer—the honour of a peer is undoubted. "May" further says:—

"In the Commons it is a distinct rule that no member who has a direct pecuniary interest in a question shall be allowed to vote upon it; but, in order to operate as a disqualification, this interest must be immediate and personal, and not merely of a general or remote description."

Now can the Postmaster-General say for one moment that where any member actually receives money, whether for money expended or not, he is not pecuniarily interested? I think he is. It is also to be remembered that the members of the Assembly have the custody of the public purse, but they are actually voting money out of that purse for themselves. I am not going to bring forward as a great argument the amount of money that will be spent, because that is comparatively a mere trifle. On principle, I entirely disagree with the hon. gentleman that it would bring forward a better class of members—the small sums of money that would be paid to them by this Bill. The nature of man is to be ambitious—to excel his fellows. If we go to municipalities there is no want of aldermen, who act without payment. It is the ambition of another class to become magistrates. They use all manner of influence, as the Postmaster-General and those who have been in the Government know, to obtain the position, and they perform the duties connected with the magistracy for nothing. We have had a Parliament since 1860, and no members have been paid, yet there has never been a dearth of members. I will allow that the colony is large, and that, in the North, there must be a difficulty at times in obtaining a local member, but I do not think that any local member who, merely on the

payment of such a paltry sum, would be induced to become a candidate is fit to become a member of Parliament. I cannot help thinking that any man who wishes to be a member of Parliament should be sufficiently independent, at all events, to be able to live; and I think that payment of members, instead of bringing forward a better set of men than we have now, would bring a far worse set of men. I need not go any further into the matter; in a few words I have tried to explain what I think. It has been my fate, somehow, to move an amendment to the motion for the second reading of the Bill brought forward for the payment of members on several other occasions, and if, as is most probable, other Bills of the same sort should come before us, unless with the decided approval of the people of this country, when perhaps I should be ready to give up my private opinion, I shall be ready at any time to propose another amendment. I would remind the hon. gentleman representing the Ministry in this Chamber that there is a report, which I have reason to believe is not incorrect, to the effect that in the event of this Bill being thrown out the money will be placed on the Estimates. If that should be the case, and this Bill meets its usual fate in the Council, hon. members will see that if these aggressive measures are attempted it will be the duty not only of members who now oppose the Bill, but of every hon. member who has a seat in this House, to assert and guard the privileges which we have under the Constitution. Without taking up any more time, I beg to move, as an amendment, that the word "now" be struck out, with the view of adding the words "this day six months."

Question—That the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: I was sincerely in hopes that we should have heard an expression of opinion from the other side of this House, in addition to what we have heard from the Postmaster-General, and I think hon. gentlemen opposite are scarcely doing justice to the leader of the House in leaving him to stand alone in the face of a considerable majority against this Bill. It would have been very much more straightforward of hon. gentlemen, even if they differed from the Postmaster-General, to have expressed their opinion fairly and fully, either in favour or against the Bill. I have no intention of dealing with the subject at great length—this is not the first, or second, or third time that we have had such a measure as this before us—but I will carefully and logically take up what I conceive to be the arguments which have been adduced by the Postmaster-General in support of the Bill and also those arguments which I think are strongest and most powerful against it. In the first instance, the arguments advanced in general have been of this character—and it has been reiterated over and over again by the other branch of the Legislature—that it is desirable they should receive emolument for their services on the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire. That expression has been made use of more than once. I can remember it having been used ten years ago, when this question was before the House. But I can show that the argument is totally without any logical ground. The labourer is worthy of his hire when he is compelled to labour to earn his livelihood, but I defy any hon. member to prove that any one of the members of the other House are compelled to give their services to the country. There is not only no compulsion, but experience proves that men are eager to grasp the opportunity of gaining a seat in the legislature of the country—they are proud, and justly so, of acquiring a position

in the Legislature, and of being elected by their fellow-electors to represent their fellow-countrymen. We find that that has always been the case, and that hitherto there has never been any scarcity of members to represent the electorates, but on the contrary there has been a scramble to try to gain the honour of a seat. Why, then, should the Government now come forward and offer a bribe to inferior men to try and secure seats in the representative branch of the Legislature? Men of the class who would try to gain a seat in Parliament, for the sake of this paltry £200 a year, are not worthy of being representatives of the people, in my opinion, and there is no doubt that the result of payment of members would be that we would get an inferior class of men than those who at present represent the country. Another argument advanced by the Postmaster-General is, that constituencies are in favour of payment of members. I utterly deny that. I think I am as well posted up in the wishes of the people of this country as the Postmaster-General, and, without arrogating to myself any special knowledge, I can assure hon. gentlemen that I have made it my business for many years past to consult all classes of the constituencies on this question, both in public and in private. At large meetings I have put the question, and I have been over and over again told that the people do not desire the payment of members of Parliament, and that they highly approve of the action of this House in throwing out the measure for that purpose, whenever it was introduced. The few other arguments which have been brought in support of the measure are very puerile, and the greater number of them have been demolished on previous occasions. I shall now, therefore, refer to what I conceive to be the strongest arguments why such a Bill should not become law. In the first place, if this measure passed, it would be very inequitable in its operations. The members who constitute the other branch of the Legislature represent constituencies that are scattered, of course, over a large amount of territory; but I have taken the trouble to see, relatively, what members would be really deserving of any consideration. I find that taking the metropolitan circuit, that is to say, taking the members who represent constituencies in and about Brisbane, and who live at such a distance from their duties here that they would be able to return to their homes every night, that about one-third of the entire number of members in the lower branch of the Legislature are in that position, and consequently are no more entitled to consideration in any shape or way than for merely attending to the functions connected with any other institution in Brisbane. Another third consist of those who come from one central point, and who would certainly have to travel some little distance to attend to their duties. They, however, are within reach of railways and steamers, and consequently it is more a matter of time than expenditure with them. The remaining third, if we are to admit the principle of payment of members at all, are the only ones who, in my opinion, are worthy of any consideration. The proposed arrangement, therefore, would not, I consider, be in any way equitable, supposing it was admissible, as the members of the metropolitan circuit would not be entitled to more than one-fifth of the remuneration of those coming from the outside and Northern districts. It has been said over and over again that payment of members would very much increase the number of candidates who would offer themselves at an election. I acknowledge that; but I must also point out that it would very much increase the evils of corruption and bribery; and a class of people would be created

who would make it their business to get an inferior class of men into Parliament, who would be open to receive consideration for their services. More than one hon. member of the other branch of the Legislature has not hesitated to say that the cost of his election has been considerably more than the £200 per session which it is proposed to grant, and that shows very clearly that even when there is no immediate hope or prospect of acquiring emolument, still men are found who are prepared to expend that sum upon their election in order to gain the privilege of representing their fellow-colonists. Can we in the face of that say that it is necessary to subsidise members in order that suitable persons may be found to occupy seats in the House? I need hardly enlarge upon the demoralising effect that this principle would have, except to say that in a House composed of members who are paid for their services, there will always be found a servile majority to support any Ministry, even although they have lost confidence in them. In Victoria this has been the case beyond question. I have spent very many months in that colony, and have discussed this question with all classes of the community, and the majority of them affirm that payment of members has been a failure. I move on now to another important point, and that is that the question has really never been put to the constituencies of the colony. There may be individual cases where the constituencies have been asked the question whether they were in favour of payment of members; but it has never been put in any substantial way so that the electors could give a vote in favour of or against the proposition. Further, I can urge the financial view of the question. The amount proposed to be expended, it is said, is only about £10,000 a year; but any hon. gentleman who has taken the trouble to watch the progress of the colony, the present condition of its finances, and its probable needs, must admit that we are not in a position to throw money away. There are innumerable public works, such as roads and bridges, which require all our means to maintain. Are we then going to take £10,000 a year from the consolidated revenue to pay members, when there is no sort of requirement for it, and when there are so many demands upon the public funds? Ten thousand pounds a year expended upon the public hospitals of the colony alone, I venture to say, would meet with the approval of the taxpayers of the colony very much sooner than if the same amount should be divided amongst members of Parliament; and I doubt whether, if the question was put to the electors whether they would expend that £10,000 upon the hospitals or members of Parliament, the vote would not be five to one in favour of subsidising those important institutions. I know that the Postmaster-General has asserted that the constituencies are in favour of this principle, but I simply deny that; and therefore, as we differ in opinion, and as I am willing to concede that the hon. gentleman has equal capacity with myself to form a judgment, I agree to differ. But I cannot help saying that I think he is egregiously mistaken in his estimate of the wishes of the constituencies. I would therefore suggest that before any attempt is made by his Government, or by any other Government, to force upon the country an expenditure of £10,000 for the payment of members, some means should be taken by which the constituencies should be absolutely tested, and by which an exact opinion may be arrived at. I would suggest that at the next general election the question might be printed upon the voting papers "Payment or non-payment of members," and let electors erase whichever one of those they please, just as they erase the names of different candidates at the

present time. That would make it patent to all of us whether the people were really in favour or opposed to such a scheme as this; and there is not a shadow of doubt in my mind that if this course was pursued we should find there would be no desire to have this additional burden placed on the shoulders of the people. I therefore feel it my duty, on behalf of the taxpayers of Queensland, to oppose this measure until I find what their opinions really are.

The HON. W. H. WILSON said: Being of a retiring disposition I did not think it became me, as a new member of the House, to follow the leader of the Opposition, and I waited for a few moments to see whether an older member would take that place. I certainly did not intend that the debate on the second reading should close without saying something in favour of this measure. I intend to vote for the second reading of the Bill, and therefore I wish to give a few reasons for doing so. The Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior seemed to think that this is really a Payment of Members Bill. I must differ from the hon. gentleman on that subject, because I think there is a very great distinction between the two. This Bill is a Bill to recoup the expenses of members of Parliament in some degree for the great expense which they incur in performing what I consider very onerous and responsible duties. We all know very well what these duties are, and the great expense involved in performing them. Therefore, I consider that this is merely a Members Expenses Bill, and not a Bill for the payment of members at all. The Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior also said that at the last election the question did not come before the electors, and I think that the Hon. Mr. Gregory reiterated that argument. Now, although it was not a burning question at the last election, still it was a very important minor question. It was well discussed at most of the meetings that were held all over the country, and I know that the question was frequently put from the body of the hall as to whether a candidate was in favour of payment of members or not, so that the question was really before the country. I look upon the passing of this Bill as an act of simple justice to the members of the other House, especially to country members, because if they are paid their expenses I am certain that local representation will be very much better obtained than under the present system. I think that the present state of things strikes at a vital point of our Constitution. The people are supposed to be represented in Parliament, and if they are not adequately represented, what becomes of the principle of representation? I do not think that the people of this colony are adequately represented, because constituencies cannot find suitable men who can afford to leave their ordinary business and also pay their own expenses. Many capable men, if they knew they would be paid their expenses, would consent to become candidates, and in this way local representation would be secured; as an illustration of this, hon. gentlemen will recollect, I dare say, a circumstance connected with the Kennedy election which took place some years ago. The people of that electorate could not secure a representative of any kind, so they elected the Right Hon. John Bright. In that case it was perfectly impossible to get a representative. Many of the Northern and Western constituencies have been compelled to elect Brisbane men as their representatives. In fact, that has been done in quite a number of cases, and I think on that account the Bill should receive support, as it will enable constituencies to obtain local men as their representatives. If this object is accomplished it will be of great benefit to the colony. Another point in favour of the Bill is that payment of expenses will tend to the more regular attendance of members in their places. That is another

object which it is very desirable to obtain, and I fancy that that will be the case if members are paid their expenses. If they received some emolument they would consider that they were more responsible to their constituents than they would be if they were not paid. It is well known that payment of members existed in the House of Commons since its creation until about the 17th century. Pepys, in his diary, refers to this pertinently. He says on date, March 30, 1668—

"At dinner we had a great deal of good discourse about Parliament, their number being uncertain, and always at the will of the King to increase as he saw reason to erect a new borough. But all concluded that the bane of the Parliament hath been the leaving off the old custom of the places, allowing wages to those that served them in Parliament, by which they chose men that understood their business and would attend to it, and they could expect an account from, which now they cannot; and so the Parliament is become a company of men unable to give account for the interest of the place they serve for."

That is in support of the argument I have advanced. I also wish to refer to those countries which adopt the principle of payment of members. In Belgium members not residing in town receive sixteen guineas per month during the session. In Denmark the members of the Upper and Lower Houses receive payment for their services. In France senators and deputies receive—deputies 9,000 francs, and senators 15,000 francs a year. In Prussia members of both chambers receive travelling expenses and diet money from the State, according to a scale fixed by law, amounting to £1 per day; refusal of the same is not allowed. In Saxony a salary is attached to the performance of the legislative functions, the members of both Houses being allowed 12s. per day during the sittings of Parliament, with journey money. In Greece the deputies are paid £72 each per session and an extra £52 each for an extra session. In Italy neither senators nor deputies receive any salary or other other indemnity, but are allowed to travel free throughout Italy by rail or by steamer. That is an important item in this colony. In the Netherlands members of the second chamber receive an annual allowance of 2,000 guilders, or £166, besides travelling expenses. In Portugal each deputy has a remuneration of about 10s. a day during the session. In Roumania both senators and deputies receive a small daily payment during the session. In Sweden members obtain salaries for their services at the rate of £67 in each session of four months, besides travelling expenses. In Norway members of the Storting have an allowance of 12 kronor a day, besides travelling expenses. In Switzerland members of the Federal Council receive £480 per annum. In the Argentine Republic members of both the Senate and the House of Deputies are paid for their services, each receiving £700 per annum. In Brazil I find that the senators receive a salary of £900 each session. The Senate has 58 members, and the 122 members of the House of Deputies receive £600 each session, besides travelling expenses. In Canada, which I think has already been referred to by the Postmaster-General, I may mention that the House of Commons there consists of 213 members, each of whom receives 10 dollars a day up to the end of thirty days, and for a session lasting longer than that period the sum of 1,000 dollars, with, in every case, 10 cents per mile for travelling expenses, the sum of 8 dollars per diem being deducted for every day's absence of a member unless the same is caused by illness. There is the same allowance for the members of the Senate of the Dominion. In Hayti, formerly a French colony, but now a republic, members of both Houses are paid during the session. In Mexico members of both Houses receive salaries

of 3,000 dollars a year. In America I understand there are 401 members of Congress, and they receive 5,000 dollars per annum each—which amounts, I think, to £1,042 13s. 4d.—and their travelling expenses. In the Orange Free States members of the Assembly, or Volksraad, 53 in number, receive £2 per day each. In New Zealand members of both Houses receive £142 each, for every session; and in Victoria members of both Houses receive £300 per annum each.

The Hon. W. FORREST: No; the members of the Upper House do not receive it.

The Hon. W. H. WILSON: I think they do. What I have read upon the subject simply shows me that in most countries the universal practice appears to be payment of members, and I think that we are not introducing anything very strange or novel if we pass a Bill for the payment of members' expenses. I consider that if the Bill pass, the electors will probably see that they get good value for their money. Of course, that is putting it upon a business ground; but at the same time, in this 19th century, that must be considered. Again, we must not presume too much upon the patriotism of hon. members by forcing them to pay their own expenses as well as give their services to the colony. It must be recollected that our members are not, as in older countries, drawn from a leisured class—I am speaking, of course, of the Lower House—but they are drawn from a class of people who cannot very well afford to pay their own expenses as well as give their services to the country. I think that we are all occupied men in Queensland, and that we are all hard workers. It has been said, as an argument in favour of the Bill, that the labourer is worthy of his hire. I do not regard it in that light at all. I do not see any hire in it. It is all labour and no hire. It is simply a Bill to recoup the expenses of a member, and it has nothing whatever to do with payment for his services. In fact, we do not propose, so far as I can see, to pay our members at all. We simply propose to pay their expenses; and I think that is a fair thing—we do not propose to be liberal. Then with regard to the previous rejections of this Bill by this House, the Postmaster-General pointed out that on several occasions this House has emphatically protested against the measure. So far so good, but I think that now we might regard the situation from a different point of view. The subject has been debated, as has been shown by the records of the House mentioned by the Postmaster-General, and the Bill has been rejected by this House on five previous occasions. The question now is whether this House intends to reject it upon this occasion. I think myself that it would be unwise to do so. Of course that may be only my opinion, but at the same time I hold that opinion. I think that the previous rejections of this Bill are a sufficiently emphatic protest on the part of those hon. members who are opposed to the principle of it, and that now when it has come forward for I think the sixth time, it might be considered as a time when, in consideration of its having been sent up so frequently, it should be passed; of course that is for hon. members to consider. It must be also recollected that this is a money Bill, and that, therefore, it is a Bill distinctly appertaining to the functions of another place. But whether that is so or not, I think it would be extremely unwise for this House, on the present occasion, to withhold its consent to the Bill. It is very evident that the representatives of the people have made up their minds upon the subject, and I say again, it is unwise for us to do anything which would disturb, or which is calculated to disturb, the cordiality that has always existed, so far as I remember, in Queensland, between this House and the Lower

House on a question of this kind. That is one reason why I press so much that hon. members should regard the situation, and pass this Bill. With reference to the question of the rejection, of course if it is rejected I am not prepared to say what the consequences will be. I may mention those familiar instances which will occur to hon. gentlemen of the rejection by the House of Lords of the Irish Land Bill, and also, on a more recent occasion, of the Franchise Bill, both of which I think ended really in the humiliation of the House of Lords. I think we have an opportunity of calmly regarding the situation as it is now, and as no steps have been taken by the public outside—for instance, the holding of mass meetings, or in the public Press—to indorse the action of this House—taking the exact opposite of the arguments of the Hon. Mr. Gregory and the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior—I appeal to hon. gentlemen who have been opposed to this Bill in the past, and who are perhaps opposed to it now, to consider the situation, and pass the Bill. We have, in this House collectively, only one constituency, and that is the whole colony; and I think we shall be serving its best interests by passing the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. J. TAYLOR said : Mr. President, —I must say I am extremely surprised to find a new member, of a week or a fortnight old, coming to lecture the older members who have been here ever since the House was established. It appears to be a perfect novelty for a gentleman to get up and lecture us, and show us the dangers of refusing the Bill. We are quite prepared for the danger on this side of the House. We are told by the Hon. Mr. Wilson that the other House is not represented at all well now—that is, that the members of the Assembly do not represent the country—but that if we give them £200 a year the country will be well represented. I cannot see, for my part, what difference the £200 a year is to make in the representation in that House at all. One hon. member—the hon. member for Ipswich—I read in the paper, stated that ever since he was sixteen years old he was a Radical, and likewise voted for the payment of members. Ever since I was sixteen years old I have been a Conservative, and have always voted dead against it. I think the arguments that have been brought forward by the Hon. Mr. Wilson extremely childish. The hon. member has read a long list of what different countries pay their members; but I, myself, do not believe one word of it—not one single syllable. I think the whole thing is “cooked” for the occasion, and I do not believe one single iota of what he read. The idea of a country giving £900 a year! Is that at all likely? It must be 900 dollars or something else, not pounds; but he said “pounds” distinctly, and I say I do not believe one single word of it. Mexico or Brazil, I think he said, gives £900 a year to its members. I myself am greatly opposed to the Bill, and I shall vote against it, let the consequences be what they may, I for my part am quite prepared to share them. Both the Postmaster-General and the Hon. Mr. Wilson have pointed out to us that we must be careful what we do, or something serious will happen. Why do not they say what is to happen? It might make some of our votes very different if we saw a great crash before us. I am not afraid at all, myself, of what may come, and as for having better representatives in the Assembly for £200 a year, they must be a mean, paltry set of men who will come forward for that amount of money. I think, myself, that that House will not be as well represented as it is now. If we were short of members, and members could not be obtained, it would be another thing altogether. But we find almost

every constituency contested, and why do we want to pay the members? I cannot see it in that light at all, and I trust that this House will stand firm to its principles in spite of the gossiping we have heard from the Hon. Mr. Wilson, and let us take the consequences ourselves.

The Hon. A. RAFF said : Mr. President,—I voted upon this measure upon the last occasion, and I intend to do so upon this. Although I do not approve of the payment of members, I believe this Bill is a very moderate proposal, and upon that ground I shall support it, and also upon the ground stated by the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior—namely, that he would support it if he were of the opinion that the constituencies were in favour of it—he would give way in that case. I believe the constituencies are in favour of it, because the only way we have of knowing the opinion of the constituencies is through their representatives, and I think it has been made clear that the people's representatives are in favour of the measure.

The Hon. W. D. BOX said : Mr. President,—As this matter will come to a division I am desirous of knowing whether the better plan would be to negative the vote, or to support the motion of the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior that the Bill be read this day six months. I think that the most courteous manner is to adopt the resolution that the Bill be read this day six months. The Bill before the House has one serious objection to it to my mind, and that is, that members of another House are voting money for themselves. If the Bill pass its second reading I trust that the House will support me in the endeavour to make the Bill operate after the end of the last session of this Parliament; so that hon. members cannot be accused of voting money into their own pockets. That seems to be strongly pertinent to our ideas. If the matter of payment of members comes before me again, and I am satisfied that the electors of Queensland desire that their representatives in the other House be paid, I will, as the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior has told us, give way in the matter and vote for the payment of members. It is all very well to say that this is only to pay the expenses of members; it is all the same thing—it is payment of members. We have had the experience of other colonies which have adopted the principle, and has any superior intellect been shown there or are the opinions of the electors more fairly represented? The representatives in Victoria, my native colony almost, do not stand one iota higher than than those of Queensland or New South Wales. I do not think the quality of the House is improved one atom, and, therefore, my opinion is that it is not a desirable thing. As I said before, a Bill to provide for the payment of the members of an existing Parliament is, to my mind, utterly wrong. I cannot sit down without mentioning that I should like to ascertain the opinion of the hon. gentleman on my left—the Hon. Mr. Foote, of Ipswich. There is no man who so much mixes with the electors of West Moreton as that hon. gentleman, and I trust he will give us his opinion as to whether the electors desire payment of members or not. I should like to have that opinion, because it is an opinion which I should value and which the House would value. I think, under the circumstances, the most courteous thing we can do is to decide to have the Bill read a second time six months hence. At any rate, if it should pass its second reading and get into committee, I hope hon. members will only make it operative on condition that the payment shall commence after the present Parliament has ceased to exist.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW said : Hon. gentlemen,—I have no wish to take up the time of the House, and should not have risen but for

the remarks made by the last speaker. It is evident that he has not read the title of the Bill, which is "A Bill to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament." He says it is for the payment of members.

The Hon. J. TAYLOR: So it is.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW: It is nothing of the sort, and I hope hon. members will vote for what is before them. When there is a Payment of Members Bill before the House, then they can vote either for or against payment of members; but as this is a Bill for the payment of expenses, that is the question on which hon. members should give their votes.

The Hon. G. KING said: Hon. gentlemen,—I have always been opposed to the payment of members, and I see no reason to change my opinion now. At the same time, summing up all the arguments *pro* and *con*., and weighing them fairly, and giving those with different opinions credit for good intentions, there is much to be said on both sides. It resolves itself very much into a question of sentiment, and on that point we shall have to give way when the constituencies directly express their opinions one way or the other. We have to study public opinion; and if the majority of the people say that their members shall be paid it will be our duty to give effect to that opinion and vote accordingly.

The Hon. W. FORREST said: Hon. gentlemen,—The supporters of the measure are very anxious to make out that this is a Payment of Expenses Bill and not payment of members—that it is intended chiefly as a measure of relief to outside men; but if the Government had been sincere in that view they would have revised the schedule, and instead of giving £2 2s. a day and 1s. 6d. a mile they would have given £2 2s. a mile and 1s. 6d. a mile for cab-hire. To my mind there is no difference between a Members Expenses Bill and payment of members. I intend to support the amendment of the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior for two reasons: first, because I am desirous of protecting the public income; and second, because I object to pass any measure the effect of which will be to call up a crop of trading politicians. Some of the arguments advanced in favour of the Bill by implication were uncomplimentary to members of the other branch of the Legislature, because it was hinted that if we passed this Bill we should have a very much better class of men. I doubt whether we should ever have a better class of men if the Bill passed. With respect to the matter having been before the country, I may say I was over a good part of the country during the late elections, and it did not come under my notice. Since that time I have been through the country, and I am of opinion, from my intercourse with people in different parts of the colony, that the people are not in favour of the measure—they would rather have the funds spent in a better manner. In illustration of that fact I may mention the deputation which waited on the Minister for Works in regard to a branch railway to Marburg. They made out a most excellent case, showing that 200,000 acres of land had been cleared, and 50,000 acres were under cultivation—that the line would go through coal country and would open up a valuable district. The country, they said, was languishing for want of a railway, and the reply given by the Minister for Works was, "There are no funds available out of the last loan." The last loan was for two and a-half millions, and none of that is available. The Minister for Works said that possibly the thing might be done out of the next loan. While there is no money available to make a railway in such an admirable district we

are quietly asked to vote £10,000 a year to pay the expenses of members of the Legislative Assembly. Some call it a trifle, but £10,000 a year capitalised at 4 per cent. means £250,000, and that would make a very much longer railway than that asked for by the deputation the other day. I should like to see that question put to the electors of Rosewood—whether they would rather see their member paid or have a railway in their district. I would like it so put to them—"You can either have a railway or payment of members, but you cannot have both." I am certain that the answer would be, "We will take the railway." The colony is at present threatened with an invasion worse than the threatened invasion of the Russians—I mean the invasion of rabbits; but the Postmaster-General says that the Government have not time to deal with that most urgent matter at present; and we are informed that there are no funds available to stop the invasion. I would point out again that the £10,000 proposed to be paid to members would more than pay the interest of an amount sufficient to put up a fence which, if it would not keep out the rabbits, would get them under control should they reach the border. Then see how the mining industry would be stimulated by a sum of £10,000. I could enumerate numberless examples of the good that could be done with this money, but I will merely ask whether branch railways, or a fence to prevent the invasion of rabbits, or substantial aid to the mining industry, or whether, on the other hand, payment of members would do more good to the country? The revenue will not stand all those drains on the expenditure, which is increasing while the revenue is decreasing. That decrease is caused by one of the most serious droughts the country has suffered from, and from crushing out the sugar industry, together with the low price of sugar. A few years ago—out west—men could scarcely be got for love or money, but now they can be seen walking about almost begging for work. If you diminish production you also diminish consumption, and the revenue must suffer, more particularly the revenue from railways. The last returns in connection with the Rockhampton Railway will strike any reasoning man with great alarm, as they struck me when I saw them. I shall not detain the House much longer with regard to this payment of members question. I am opposed to the Bill on principle, because I think it is appropriating a portion of the revenue of the colony to something to which it should not be devoted, and in the next place it will encourage trading politicians instead of men such as we get now, who from patriotism and ambition come forward to serve their country. No one has attempted to show why we should pay for getting work done when we can get it done quite as well—in fact better—without pay. I shall certainly support the amendment of the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior.

The Hon. A. H. WILSON said: Hon. gentlemen,—I see no reason for changing the opinions I expressed last December relative to this Bill, when it was rejected by this House. I notice that elsewhere it was stated that when the Bill came again before the Council it would not be rejected, because we are sensible people. Very flattering indeed! But if, after fair consideration, we reject a Bill, and then within eight months take it up, agree to it, and pass it, without its being altered or improved in any way, or without good reason being shown that it is for the good of the country, I fail to see any reason for this doubtful flattery. However, at the risk of being denounced as void of sense, I do not intend to vote for the Bill, which I think will do more harm than good to the country. I said last year I should vote for the

payment of members whose homes and business places were at such a distance that it was impossible for them to reside in and about Brisbane; but members who live in or so near to Brisbane as to be able to get comfortably to their homes after the evening's debate are really out of pocket little or nothing, and surely the pleasure, honour, and perquisites appertaining to their position as members form a very fair set-off for any trouble or loss of time or expense to which they may be put. Members coming from a distance are put to considerable expense, not only for travelling expenses, but also for board and lodging while attending to their duties in Parliament, and I consider that any Bill to reimburse them for such imperative outlay would perhaps be a step in the right direction. Whether the amount set down in this Bill is sufficient or not I will not argue; but I am perfectly certain that there are cases where it will go but a small way towards the expenses of some who have to pay dearly for the management of their business during the time they attend Parliament, to say nothing of the risks of trade and heavy expenses in their own homes. We often see men who, after being elected for a constituency, give up their homes, and even business, in the district they represent, and come and locate themselves in Brisbane, consequently soon losing their claim to be called local representatives; a matter that distant constituencies have always felt very keenly, and I fail to see how this Bill will benefit them. In my opinion it will go the other way, and it will rather assist members to come and locate themselves in Brisbane than in the districts they represent. I have often heard it argued that the amount stated in the Bill is so small that it would not tempt a capable man to leave the district in which he is located and reside in Brisbane. I am speaking of the working class, and I look upon it in this way: that it is equal to an idle life for nearly six months of the year—seven hours per day, for three or four days per week, at the rate of from £5 to £8 per week, or a great deal more than good artisans or the best of workmen are able to make by working eight hours a day and six days per week. A man of this class, by locating himself in Brisbane, has a better chance of finding employment for the time he is not engaged at his Parliamentary duties than anywhere else in the colony; therefore, to such a man it would be to his interest to leave the district for which he might be elected and reside, while a member of Parliament, in Brisbane. We all know that money goes a great way in securing a majority at elections; but, in the case of members living at a distance, when they come to Brisbane the amount they will receive will go but a small way towards paying their necessary expenses; but, on the other hand, a man residing in Brisbane will have a very good sum to save up and make provision for his next election expenses. I say and maintain that it is wrong to pay members residing in Brisbane or about Brisbane, no matter what constituencies they may represent, and I think the Bill should be amended in some way to meet the different cases that will arise. Unless that is done I shall vote against it.

The Hon. A. C. GREGORY said: It has been urged in support of this Bill, first of all, that it is next to impossible to get representatives to attend Parliament unless they are paid. Now, a statement of that kind is so diametrically opposed to the actual facts that we can hardly understand how it can be advanced. We find that there is not a single constituency of any importance but what there have been more candidates than there were members to be elected—that is, in the case of either party, there has always been more than one candidate representing each side to fill the vacancy. As

a matter of fact we should really see more candidates in the field, but that the committees who know who has the best chance always endeavour to keep back others who would come forward and split the votes. That is one reason why we see no greater number of men offering themselves for election, yet notwithstanding that there are always an ample number coming forward. It has been urged again that the country is very anxious that members should be paid. I am aware that at a great number of political meetings during the last general election the question has been asked, "Are you in favour of the payment of members?" but that formed part of a nice little scheme, and it was part of the business of the election committees to have someone in readiness to ask that question in an indirect sort of manner from the body of the hall. It was a kind of abstract question, and now members take advantage of the arrangement and say that the country is in favour of their being paid. Especially in the northern part of the colony, where we would suppose that the electors would be willing to have their members paid, I made inquiries of people of all shades and classes of opinion, and I could hardly find a single individual who spoke in favour of it. They said, "Yes, members would like very much to be paid," but they evinced a kind of indifference to the whole question. There is evidently such a diversity of opinion in the different parts of the colony that it would be desirable that we should adopt a species of local option. That would be the fairest way if payment is to be given at all. At the elections let the member declare himself by saying, "I require payment" or "I do not require payment." If he be one of those who say "I require payment," let the electors note on their voting papers accordingly. We should then get the true feelings and opinions of the electors as to whether the member is to be paid or not. That would not be imposing a heavier burden upon one electorate than upon another, because they would only pay exactly the same amount as if all members were being paid alike throughout the whole of the electorates. They would be simply contributing directly. Then I might be met by the argument, "Look at the expense of deciding the matter in that way," but there would be no expense whatever, because, if a member is to be paid, it could be easily arranged that the municipality or other local authority should be required to strike a rate sufficient to cover the amount of the member's expenses, and if there was any difficulty in collecting the rate then the amount might be deducted from the endowment due to the local authority by the Government. Under these circumstances I think we would get the true feeling of the people, and we would see a substantial evidence on the part of the electors that they wished their member to be paid. Until I see some evidence that it is the desire on the part of the electors that members should be paid, I shall certainly oppose any Bill that may be brought forward having that object in view. The little argument that this is not a Payment of Members Bill but a Members Expenses Bill is too transparent. The really important question is whether we should pass this Bill or not, and I certainly think that the arguments that have been brought forward in favour of it this session have been weaker than ever. While we see the minorities in the other House increasing and parties becoming much more equal than they were heretofore, it is quite evident that the cause is losing ground. What is the state of affairs here, the division to-night will show. When I look round and seek for some information, from what is considered to be a power in the State—the Press—I see hardly a single article in favour of payment of members.

I think that one of the leading papers in this city, which is supposed to be the organ of the present Government, denounces the payment of members in most unmeasured and unmistakable terms. How far, then, are we to suppose that the mere assertion on the part of the few individuals who are to be benefited by it, is to be taken as a proper indication of public opinion. I will leave hon. members to judge. At this period of the evening, I will not take up the time of the House any longer, because I think the question has been pretty well run out, but I will simply content myself by voting for the amendment.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE said : When this question was before the House last year, I stated that I should not give my consent to the passing of a Bill by which one branch of the Legislature should put in their own pockets public moneys which are required for many other useful purposes, and I see no reason for a change of opinion on the subject. I think that a measure, which was thrown out of this Chamber last year, being introduced in the self-same words the following year, ought to be accompanied by some stronger arguments than have been offered to us to-night. I do not quite agree with some of the remarks that have been made on the subject on this side of the House. I am not quite content to say that even if a majority of the constituents were in favour of this measure I would give up my opinion upon the subject. There are many points to be considered before one in this Chamber should surrender the opinions which he has formed after careful consideration ; and there is no reason why, because another branch of Parliament has arrived at a certain decision, that we should act upon that decision after the question has been carefully considered and decided by us. If a hasty conclusion has been arrived at—if the question has been put upon a false foundation, as many public questions are in this country—we should not be too ready to cast away the views which we have taken, as I have already said, after due and careful consideration. I felt some pain in the earlier part of the debate on the constant allusions which were made to the constituencies. Now I do not think it is a question for us here in this Chamber to go into what has been put before the constituencies or what has not been put before them at former elections. We have the question submitted to us for our consideration ; we have to deal with it, and if there are no good reasons for a change of opinion on our part I do not see why we should stultify ourselves and adopt a different course to that which we adopted last year.

Question—That the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put ; and the House divided :—

CONTENTS, 5.

The Postmaster-General, and the Hons. W. H. Wilson, F. H. Holberton, W. Pettigrew, and A. Raff.

NON-CONTENTS, 15.

The Hons. A. H. Wilson, A. J. Thynne, F. T. Gregory, T. L. Murray-Prior, A. C. Gregory, W. Graham, J. Taylor, W. Forrest, W. G. Power, J. C. Smyth, J. C. Foote, W. D. Box, E. B. Forrest, F. H. Hart, and G. King.

Question resolved in the negative.

Question — That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put and passed.

Question—That the Bill be read a second time this day six months—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved, that the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes past 8 o'clock.